Perspectives from a Non-Dominant Language Community on Education in a Multilingual City

Kate Schell
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Abstract

This book investigates the perspectives of parents and community members from a non-dominant language community (the Central Sama [sml]) in the Philippines on children’s education, specifically considering the implementation of MTB-MLE in multilingual Davao City. Implementing MTB-MLE in a diverse context presents particular challenges and requires creative adaptations, which impact NDL communities, who should have a significant voice in education planning for their children.

Taking a mixed methods approach, with a combination of participatory methods and individual interviews, the study seeks to discover and analyse Sama community members’ understanding of current language-in-education policies and practices, their hopes and desires for their children’s education, and their vision for accomplishing those goals. Findings revealed which traditional Sama values, skills and practices parents want children to learn, a valuable starting point for contextualising the national curriculum to reflect their culture and language. Creative solutions were proposed to increase school participation and incorporate Sinama into the implementation of MTB-MLE through the involvement of community members in the classroom. Results also highlighted the need for awareness-raising in the community about the potential for strong models of MTB-MLE, which provide learners a foundation in their first language, to improve children’s acquisition of other languages, such as English.
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Preface

This work analyses parent and community perspectives on multilingual education in a Central Sama community in multilingual Davao City, Philippines, as the Department of Education is beginning to implement the Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) policy. Using participatory methods, individual interviews and thematic analysis, I construct a multidimensional understanding of the community’s hopes for their children’s education, their view of the current policy and their perspectives on how it could be best implemented to address the needs of their children.

I would like to acknowledge many people whose assistance and support made this research possible. First, I am grateful to the members of the Kana’an Sama community, who invested countless hours in teaching me their language and culture over the years and have generously opened up their lives to me by participating in this research. I also want to thank my advisors, Catherine Young and Xinia Skoropinski, for their encouragement, guidance and feedback throughout the research and writing process. I am indebted to my colleagues and friends in the Philippines, Omarjan Jahuran, Jeremiah James, Lydia James, Luke Schroeder, and Ruth Schroeder, who acted as interpreters, hosted me, provided logistical support, cheered me on, and helped in more ways than I can name. Finally, I am grateful to my dear husband, Chris, and our family and friends, for their love and support, and above all, to my God and Saviour, Jesus Christ!
Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BE</td>
<td>Bilingual education</td>
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<tr>
<td>CBO</td>
<td>Community-based organisation</td>
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<td>DepEd</td>
<td>Department of Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>DL</td>
<td>Dominant language</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dx</td>
<td>Discussion (number)</td>
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<tr>
<td>ECE</td>
<td>Early Childhood Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>IP</td>
<td>Indigenous people</td>
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<td>IPsEO</td>
<td>Indigenous Peoples’ Education Office</td>
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<tr>
<td>K-3</td>
<td>Kindergarten – Grade 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>L1</td>
<td>First language</td>
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<td>L2</td>
<td>Second language</td>
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<tr>
<td>LGU</td>
<td>Local Government Unit</td>
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<tr>
<td>MOI</td>
<td>Medium/Media of instruction</td>
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<tr>
<td>MLE</td>
<td>Multilingual Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>MTB-MLE</td>
<td>Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>NDL</td>
<td>Non-dominant language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Php</td>
<td>Philippine peso</td>
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<tr>
<td>Px</td>
<td>Participant (number)</td>
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1 Introduction and Context

This paper analyses parent and community perspectives on education through a case study featuring a Central Sama [sml] community in diverse, multilingual Davao City, Philippines, where the Department of Education is in the initial years of implementing the Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) policy (Department of Education 2009). Using participatory methods and individual interviews, I seek to understand the community’s perspective, values and concerns about how this policy is implemented in their context.

1.1 Impetus for this research

The situation of the Sama1 community in focus (described in sections 1.4–1.5) is somewhat unique within Davao City, as they represent a small ethnolinguistic minority inside the city, while the majority speak Bisaya (sometimes called Binisaya, Cebuano or Dabawenyo)2, the dominant language of wider communication (LWC) in the area. On a global scale, however, their circumstances reflect the realities of other non-dominant language (NDL) communities in increasingly multilingual cities (Simpson 2017:207).

Addressing the educational needs of marginalised communities in diverse cities is one of the remaining hurdles to implement MTB-MLE in the Philippines (Monje et al. 2019; Nolasco 2015; Lartec et al. 2014). Furthermore, as increasing migration and displacement stretches education systems globally, educational researchers and policymakers have also been grappling with how to provide quality, linguistically-appropriate education in multilingual cities.

Some of the specific challenges for MTB-MLE in diverse situations include multilingual classrooms where students don’t share a first language (L1) and a lack of qualified teachers who speak students’ L1(s). While these problems are beginning to be addressed meaningfully by experts and practitioners (Benson 2017; Benson and Young 2016; Nolasco 2015; Nyaga 2013), the voices of parents and NDL community members have not been prominent in the discussion. Benson (2013:290) points out that although members of NDL communities may be asked to support local schools financially or with volunteer labour, they are rarely involved in educational planning decisions, due to communication barriers ‘both real (understanding-related) and perceived (status-related)’ when teachers do not speak the language of the community.

However, Tupas and Martin (2017:10) observe that the ‘most successful attempts to institutionalise mother tongue use in school…have been those which empower local people…to decide on the social development needs of their community’. This suggests MTB-MLE will be more effective if NDL community members are an integral part of planning how to address the specific needs of their children.

On a personal level, I have been involved with this particular Sama community and others since 2014 as a Literacy and Education Specialist with a faith-based NGO, SIL Philippines. I have assisted teachers at the local public school, at their request, with developing instructional materials and strategies to address the educational needs of Sama students. I have also partnered with community members to advocate for practices leading to greater inclusion of Sama students in formal education. As my opportunities for advocacy have grown, I have considered how my own biases may interfere with the advancement of the best possible outcomes for Sama children. In particular, my understanding and perspective may be limited by what Benson (2013:284) calls a ‘monolingual habitus’, a set of unquestioned assumptions about languages based on my background as an American from a monolingual family and culture. In this research, I hope to learn from my multilingual colleagues in the Sama community to become more aware of my own biases and shift towards a ‘multilingual habitus’ in my advocacy and educational development work.

1 Although ‘Sama’ is a term several different ethnolinguistic groups use for themselves (see section 1.4), I use ‘Sama’ in this paper to refer specifically to the Central Sama [sml].

2 In this paper, I use ‘Bisaya’, since it is the term used widely in the Davao City Sama community.
1.2 Linguistic context in the Philippines

The Philippines is a country in southeast Asia made up of over 7000 islands, where 175 indigenous, living languages are spoken (Simons and Fennig 2018). According to the 2000 census, 12 of those languages are spoken by more than 1 million people, and of those, 8 are considered major, regional languages (Nolasco 2008). A variant of one of those regional languages, Bisaya (sometimes called Dabawenyo), is the dominant language (DL) and LWC in Davao City.

1.3 Language-in-education policies in the Philippines

Since 1974, the languages of education and literacy in the Philippines have been English and Filipino, the Tagalog-based national language (Tupas and Martin 2017:248), with all other Philippine languages relegated to a subordinate place as ‘auxiliary’ languages of instruction, used only orally to enhance understanding in the classroom (Nolasco 2008:3; Young 2001:21). However, in response to increasing empirical evidence that children learn best when they have the opportunity to learn in the language(s) they understand best (Nolasco 2008:5–8), the Department of Education issued an order in 2009 entitled ‘Institutionalising Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education’, which directed that students’ L1 should be the primary MOI and language of initial literacy for preschool through at least grade 3 (Department of Education 2009).

In 2013, the Philippine Congress passed the Enhanced Basic Education Act, a weakened version of the same policy (Congress of the Philippines 2013). The law put greater emphasis on early transition to Filipino and English as MOI, while still calling for that transition to be gradual (Nolasco 2013). The law also allowed that ‘instruction, teaching materials and assessment shall be in the regional or native language of learners’ (Nolasco 2013). This option of ‘regional or native language’ opened the way for each Department of Education (DepEd) field unit to designate the regional majority language as MOI for a Region or Division if they chose, even though some students in the Region or Division may speak other languages at home and have little exposure to the regional language. The designated MOI for an entire Region or Division is still called the ‘mother tongue’ by DepEd, although it may not be every students’ actual L1, which confuses the public discussion of the policy significantly.

