Language education for a strong foundation and a good bridge

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MTB MLE Bridging Workshop
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The goal of MTB MLE:

Students will be...

multilingual

multi-literate

multi-cultural

They will achieve their educational goals and will be productive members of their community and citizens of their country.
Strong MTB MLE programs focus on three kinds of development
Language development

Strong MTB MLE programs enable students to develop fluency and confidence in understanding, speaking, reading and writing their first language (L1), the official school language (L2), and other languages, for communication and for academic learning.
**Academic (concept) development**

Strong MTB MLE programs help students achieve the academic competencies established by the government for each grade so that, at the end of the MLE program, those students who want to continue their education, have the competence, and confidence, to do well.
**Socio-cultural development**

Strong MTB MLE programs encourage students to love and respect their heritage language and culture and to feel comfortable interacting with others from outside their home community.

They prepare students to take an active part in developing their home community and also contribute to the development of the nation.
Regarding the time it takes to learn a new language:
In a strong language program and when they hear the L2 outside the classroom, it takes students about 2 years to gain the level of competence they need to communicate about things that are part of their everyday lives (from Jim Cummins. ND. BICS & CALP. http://www.iteachilearn.com/cummins/bicscalp.html)
In a strong language program and with exposure to the L2 outside the classroom, it takes them **at least 5 years** to gain the level of competence needed to understand and talk about abstract concepts *(from Jim Cummins. ND. BICS & CALP. http://www.iteachilearn.com/cummins/bicscalp.html).*
Regarding the basic principle that guides planning for the bridging process (and all education!)

If I had to reduce all of educational psychology to just one principle, I would say this: The most important single factor influencing learning is what the learner already knows. Ascertain this and teach [her or] him accordingly (Ausbekel, D., Novak, J. & Hanesian, H. 1978, Educational Psychology: A Cognitive View, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New York, p. 163.)
Regarding the focus on oral language before literacy (in both L1 and L2)

Oral language is the foundation of learning to read and write. At the initial stages, reading builds on an oral language. Any reading program designed to build early reading skills must offer support for and connections to an oral vocabulary in a spoken language  


http://www.equip123.net/docs/e1-EarlyGradesToolkit.pdf
Regarding the rationale for introducing reading in the L1 (rather than the L2)

Because we learn to read by reading, by making sense of what is on the page (Smith, 1994), it is easier to learn to read in a language we understand. Once we can read in one language, we can read in general (Stephen Krashen, http://www.languagepolicy.net/archives/Krashen7.htm).
Regarding the reason for building competence in ORAL L2 before introducing L2 Literacy

[T]he attempt to teach literacy in a second language without sufficient acquisition of the necessary oral skills leads the teachers to ... return to traditional practices of synthetic methods and structural pattern drills

Regarding the reason for continuing L1 and L2 as subjects in middle and upper primary

Language plays a central role in learning. No matter what the subject area, students assimilate new concepts largely through language, that is, when they listen to and talk, read and write about what they are learning and relate this to what they already know.

Ontario Ministry of Education, quoted in Vollmer, 2006
www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Source/Vollmer_LAC_EN.doc
Regarding the reason for using both languages for instruction in middle to upper primary

...when students’ L1 is invoked as a cognitive and linguistic resource through bilingual instructional strategies, it can function as a stepping stone to scaffold more accomplished performance in the L2.

And...

It is very important that this program continue through 8th grade, because when there are no native [L2] speakers in the classes, it takes longer to reach grade level in [the] second language. In this model, students receive literacy development in L1 and L2, as well as academic content development in L1 and L2

Virginia Collier, personal communication, 2004
To review the process:
Students build fluency in using oral L1 for meaningful communication;
They learn to read and write in their L1;
Teachers use L1 as LOI in early grades;
Lessons build on their knowledge and experience and celebrate their cultural heritage.
Students are introduced to Oral L2 through enjoyable “hear-see-do” activities;

They build confidence in using L2 to communicate (listening and speaking) meaningfully about familiar topics;

They use what they know about L1 reading and about oral L2 to begin reading and writing L2;

They use L1 and L2 for learning throughout primary school.
Use L1 as LOI
Begin introducing L2 academic terms

*Introduce oral L2*

*Introduce written L1*

Continue building oral L1

Use L1 as LOI; begin introducing L2 academic terms

*Introduce oral L2*

*Introduce written L1*

Continue building oral L1

Use L1 and L2 as LOI

Bridge to written L2

Continue building L1 and oral L2

Use L1 as Language of Instruction (LOI)

*Build small children’s oral L1*