Since 2009, DepEd has been involved in the incremental implementation of MTB-MLE for the eight major, regional languages, which later extended to nineteen languages (Tupas and Martin 2017:9). For approximately 150 languages which are not currently included in the DepEd implementation of MTB-MLE, the law allows for them to be used as MOI in the early grades if language communities so choose (Congress of the Philippines 2013). There are NDL communities throughout the Philippines who have chosen to work with local government authorities, NGOs or Universities to implement MTB-MLE or another model of MLE with an L1 component, without material support from national DepEd.

Meanwhile, two years after the DepEd order institutionalising MTB-MLE (DepEd 2009), DepEd strengthened its policy on Indigenous Peoples’ (IP) education in light of the marginalisation and exclusion that IPs often face (SEAMEO INNOTECH 2007: vii, 54). The new policy mandated the development of an IP education programme under the oversight of the newly established Indigenous Peoples’ Education Office, IPsEO (DepEd 2011a:1; DepEd 2011b). The programme seeks to engage IP communities in a participatory and empowering way to develop more culture-responsive education (DepEd 2011a). The DepEd order cites the Indigenous Peoples’ Rights Act of 1997, which afforded IPs the right to education in their own language (Congress of the Philippines 1997). And the new IP education programme prioritised, among other things, implementing MTB-MLE for IP learners (DepEd 2011a:4). As of 2018, work was ongoing in many Regions to develop guidelines for contextualising the curriculum for each IP culture, standardize orthographies for IP languages where needed, and develop instructional materials in those languages, under the direction of the national IPsEO and the regional DepEd IP coordinators. In many cases, this work is being done with technical support from Universities and NGOs.

In Davao City, where this study was conducted, Bisaya has been designated the official ‘mother tongue’ for the purposes of MTB-MLE implementation, since it is the Regional language and is spoken by
most children in the city. Efforts are also underway to begin implementation of culturally-responsive and linguistically appropriate MTB-MLE for the 6 IP groups who are represented in the city (Badian 2016).

### 1.4 Central Sama

The Central Sama are an ethnolinguistic group numbering approximately 90,000 (Simons and Fennig 2018). Their geographic homeland is in the Sulu archipelago, southwestern Philippines, but they live in communities scattered across the Philippines, ‘in the coastal regions of Mindanao and the Visayas, as far north as Manila Bay and Pampanga, and as far south as Semporna, Malaysia’ (James 2017). A map of known Central Sama communities is shown below. The wide geographic dispersal of Sama communities is partly due to a cultural norm of traveling great distances for fishing and trading, and partly due to conflict in Sulu between extremist groups and government forces (James 2017:3–4).

Map. Distribution of Central Sinama: The Philippines and Sabah.

In terms of language vitality, Simons and Fennig (2018) classify Sinama as a 4, or 'Educational' on the EGIDS scale (see Simons and Fennig 2018, for a description of EGIDS, the Expanded Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale). James (2017:8), however, considers it to be closer to 6a, ‘Vigorous,’ since it is widely used orally by all generations of speakers, but is only in the earliest stages of development for educational use with very little print literature.

The label ‘Central’ is not used by speakers themselves. It is a geographic reference to where this language group is situated among the wider family of Sama-Bajaw languages. Speakers themselves identify as Sama and call their language Sinama, which are the terms I will use in this paper (Pallesen...
The Sama are known to others by a variety of names, which leads to confusion regarding their identity. In Davao City, other names for them include Samal, Sama Dilaut, Sama Pala'u and Badjao, the latter of which is considered pejorative by some speakers (Pallesen and Soderberg 2012:353).

Sinama is not one of the nineteen languages for which national DepEd is implementing MTB-MLE. However, Sinama is included in the implementation of MTB-MLE being carried out by the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) for all the language groups in that region.

In Davao City (which is not located in ARMM), there are several communities with sizeable Sama populations, though exact population data is not available. As of 2018, the IP coordinator for DepEd-Davao City Division considered the Sama (who they refer to as ‘Badjao’) to be an IP group, and they were included in some activities to extend culturally-appropriate education in the L1 to IP communities in the city. As of 2018, they had participated in the development of a guide for culturally contextualising the curriculum, a working orthography for Sinama, and a guide for teaching reading and writing (an alphabet primer). At the time of this study, however, these materials were not yet widely in use in school, according to teachers.

1.5 Kana'an community

The specific community in focus for this research is a Sama community called Kana'an, located in Seaside Village, Barangay Matina Aplaya. According to community leaders, Sama people first moved to this location in the early 1990s. I have been in contact with this community since late 2014, when I began learning Sinama there. There are no sources indicating the exact size of the community, but based on my observations in 2018, I estimate it to be around 500 people. The children from Kana'an are in the catchment area for Matina Aplaya Elementary School.

1.6 Research questions

Given their particular context, some unique challenges face educators and parents responsible for educating Sama children in the Kana'an community. At the same time, their situation resonates with similarly marginalised NDL communities around the world living in multilingual cities. In this research, I explore perspectives of Sama parents and community members on the implementation of MTB-MLE, who have not had a significant voice in the educational planning thus far due to language barriers, cultural prejudice and a host of other factors. My analysis of their perspective is organised around the following questions:

Q1) What is their understanding of the current language-in-education policy and how have they observed the use of languages for instruction in the schools their children attend?
Q2) What do they want their children to learn when it comes to language, culture and other educational content? Why, or for what purposes?
Q3) How do they believe these ends would be best accomplished? Are there particular ways they envision MTB-MLE being adapted, implemented or abandoned to better serve their goals for children's education, especially related to some of the challenges specific to a multilingual context?

To better analyse participants' responses, understand the limitations of this study, and discern how it might be generalised to other Sama communities and other NDL communities in diverse cities, I also gathered data to describe:

Q4) What is the demographic makeup of the participants, their language repertoire, educational experiences and those of their children?

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3 ARMM’s Regional government has autonomy from the federal government in many respects. DepEd-ARMM is responsible for basic education in the Region and operates independently from national DepEd (Congress of the Philippines 1989).
1.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have introduced the study, described the impetus for the research, discussed the sociolinguistic and language-in-education policy context that defines the situation of the Kana'an Sama community, and posed the research questions guiding this study. In chapter 2, I review and critique current academic literature related to parent and community perspectives and attitudes, and what bearing those have on the implementation of successful MLE programmes. Then, I highlight research on some of the key challenges for MTB-MLE in multilingual settings and strategies that have been proposed to address them. Chapter 3 describes the methodology that I used for field research, along with its rationale and potential limitations. In chapter 4, I analyse the results of the research in relation to the questions posed. Chapter 5 provides a discussion of the outcomes in light of relevant academic literature and recommendations arising from the results, while chapter 6 concludes with a summary of the key findings and directions for further research. Having introduced the context for this study, I will now move on to the literature review.
In the first part of this chapter (2.1), I discuss academic literature concerning the role of community perspectives on languages-in-education and their impact on MLE implementation. I also present research revealing how parents from other NDL communities define ‘quality education’ (2.2) and consider orientations to language planning as a lens through which to analyse parents’ perspectives (2.3). In the last part of the chapter (2.4), I review literature related to three key challenges affecting ethnolinguistic minorities in multilingual cities: teachers and students who do not share a language (2.4.1), students with different L1s in the same school or class (2.4.2), and high rates of absenteeism, drop-out and out-of-school children (2.4.3).

2.1 Role of community perspectives in MLE programmes

A robust body of literature reveals the importance of involving community stakeholders and parents throughout planning and implementation of MLE programmes. According to Pflepson et al. (2015:30), ‘parents’ understanding of language-of-instruction policies and plans and belief in their value is key to successful implementation and will determine in part whether children attend school regularly and receive necessary support at home to succeed’. Manocha and Panda (2017:116–117), comparing two MLE models in India, found that empowering parents and communities to participate in children’s learning enabled inclusion and was a defining feature of the more effective model. In light of the evidence, education experts warn that the cost of ignoring parents’ and other stakeholders’ views is high, in terms of failure, student drop-out and grade repetition (Pflepson et al. 2015:21).

It is perhaps especially important to give a central role to the experiences and perspectives of communities that have historically been excluded from education (Newman 2007:62). Foregrounding community perspectives in planning for education requires a ‘systematic participatory analysis’ of their experiences with education, their view of what quality education means and what they believe needs to be put in place so that they can enjoy quality education (Newman 2007:62). The current study is intended to contribute to this process of participatory analysis in one particular Sama community in order to amplify the community’s voice in evaluating MTB-MLE and its implementation in the Philippines. However, it will be helpful to first consider global and Philippine research illuminating how parents in other NDL communities define quality education, in terms of MOI and languages learned.

2.2 How NDL parents view languages-in-education

Various studies have referenced the strong desire NDL-speaking parents have for children to learn national and international languages, especially English. Nyaga (2013:15) puts it simply: for parents in Kenya, ‘English is synonymous with education’ and speaking English is equated with being educated. Therefore, parents want children to start speaking English from the first day of school. Tembe and Norton (2008:44) report the same view in Uganda: ‘a child’s ability to speak English is proof that learning is taking place’. This perspective often sets up a dichotomy where knowledge of English represents ‘progress’ (Tembe and Norton 2008:44), while local languages are seen as limiting upward mobility (Nyaga 2013:15). So, one way parents may define quality education is by how well children learn English.

In some corners, the importance parents place on English proficiency is cited as a supportive argument for using English as MOI, rather than local languages. This is based on the commonly held misconception that introducing English as early as possible and using it as the language of instruction will increase and accelerate children’s English acquisition (Kosonen 2017:8). Many parents share this misconception, but evidence from India and Ghana shows that clear communication with parents about the benefits of instruction in L1, including better proficiency in English and other DLs in the long-term, can lead to strong community support for using L1 as MOI (Gove and Cvelich 2011:45).
The value parents place on children learning English and, to a lesser extent, the national/regional languages, has also been attested to in the Philippines (Mahboob and Cruz 2013; Walter and Dekker 2011; Quijano and Eustaquio 2009b). Mahboob and Cruz (2013:3–4) attribute the perceived link between English and economic mobility to the history of American colonial language policies, the labour policies of the 1970s Philippine government and the current dependence of the Philippine economy on remittances from overseas foreign workers in mostly English-speaking countries. Their research reveals that a majority of highly-educated Filipinos in Manila believe using local languages in education could negatively affect students’ access to English and jeopardise their opportunities for economic success (Mahboob and Cruz 2013:10, 13).

Tupas (2015:120) is critical of the ideology that English opens up opportunities for jobs and socioeconomic mobility in the Philippines because evidence shows this has only been true for a select few. Mahboob and Cruz (2013:14) agree that when this ideology is interpreted to promote English as the MOI, it has the effect of perpetuating existing inequalities in Philippine society because it privileges children from wealthy families in Metro Manila, who have much more exposure to English, while disenfranchising other children. As a metric for defining quality education, proficiency in English (and other DLs like Filipino) ought to be viewed critically as potentially harmful to children from NDL communities, who might be disenfranchised further by the elevation of English as MOI. However, if it is a value parents hold strongly, as the literature suggests, it will impact their evaluation of the outcomes of MTB-MLE.

On the other hand, the literature shows that alongside a desire for their children to learn English, it is important to NDL parents that children learn their own language well to maintain their cultural and linguistic identity (Quijano and Eustaquio 2009b:163). Parents from NDL communities may believe that these two values, learning English and maintaining their linguistic and cultural identity, are in tension with one another. Batibo (2005, cited in Tembe and Norton 2008:50) describes the dilemma often faced by NDL speakers who feel they must choose between these goals for their children and, as a result, are ambivalent about the use of local languages in education. A full definition of quality education must consider all the goals parents hold, even those that are perceived to be or are, in fact, in tension.

Education planning must also be critically mindful of what Tupas (2015:113) calls the ‘inequalities of multilingualism’. Multilingualism and any MLE programme are deeply situated within a particular economy of language, where certain languages are invested with more cultural and symbolic capital than others (Tupas 2015:115) and DL groups have a legacy of dominating NDL groups (Batibo 2005, cited in Tembe and Norton 2008:5). To address these complexities, I believe the ‘orientations to language planning’ is a helpful framework for analysing how NDL parents and communities view multilingualism and education, and how those views inform their goals for their children.

### 2.3 Orientations to language planning

Ruiz (1984) developed a paradigm for understanding the values and attitudes about language that underlie language choice and policymaking in multilingual contexts. In the decades since, his framework of three ‘orientations’ has proven useful to guide analysis of the values held by a variety of stakeholders in MLE (Hult and Hornberger 2016:42). I will briefly review the three orientations to provide a framework for analysing the responses of Sama parents and community members in this study.

The orientations in Ruiz’s model are language-as-problem, language-as-right and language-as-resource. The language-as-problem orientation, rooted in a monolingual ideal, views linguistic minorities through a deficit perspective, emphasising what they lack (for example, proficiency in the DL) and barriers they must overcome to assimilate (Hult and Hornberger 2016:34). MLE informed by this orientation prioritises transition to the DL, while attributing low educational achievement among NDL students to the ‘problem’ of language (Nyaga 2013:24). I believe the model of MTB-MLE being followed in the Philippines stems from a language-as-problem orientation, since recent DepEd guidelines for implementation give learners less instruction in the L1 than the original law prescribed, prioritising instead early transition to English and Filipino. This type of early-exit MLE has been proven less pedagogically effective in many studies (Benson 2016; Heugh 2011; Malone and Paraide 2011; Cummins 2009; Alidou et al. 2006).
The language-as-right orientation seeks to address inequity between DL speakers and NDL speakers through legal mechanisms (Hult and Hornberger 2016:35). The educational models that grow out of the language-as-right viewpoint may facilitate equal access to education by providing linguistic support for NDL learners, but generally do not promote the goal of lifelong multilingualism (Hult and Hornberger 37).

In contrast to both of these, Ruíz offered the language-as-resource orientation as a counter-narrative (Hult and Hornberger 2016:38). In this view, languages are recognised as both personal resources for their speakers and societal resources, since linguistic diversity benefits everyone (Hult and Hornberger 2016:38; Nyaga 2013:26). Speakers of NDLs are esteemed for their specialised knowledge and expertise and what they offer to the wider society (Nyaga 2013:26). This orientation is the foundation for MLE programmes that aim for additive language learning, lifelong multilingualism and increased connection and interaction between cultures and speakers of different languages (Hult and Hornberger 2016:41; Nyaga 2013:26).

Participants’ responses in this study will be analysed through the lens of Ruíz’s orientations to language planning to understand how they view current language-in-education policies and their implementation and to examine what attitudes towards language underlie their own goals for their children’s education.

2.4 **Key challenges NDL communities face in multilingual cities**

To develop a more nuanced understanding of how the community would like to see MTB-MLE implemented in their context, it will be helpful to consider some specific challenges affecting their children’s education. Though other issues may emerge in the participatory discussions, I consider three particular challenges in this section which I know to be significant for this community based on previous conversations with local educators, community members, and other stakeholders. To situate my analysis of participants’ responses in the broader educational conversation, I will review recent research into the nature of these challenges and potential strategies for managing or transforming them. The three challenges considered here are: teachers and students who do not share a language, students with multiple L1s in the same school or class, and high rates of absenteeism, drop-out and out-of-school children. These are particularly relevant for many NDL communities in multilingual, urban contexts.

2.4.1 **Teachers and students who do not share a language**

One of the most significant challenges for extending MTB-MLE implementation to NDLs in the Philippines is that many teachers are not proficient in the NDLs of their students. Researchers from different regions of the Philippines have pointed out this widespread problem (Monje et al. 2019:31; Lartec et al. 2014:11; Skoropinski 2013:4). At Matina Aplaya Elementary School in 2017–2018 when this study was conducted, none of the teachers spoke Sinama beyond basic greetings.

The reasons behind this situation are complex, the product of several decades under the Bilingual Education system, which gave only Tagalog-speaking learners access to education in their L1. Newly hired teachers are often assigned to remote areas far from their own communities, where they are unlikely to speak the L1 of their students, because systems for teacher hiring and placement have not been restructured to take into account teachers’ language proficiency and students’ L1s (Monje et al. 2019:31, 37; Quijano and Eustaquito 2009b:169). Even where DepEd would like to hire teachers from the local area, few teachers from NDL communities are qualified, since many have difficulty passing the Licensing Examination for Teachers (Quijano and Eustaquito 2009b:169).

Quijano and Eustaquito (2009b:160) have observed that teachers who do not speak the students’ L1 generally resort to using the regional language as MOI. It was unclear from their study how much exposure students had to the regional language upon entering school. However, Perfecto (2020:21) found that teachers’ perceptions of students’ proficiency in Tagalog were inaccurate; teachers over-estimated learners’ proficiency in Tagalog as compared to their L1. To develop appropriate strategies and
ensure understanding, it is important to discern what students' true linguistic resources are at the age they begin school (Benson and Young 2016:1).

Benson (2017:105) argues that implementing a strong L1-based MLE program where learners from NDL communities are well-supported and have opportunities for higher education will produce qualified teachers who speak NDLs in the long run, when the first cohort graduates. In the meantime, stop-gap strategies must be employed. One strategy suggested in the literature is training existing teachers to develop enough proficiency in the NDL to teach, but, as Benson (2017:105) points out, this usually requires significant training and may be cost and time-prohibitive. Another strategy, employed elsewhere in the Philippines, is engaging para-teachers or parent volunteers from the NDL community to assist teachers in the classroom, either as interpreters or teachers' assistants (Benson 2017:105; Benson and Young 2016:4). However, hiring para-teachers requires funding and the alternative, asking parents to volunteer, may be unsustainable in poorer communities.

A third possibility is training NDL community members in MLE methods, L1 literacy, and academic content with the goal of an alternative route towards teacher qualification. This would require cooperation between the community, DepEd and perhaps an NGO, but such an approach was successful in the CARE program in Cambodia, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education (Lee et al. 2014, cited in Benson 2017:105). Alongside any of these measures, Walter (2016:24) suggests the development of materials to support teachers who lack sufficient oral proficiency or literacy in the NDL, such as a dictionary, a guide for terminology commonly used in the classroom, and detailed lesson plans.

2.4.2 Multiple L1s in the same school or class

Another challenge for implementing MTB-MLE in multilingual cities is classes or schools where students have different L1s. Monje et al. (2019:6) found that even in parts of the Philippines considered ‘less linguistically diverse,’ many classrooms include learners with a variety of home languages. In this study, the elementary school student population is linguistically mixed, with the majority of students having Bisaya as their L1, while a sizeable minority speak Sinama at home.

In multilingual situations, linguistic diversity in schools is often one of stakeholders’ top concerns about how MLE programmes will work (Graham 2009:314). At the time of this study, DepEd had not given any clear guidance for how schools should manage linguistic diversity (Monje et al. 2019:40). Kosonen (2006) proposes organising classrooms by language rather than grade (perhaps for a specific portion of the day focused on language arts) and providing multi-grade instruction using students’ L1. On the other hand, Nolasco (2015) argues that organising classrooms by language may promote a segregationist mindset and exacerbate discrimination. He believes a ‘mixed’ classroom with a multilingual teacher and multilingual materials is preferable, as learners are exposed to languages other than their own L1 and learn to negotiate meaning through peer interaction, resulting in more multicultural, tolerant individuals (Nolasco 2015). Unfortunately, there is a lack of rigorous research comparing the outcomes of these two strategies (UNESCO 2017:8–9).

If classrooms are mixed linguistically, teachers need to be trained in strategies for managing a diverse group of students (Nyaga 2013:4, 57). In such situations, when students in the same class have vastly different linguistic competencies, teachers develop their own ad-hoc strategies. Often, they default to using the DL (or the LWC or the teacher’s L1) as MOI and then translating the same content into different NDLs for students who struggle to understand (Nolasco 2015; Lartec et al. 2014:5; Nyaga 2013:199).

Researchers have suggested a variety of other approaches that have proven successful in one situation or another and could perhaps be adapted to suit schools in the Philippines with a linguistically mixed student body. Nyaya (2013:59–62) references various strategies relying on interactions among learners, including peer tutoring, partner work and cooperative learning groups. Learners who share an L1 may be grouped together or cross-linguistic groups may be formed to maximise the linguistic resources of students who speak the MOI.

Benson and Young (2016:10, 12) suggest that certain principles from the Integrated Plurilingual Curriculum, very successful with mixed-L1 learners in the Basque country, could be applied in low-income contexts. Teachers could strategically communicate in multiple languages, drawing on the
diverse linguistic resources that students bring to the classroom and explicitly comparing and contrasting languages (Benson and Young 2016:10,12). These strategies could be applied in something like a two-way immersion programme, with combined classrooms of DL and NDL speakers and the goal that all students would gain oral and written proficiency in both languages (Benson and Young 2016:4). Such an approach would require multilingual and multiliterate teachers proficient in the DL and NDL, although it could potentially also be accomplished with team teaching or classroom language assistants (Benson and Young 2016:4). Finally, involving parents and community members to lead learning activities or develop appropriate multilingual materials is a strategy supported by many educational researchers (Benson and Young 2016:12; Nyaga 2013:62).

2.4.3 Absentee, drop-out and out-of-school children

The high proportion of Sama children out-of-school is a major concern of teachers and DepEd administrators. They generally place the blame for low school participation on Sama parents, who they say do not value education. However, studies on out-of-school children in the Philippines indicate that poverty is the primary factor in low school participation – children from the poorest families, especially those with irregular income, are at greatest risk of being out-of-school (UNICEF 2013:17; Albert et al. 2012). The ‘myth of parental indifference’ persists among educators in the Philippines, even though in-depth analysis shows that even the poorest parents highly value education (UNICEF 2013:38).

According to a study undertaken by UNICEF (2013:54, 66) in the Philippines, ethnicity, home language and MOI may also put children at greater risk of being out-of-school. The 2019 Global Education Monitoring Report also notes that children from ethnolinguistic minority groups are among the lowest performers in school, which makes them at higher risk of dropping out (GEM Report Team 2018). If an unfamiliar MOI contributes to school drop-out for students from NDL communities, using their L1 as MOI should improve learning outcomes, thereby reducing the number of out-of-school children. In fact, Skoropinski (2013:35, 38) found that in the first year of MTB-MLE implementation in several schools in the southern Philippines, the number of absences was reduced, which parents attributed to children’s increased motivation to learn since they could understand the teacher easily. Furthermore, since the start of MTB-MLE implementation in 2009, DepEd (2019:110) has noted an overall improvement in learners’ literacy and numeracy skills and a decrease in children leaving school early, citing BEIS data collected between 2005–2014.

However, language is only one of many factors affecting this complex issue, as Quijano and Eustaquio (2009b:168) found in a pilot study of schools using students’ L1 as MOI. Although they observed positive educational outcomes, significantly lowered drop-out rates and less grade repetition, overall enrolment decreased due to families facing economic hardship. This could be because children’s labour was needed to supplement household income or due to lack of funds for school-related expenses, such as packed lunch, school supplies and transportation (Albert et al. 2012).

In addition to implementing linguistically and culturally appropriate MLE, UNICEF (2013) suggests additional strategies to increase school participation in the Philippines. Among teachers, they encourage more realistic expectations and developmentally appropriate teaching methods in early grades, such as learning through play (UNICEF 2013:31). Meanwhile, they argue that parents must be responsible for finding ways to get their kids to school when they do not want to go (UNICEF 2013:33). Local government units (LGUs), at the same time, ought to enforce child truancy laws when parents do not do their part (UNICEF 2013:33). None of these strategies, however, addresses the impact of poverty on school participation.

For the Kana'an Sama community, lack of school participation has been identified as a problem by local educators. It will be important to learn whether parents and others inside the community perceive the issue similarly, whether they agree with policymakers about the underlying reasons, and what value they place on participation in formal education. If they wish to see school participation increase, I hope to discover how they view the strategies proposed and what interventions they would design.

Having explored and critiqued recent literature relevant to this study, I will now describe the theoretical framework and methodology for field research.
3

Methodology

This chapter describes the theoretical paradigm, approach, design, and data collection methods, along with their rationale and potential limitations.

3.1 Theoretical paradigm

My theoretical framework for this study draws on interpretivist/constructivist approaches and critical theory. Interpretivism emphasises the exploration of participants’ ‘lived experiences’ and grounds interpretations of meaning in that context (Ormston et al. 2014:12). I also take the constructivist view that ‘social reality cannot be captured or portrayed “accurately” because there are different (and possibly competing) perspectives and understandings’, so research aims to simply ‘represent the participants’ meanings as faithfully as possible’ (Ormston et al. 2014:12).

My ontological view aligns with what Ormston et al. (2014:21) call ‘critical realism’. I believe a reality exists independently of its observers, but our only access to knowing and understanding reality is through the perceptions and interpretations of people. Through participants’ interpretations of the issues, we can approach a multidimensional understanding of reality (Ormston et al. 2014:21). From critical theory, I adopt the intention to establish an equitable, collaborative relationship with participants and an emerging research design that unfolds throughout data collection (Ormston et al. 2014:16).

3.2 Approach and case study design

The interpretivist/constructivist paradigms and critical theory suggest a qualitative approach, which is well-suited to the research questions in this study (section 1.6). According to Skovdal and Cornish (2015), qualitative methods are especially appropriate for investigating people’s perceptions and experiences, the meanings they attach to those experiences, and relevant social processes and contextual factors. I included a quantitative component as well, to develop a sociolinguistic profile of participants. The approach for this study can therefore be described as mixed methods, leaning heavily towards qualitative.

I chose a case study design, which is appropriate for answering ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions, with a deep concern for the context in which the participants and phenomena are situated (Baxter and Jack, 2008:545). Baxter and Jack (2008:546) define a case as ‘a phenomenon occurring in a bounded context’ and advise that a case may be bound in various ways. I have bound the case for this study by time, place, and definition: this case is restricted to members of the Kana’an Sama community, defined by geography, ethnicity and language use (see section 3.4.2.1), during the period July 2017–February 2018.

3.3 Data collection

I collected data in June–July 2017 and February 2018. I discussed my research plans with community leaders in the weeks leading up to the data collection, explaining the purposes for the research and answering their questions. They set the locations, dates and times for data collection at the convenience of participants.

I used a variety of methods that could be triangulated to yield more robust findings. The methods included two facilitated participatory discussions, structured individual interviews with each participant to gather sociolinguistic information, and longer semi-structured interviews with three key informants. Collecting data over two periods, separated by several months, allowed for an iterative process. The two participatory discussions and most of the sociolinguistic interviews were conducted during June–July 2017. Then, preliminary analysis of the data gathered from the discussions informed the design of the key informant interviews, conducted in February 2018.
3.3.1 Participants

The data collection involved 22 participants: 12 women and 10 men. Of the 22 participants, I conducted sociolinguistic interviews with 20 of them. Three of those participants were identified as key informants to be interviewed in greater depth. I intended to gather sociolinguistic data from all 22 participants, but two participants from the first discussion were repeatedly unavailable when I was conducting interviews in the community.

The two community leaders, acting as ‘gatekeepers’, were charged with selecting and inviting participants to join in the participatory discussions (Skovdal and Cornish 2015). The leaders indicated that they understood the importance of gathering a representative group, including both men and women of a variety of ages and education levels, coming from both kampung (clans) in the community.\(^4\) I considered facilitating the discussions with groups separated by gender or clan, to prevent power dynamics from influencing their responses. However, I decided that a diverse group with cross-sectional representation would allow a more nuanced perspective to develop in the discussions.

In actual fact, when the community leaders gathered participants for the first discussion, it was majority women (12 women, 4 men). I am not certain of the reason for this. The timing of the discussion may have made it more convenient for women, or the leaders may have decided women were the most appropriate members of the community to discuss education (despite my requests for a gender-balanced group). It could also be that as some women decided to participate, other women were more comfortable joining in. I am inclined toward the latter as the likely explanation, since many daily activities and cultural events in the Sama community are segregated by gender.

Because equal representation of men and women was important for the validity of the research, I asked community leaders to engage more men for the second discussion. As a result, that group included 7 men and 3 women. Although my original intention was to convene gender-balanced groups, in retrospect, the tendency towards segregating by gender is fairly common in the Sama community, especially for discussions on important matters, so that may have been more comfortable for participants. I was concerned it would limit the participation of those in the minority, but I observed active participation from men and women in both discussions. Still, it would be interesting to conduct further participatory discussions with gender-balanced groups to determine what effect it might have had, if any.

3.3.2 Data collection procedures and ethical considerations

The discussions and interviews were recorded using an Olympus LS-10 recorder, while I took notes by hand. In addition, the participatory discussions were video recorded, to aid in transcription. Before each discussion and interview, the facilitator explained to participants the purpose of the study and how it might be disseminated in the future, and made clear that they could choose not to answer questions and could leave at any time. Participants then orally consented to participate and to be recorded (statements of consent were audio recorded). I obtained consent orally because I knew many participants were not literate.

After each period of data collection, participants received an honorarium of 50 Php each (approximately $1, equivalent to the hourly wage for skilled labour), in recognition that they took time away from their work and daily activities to participate. I also provided refreshments during the participatory discussions, as is customary among the Sama when convening a group of people. Data collection was conducted in Sinama, the language most widely used in the community and the first language of most participants. However, participants were encouraged to respond in whatever language they chose. For the most part, participants spoke in Sinama, but occasionally used other languages.

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\(^4\) There is one other clan in the community which is significantly smaller than the two main clans. Since I did not have pre-existing relationships with them and did not have the opportunity to establish relationships prior to data collection, they were not included in this research. However, future educational research in this community should include them.
I had assistance from co-facilitators/interpreters in the data collection process. Although I am proficient in Sinama, which I began learning in 2014, my receptive knowledge surpasses my productive fluency. I was not confident in my ability to converse about abstract topics fluently enough for discussions and interviews to flow naturally. I developed the interview questions and participatory tools in English and worked with an interpreter to translate them into Sinama. During the data collection, I was able to follow the discussion in Sinama, asking follow-up or clarifying questions in English, which the interpreter translated into Sinama for participants.

For the participatory discussions and sociolinguistic interviews conducted in June–July 2017, Omarjan Jahuran worked with me to prepare the tools in Sinama, facilitate the discussions and conduct interviews. I chose Mr. Jahuran, an experienced translator, because he a native Sinama speaker also fluent in Bisaya, Filipino, and English. He is not from the Kana’an community but has been involved in some literacy activities there, so he is known to the community. Furthermore, he is trained in participatory methods and is a skilled facilitator.

Although I hoped to have the same interpreter throughout data collection, Mr. Jahuran was unavailable in February 2018. Jeremiah James, a colleague in our NGO, agreed to act as interpreter for the remaining sociolinguistic interviews and the key informant interviews. Mr. James is trained as a linguist/translator and has been working closely with this and other Sama communities since 2010. He is fluent in Sinama, having learned it primarily while living in the Kana’an community. The long-established relationships that he has in the community, his deep understanding of Sama culture, and his experience as a translator made him a very effective interpreter.

It must be noted that the involvement of Mr. Jahuran, Mr. James and myself may have introduced a bias into the data collection process, since we have all been involved in the production of literacy materials in Sinama and Bisaya for this community. There was a risk that participants would tailor their responses to what they imagined our opinions to be. This is one reason I chose participatory methods, so that participants would primarily discuss issues with one another rather than speaking directly to the researcher or facilitator.

3.4 Rationale and limitations of using participatory methods

In this section, I explain the rationale for choosing participatory methods and some of their limitations. The choice of participatory methods stems from my overarching goals for this study, which are: (1) to empower Sama people who desire to enact change related to education in their communities and (2) to enlighten stakeholders outside the Sama community who wish to enable such change.

3.4.1 Rationale

Participatory communication in research is based on the idea ‘that researchers are not solely responsible for generating the research or communicating about it’ and therefore, that participants ‘[create and express] their own knowledge and, in so doing, empower themselves to effect…change’ (Cornish and Dunn 2009:666). The hope is that as participants construct an understanding of the issues together, relationships between them are strengthened, paving the way for collective action. Furthermore, as they learn one other’s perspectives, they judge for themselves how ideas are related, thereby participating in data analysis as well. For the Sama participants in this study, the participatory process has the potential to feed their sense of ownership over their children’s education and empower them to take action towards their own goals (Cornish and Dunn 2009:670).

Participatory methods might also help address some common weaknesses of educational development programmes, a ‘limited understanding of the local context’ and ‘insufficient involvement of local stakeholders’ (Tuft and Mefalopulos 2009:18). In order to better inform stakeholders outside the community who wish to be part of the change process, this study seeks to engage Sama community members at the level of participation that Tuft and Mefalopulos (2009:7) call ‘empowerment’, where outsiders and primary stakeholders work in equal partnership, while ownership and control rests with the community.
3.4.2 Limitations

Although participatory methods have potential to empower the community (Skovdal and Cornish 2015; Cornish and Dunn 2009; Hickey and Mohan 2004; Sanderson and Kindon 2004; Salas et al. 1993), there are limitations on the impact for participants and on what conclusions can be drawn from the results (Cooke and Kothari 2001; Cleaver 1999). These limitations relate to how ‘community’ is defined and the power relations within the community.

3.4.2.1 Limitations around defining ‘community’

One important question that can be overlooked is: Who will be empowered through participation? Cleaver (1999:603) points out that the common assumption in participatory literature of one identifiable ‘community’ is false. In reality, evidence points to the ‘overlapping, shifting and subjective nature of “communities” and the permeability of [their] boundaries’ as well as the way they are connected through complicated kin relationships to networks of wider, physically-dispersed ‘communities’ (Cleaver 1999:603).

For this study, the ‘Kana’an Sama community’ will be defined by ethnic identity, language use and geographic area. The community is comprised of households situated in the area served by Matina Aplaya Elementary School, where at least one member of the household is ethnically Sama and Sinama is spoken in the home (perhaps alongside other languages). When considering the makeup of research participants, stakeholders themselves may be best positioned to determine the appropriateness of a particular group of individuals as representatives of a ‘community’ (Kanji and Greenwood 2001:9–10). This is why I asked community leaders to select and invite participants, within certain parameters.

3.4.2.2 Limitations around power relations

Another complicating feature of participatory methods, particularly in terms of their potential to empower, is that participation itself is a direct negotiation of power relationships (Sanderson and Kindon 2004:116). Within the literature on participatory approaches, concerns persist regarding what Foucault (1980) calls ‘power/knowledge’: the way that knowledge is an exercise of power and power is a function of knowledge. Sanderson and Kindon (2004:117-118) argue that participatory research has the potential to assert the power/knowledge of a marginalised or non-dominant group, but that care must be taken within the facilitation process to make space for such negotiations of power/knowledge. Doing so requires transparency about the power relations within a community – the community must be treated as the sum of several distinct groups (perhaps of unequal power), rather than a homogenous entity (Tufte and Mefalopulos 2009:19).

For greatest transparency, it is helpful to examine how people are positioned in multiple ways, understanding that social relationships are conferred by their specific social identities (Cleaver 1999:606). In the Kana’an community, some identity distinctions important to consider are gender, age, and level of education. Chapter 6 will address how power relationships came into play in relation to the findings.

3.4.2.3 Limitations of participation within a research framework

One final limitation is the inherent tension between the way that ‘full participation’ is defined for participatory approaches and the necessary constraints of a focused piece of research. Empowering participation, according to Tufte and Mefalopulos (2009:24) requires that the stakeholders are the ones to define significant issues within a topical focus. Vallejo (2011) goes a step further and suggests that the goals should be defined by participants to begin with. For this study, the goals and topical focus are restricted by the research questions. However, every attempt was made through open-ended prompts and careful facilitation to encourage participants to define significant issues within the topic and to raise other, interrelated topics.
Beyond the goals and topic, Sanderson and Kindon (2004:122) argue that to give participants a stronger sense of control over the process, they should be involved in designing the framework and methods. However, in this study I had to balance giving participants control with the need for methodological consistency to achieve rigor and reliability in the data. Collecting data over the course of two distinct periods allowed me to include issues participants raised in the participatory discussions when designing the key informant interviews, giving participants a voice in the design.

### 3.5 Description of participatory methods

The first participatory discussion was conducted with 16 participants outdoors in the Kana'an community, *marilaut* (by the seashore). I observed all the participants actively engaged in the discussion. The prompts for the first participatory discussion were adapted from a participatory tool called ‘What We Want Our Children to Know’ (developed by Ian Lau and others from SIL). This tool invites participants to consider and discuss the skills, knowledge and values they want their children to know and to classify them according to what language(s) and methods are best suited for teaching them. I chose this tool as a basis for the first discussion to address Question 2 (Q2), as it invites participants to consider and discuss the skills, knowledge and values they want their children to know and to classify them according to what language(s) and methods are best suited for teaching them. (The facilitation guide is in Appendix A.)

The second participatory discussion took place a few days later with a group of 10 participants (5 of whom were in the first discussion), under a community leader’s house in a meeting space. The prompts for the second discussion built on the findings generated during the first discussion and also sought to discover participants’ understanding of the current language-in-education policy (Q1) and how they envision accomplishing their goals for children’s education (Q3). The plan for the second discussion was not based on a pre-existing participatory tool. (The facilitation guide is in Appendix B.)

To take full advantage of the flexibility and open-ended nature of qualitative methodology, the interaction between the facilitator and participants was not limited to the facilitation guides, but they provided a starting point for the discussions.

### 3.6 Interviews

By complementing group discussions with individual interviews, I hoped to discover both the collective experiences, perspective and social norms of the group as well as individual views and experiences. Skovdal and Cornish (2015) indicate that collective and individual methods play complementary roles in qualitative research. The interviews were conducted with the participant, researcher and interpreter present.

Short, structured interviews were conducted with each participant (excepting two, see section 3.3.1) to gather sociolinguistic data about them and their household, addressing Q4. The questions were selected and adapted from the Research Instrument and Design Tool developed at the Linguistic Institute of Payap University for ethnolinguistic survey (Nahhas, Kelsall and Mann). (The structured interview questionnaire is given in Appendix C.)

More in-depth, semi-structured interviews lasting approximately 1–2 hours were conducted with three participants deemed to be ‘key informants’ based on their specific role and knowledge of the community, which suggested they would have unique insight on the topic of education (Skovdal and Cornish 2015). One of these key informants was a community leader. The other two key informants are the only members of this community to attend college, as far as I am aware, and at the time of the study, were both pursuing degrees in education and teaching at community-based, informal schools. As mentioned previously, the prompts for the semi-structured interviews were designed to further explore

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5 They developed the tool based on an early version of the ‘Guide for Planning the Future of Our Language’ (Hanawalt et al.).

6 I scheduled an interview with the other community leader as well, but he had to travel unexpectedly and we were unable to complete it.
topics and issues raised in the participatory discussions, from the knowledgeable perspective of the key informants. (The key informant interview guide is in Appendix D.)

Having described the theoretical paradigm, approach, case study design and data collection methods and procedures for this study, I will now analyse and discuss the findings in chapter 4.
4
Analysis and Results

In this chapter, I describe the data analysis procedures and explore the findings in relation to the research questions (see section 1.6) as well as themes highlighted by participants.

4.1 Procedures for data analysis

I transcribed recordings of the participatory discussions and key informant interviews using ELAN (The Language Archive 2018) and translated them into English, with assistance from a native Sinama speaker. I analysed the original language and English side-by-side, to preserve distinctions in meaning that might be less clear in the translation. For the sociolinguistic interviews, I listened to the recordings and documented participants’ responses in a spreadsheet.

I encountered some difficulty transcribing the first discussion because of a poor-quality recording. The audio recorder placed in the centre of the group malfunctioned and did not capture any data. As a result, I only had a recording from the internal microphone of the video camera, which had more interference from ambient noise. I used my notes to reconstruct portions of the first discussion that were impossible to transcribe from the recording.

I chose a thematic analysis approach, which is best suited to ‘elucidating the specific nature of a given group’s conceptualisation of the phenomenon under study’ (Joffe 2012:213). Thematic analysis requires working systematically through data, identifying topics and progressively integrating them into higher-order themes, which are interpreted to address the research questions (Spencer et al. 2014:271). The topics and themes that emerged through analysis included some directly observable in the data and others that were referred to indirectly by participants (Joffe 2012:209). Some themes were drawn from pre-existing theory in the literature, while others came from the data itself. (The thematic framework I used to code the data is in Appendix E.)

In the following sections, I explore the findings, beginning with what sociolinguistic interviews revealed about participants.

4.2 Sociolinguistic profile of the participants (Q4)

In this section, I describe the results addressing Question 4 (see section 1.6), about the sociolinguistic profile of participants. The participants included 10 men and 10 women, with an average age of 34 years. All participants were married and 19 out of 20 had children. All participants were ethnically Sama. 80% of participants had two Sama parents, while the other 20% had one Sama parent.

In terms of language repertoire, 80% had Sinama as their first language (L1). Another 15% had both Sinama and Bisaya as L1s, having been raised bilingually, and 5% grew up with Bisaya as L1. Figure 1 shows participants’ self-reported language proficiencies.

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7 Two additional women participated in the first discussion but are not included in the findings presented in this section, since I was unable to conduct sociolinguistic interviews with them (see section 3.3.1).
Figure 1. Participants’ self-reported language proficiencies.

Participants were asked about their experiences with formal education. They reported a wide range of education levels, with more women than men having progressed to higher levels of education. Figure 2 shows the number of participants who reached each level of education, organised by gender.
This data encompasses formal DepEd programmes, including equivalency certificates from the Alternative Learning Systems (ALS) programme⁸. Participation in ALS programmes not resulting in an equivalency certificate and community-based education experiences are not included here because the variability and uniqueness of such programmes make them difficult to compare directly with formal education.

The participants reported a range of literacy skills, with some able to read and write in multiple languages and others who were pre-literate. Some participants described their own literacy as limited to certain domains, like reading signs on public transport or signing their name. Figure 3 shows the distribution of literacy skills among participants, organised by gender, showing there is not a significant difference in literacy between women and men.

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⁸ DepEd’s programme for adult education and out-of-school youth. For more information, see http://www.deped.gov.ph/alternative-learning-system/.
80% of participants who were pre-literate or had limited literacy indicated that they wanted to learn to read and write. The most frequently cited motivations for literacy learning, along with participants’ current literacy practices, are listed in table 1.

Table 1. Literacy motivations and practices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Motivations for literacy learning</th>
<th>Current literacy practices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Read the Bible</td>
<td>Reading the Bible in Sinama</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teach children to read and write</td>
<td>Teaching children to read and write</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help children with homework</td>
<td>Helping children with homework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Doing own schoolwork</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reading books/articles for enjoyment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reading prescriptions, signs on public transport, etc...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participants were asked about their language use at home. With their spouses, participants generally used their L1, 80% speaking primarily Sinama, while the other 20% used a mixture of Sinama and Bisaya. With their children, there appears to be a slight shift towards raising children bilingually in Sinama and Bisaya. Among participants who have children, 68% spoke to them only in Sinama, while 32% spoke both Sinama and Bisaya. There does not seem to be any shift away from children learning Sinama, but there may be increasing bilingualism among children. However, some parents raising children bilingually only begin to incorporate Bisaya as children approach school age. Although not within the scope of this study, it would be helpful to directly investigate the language proficiencies of children in the community.

Data was also collected regarding the level of school engagement among participants’ children. That data is presented in section 4.6, alongside qualitative data on the topic of school participation.
4.3 Participants’ understanding of language-in-education policies and implementation (Q1)

When key informants were asked about the current language-in-education policies, to investigate Question 1 (see section 1.6), their responses revealed mixed understandings. They were aware of a new law allowing languages other than Filipino and English as MOI. Two of them used ‘K to 12’ and ‘MTB’, shorthand names DepEd uses for the policy (P20, p. 28; P19, p. 29). They all understood that the law requires Bisaya to be the MOI in early grades for Bisayan children.

Their beliefs differed, however, in how the law pertained to Sinama. One participant said the law did not speak to the use of Sinama as MOI (P20, pp. 29–30). Another said the law allows Sinama to be the MOI if the children and teacher speak Sinama, but the Regional language will be MOI if that is what the teacher speaks (P1, p. 10). The third informant understood that all children’s L1 should be the MOI until Grade 3, according to the law, and teachers should be assigned based on language proficiency so they can teach in the children’s L1 (P19, pp. 29–31).

Their mixed understanding of the law reflects the mixed rhetoric from the government and DepEd. As discussed in section 1.3, the original DepEd order pertaining to MTB-MLE states that students’ L1 or ‘mother tongue’ should be the MOI from Kindergarten through Grade 3 (K–3) (DepEd 2009), but the law later passed by Congress allowed ‘mother tongue’ to be defined as a Regional language for the purposes of implementation (Congress of the Philippines 2013). Furthermore, at the time of this study, DepEd only included 19 languages in their MTB-MLE implementation nationally (Sinama is not one of the 19). As a result, when MTB-MLE and the ‘mother tongue’ are discussed by DepEd in Davao City, they usually refer to Bisaya, which is the designated ‘mother tongue’ for implementation purposes.

Participants demonstrated understanding of the principles underlying MTB-MLE and expressed support for it, pointing out that children learn more easily when they can understand the teacher and learn to read quickly in their L1. However, they did not agree on whether the current policy affords Sama students that opportunity.

Key informants described the implementation of MTB-MLE at the local elementary school very similarly. Since the teachers are Bisayan and Bisaya is the designated ‘mother tongue’ for MTB-MLE in Davao, Bisaya is the oral MOI for K–3 and literacy is initially taught in Bisaya (P1, p. 10; P20, p. 31; P19, p. 34). Even in early grades, though, most print materials are in Filipino and English, with a small number of learning materials in Bisaya. Participants said teachers sometimes translate print materials into Bisaya orally, so Bisayan children can understand them (P1, p. 10; P20, p.31; P19, p. 34). One key informant noted that the Grade 1 teacher with Sama students tries to make lessons meaningful by asking children to supply equivalent words in Sinama for Bisayan key words used to teach the alphabet (P19, p. 35). This was the only reported instance of Sinama being used at the public school.

From Grade 4 onwards, the languages of instruction are Filipino and English, though Bisaya is used orally when students do not understand something (P19, pp. 31–34; P20, pp. 31–32). One participant expressed concern that students are not learning English early or well enough through MTB-MLE, compared with his experience as a student (P20, pp. 38–39). Concern over students not learning English well was a recurring theme, since English proficiency and reading in English are major academic difficulties for Sama children. Other participants, however, did not link difficulties with English to the shift towards MTB-MLE. Even the two key informants in college, who were educated under Bilingual Education (BE), said learning English was the most significant challenge they had overcome (P19, p. 56; P20, pp. 58–59).

Participants pointed out that implementation of MTB-MLE in their context is constrained by a lack of Sama teachers (P19, p. 29; P1, p. 10). One key informant identified this as a problem with how teachers are assigned by DepEd (P19, p. 30). She also reported that DepEd administrators had

9 Specific data extracts supporting the findings are cited in the following form: For key informant interviews, the participant number (Px) and page number in the transcript (p. x) are given. For participatory discussions, the discussion number (Dx) is noted.
encouraged her to finish school quickly because they need Sama teachers and would hire her (P19, p. 50).

The impact of the language barrier between Bisayan teachers and Sama students was raised often; students have difficulty understanding teachers and learning to read in a language they do not speak well (P20, pp. 41–47; D1; D2). Participants’ perspectives on how to address these issues are presented in section 4.5.

Sama students’ ability to understand instruction in Bisaya is directly related to their proficiency in Bisaya, which remains unclear from the data. As described in section 4.1, 32% of participants reported speaking in Bisaya to their children. In addition, participants report that most children learn Bisaya eventually. It is unclear, though, how proficient children are in Bisaya when they begin school, around age 6 or 7. Key informants noted that exposure to Bisaya mostly happens outside their community and young children mostly stay inside the community (P19, p. 28; P1, p. 16). Moreover, the difficulty students reportedly have understanding their Bisayan teachers suggests that young children are not proficient enough to learn new content through Bisaya.

4.4 What participants want children to know (Q2)

In relation to Question 2 (see section 1.6), participants considered at length what they hoped Sama children would learn. They reflected on how well children are currently learning and what could be done to improve the situation, if need be.

The complete list of what they want children to learn can be grouped into five categories, according to how they are taught, listed in table 2. (A complete list of participants’ responses by category is in Appendix F.)

Table 2. What participants want children to know

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<thead>
<tr>
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<th>1. Moral values and traditional ways</th>
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<td>2</td>
<td>2. Cultural and livelihood skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>3. Literacy</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>4. Second language acquisition</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>5. Skills for work outside the community</td>
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The findings related to each of these categories will be presented in turn.

4.4.1 Moral values and traditional ways

The first group includes what participants referred to as *addat tabi'at* and *usulan tagna’,* concepts that do not translate neatly into English, but are roughly equivalent to ‘morally correct behaviour’ and ‘traditional ways,’ respectively. They are learned through listening to *kamatto'ahanna*, which translates as their parents or elders in general.

In this domain, participants wanted children to learn how to treat others well, showing kindness to everyone and respect to their elders. They also valued personal discipline, understanding the importance of education and having a vision for the future as goals for their children’s development. Among the ‘traditional ways’ parents wanted children to learn were the cultural laws governing community practices, the history of the Sama, traditions surrounding marriage, and the Sinama language.

Participants were in consensus that children in the community are learning all of these things from the time they are very young and know them fully once they are grown (D1; D2; P19, p. 47; P20, p. 36; P1, p. 23). Participants said all children in their community learn to speak Sinama (though some of them
also learn Bisaya), and no one knew of a Sama child in the community unable to speak Sinama (P1, p. 8; P20, p. 26; P19, p. 28).

Although participants generally agreed children were learning these values well, some participants expressed a desire to see more children going to school and pointed to a lack of discipline or understanding about the benefits of education as contributing factors (P20, p. 23; P1, p. 24). It is also possible that children are learning these values about education, but other constraints or priorities keep them from going to school. This will be explored further in section 4.5.

4.4.2 Cultural and livelihood skills

The kapandayan (skills requiring expertise) that participants want children to know are learned within the community, by watching others and practicing. Participants included in this category cultural art forms, like mat-weaving, sewing, and making traditional music. Other skills participants wanted children to learn related to sustaining a household and earning income. Cultural norms dictate that these skills are heavily gendered, though there are exceptions. They wanted girls to learn to cook traditional food and do household chores. They wanted boys to learn to make fishing equipment, free-diving, and methods for fishing. One livelihood skill, gathering seafood from low-tide areas, is learned by both boys and girls.

Overall, participants agreed that those skills which are still a part of daily life for adults in the community are being learned by children. However, some traditional skills no longer practiced in this community are not being passed on to their children, including sailing, carving dugout canoes and playing traditional gong instruments. Participants had mixed views on the fact that children were not learning these skills. Most felt that they were no longer useful or important for children to learn, but a few wanted them to be resurrected and passed on (D2).

4.4.3 Literacy

Children learning to read and write is a goal parents repeatedly emphasised. Participants shared the viewpoint that no matter what children end up doing in life, literacy is useful (D2). In fact, it is one major reason they send children to school and some parents let children leave school once they have learned to read and write (P19, p. 26). Participants also believe Sama children should be taught to read in Sinama first, since there are sounds and symbols unique to Sinama and they learn to read more easily in Sinama than other languages (P19, p. 45; P20, p. 41; D1).

They reported that children going to school become literate for the most part, but children not in school or only in school for a short time do not learn to read and write (P19, p. 44; P1, p. 21). Some children are learning to read and write in Sinama at a community-based preschool, and elementary teachers reported to parents that upon starting school, those children learn to read in Bisaya more easily than other Sama students (P20, pp. 33–34, 39). Though Sama students eventually become literate if they persist in school, reading is one of the main struggles for them and some drop out because they find it too difficult (D2; P20, p. 25; P1, p. 5).

Although they are glad that children going to school are learning to read and write, participants expressed a desire to see more children going to school and for out-of-school children to learn to read and write as well.

4.4.4 Second language acquisition

Participants want children to be proficient in languages besides Sinama, including Bisaya, Filipino, and English. Perspectives were mixed on which languages are most important for children to learn, but there was consensus around how well children are learning each language.

Many participants articulated that English is necessary to succeed in higher levels of education and is useful for getting a job in the city (D1). One participant said speaking English means you will be known as ‘educated’ (D1). They believe that some school-going children are learning English, but not as
well as they would like, as it is the most difficult language for them to learn (D2; P20, p. 35). Out-of-
school children, meanwhile, are not learning English at all.

Other participants argued that Bisaya was more important because as the LWC in Davao City, it is 
more useful day-to-day. Additionally, they need Bisaya to succeed in elementary school since teachers 
speak Bisaya in the early grades (D1). While some children begin learning Bisaya from their parents or 
have early exposure outside the community, most children learn Bisaya at school, and those not in 
school are not learning it well (P19, pp. 39–41; D1). Of all the L2s, they believe children learn Bisaya the 
most easily because they have more exposure to Bisaya than other L2s (P19, p. 40).

4.4.5 Skills for work outside the community

Participants spoke often about wanting children to have jobs *mareya*, which means ‘inland’ and refers to 
work outside the Sama community, as opposed to the traditional ocean-based livelihoods common in the 
community. Some of the specific professions they mentioned included doctors, nurses, government 
workers and teachers (D1; D2). Participants believe that in order for children to achieve these goals, they 
must continue in school and graduate (P20, p. 48; P1, p. 24). As of 2018, there were not yet people from 
their community in professional jobs, though there were two college students who plan to become 
teachers (D2; P1, p. 24).

Underlying many of the participants’ hopes was the desire for children to succeed in school, so they 
might become literate, acquire L2s and be equipped for jobs outside the community. At the same time, 
lack of school participation among Sama children was an emergent theme in both participatory 
discussions. The findings related to this topic are discussed in the next section.

4.5 School participation (Q3)

Participants raised lack of school participation as a problem directly related to how they envision 
accomplishing their educational goals for their children, addressing Question 3 (see section 1.6). One key 
informant described lack of school participation as the ‘number one problem’ in their community (P19, 
p. 25). Participants also described a widespread problem of children leaving school partway through the 
day (D1; D2; P20, p. 22). The data reveals that problems with school participation encompass two 
distinct issues that share some characteristics. Namely, there are children enrolled in school who have 
erratic attendance, and children who are truly ‘out-of-school’ who have never enrolled or enrolled at one 
time but have dropped out.

In this section, I present findings regarding current levels of school participation (4.5.1), the stated 
reasons and underlying causes for lack of school participation (4.5.2), and participants’ suggestions to 
increase school participation (4.5.3).

4.5.1 Levels of school participation

Participants gave varying estimates of the number of children from their community attending 
elementary school, ranging from 30–100. According to one key informant, the MTB-MLE coordinator at 
the school said just over 100 Sama children are enrolled across all grades, which aligns with what I was 
personally told by the school administration in 2018 (P19, p. 22). However, without data about the total 
population of children in the community, it is impossible to say what proportion of children are going to 
school.

The data from sociolinguistic interviews show what proportion of the participants’ children were in 
school at the time of the study. Because this group of participants was not a scientifically representative 
sample, findings cannot be generalised to the entire community, but they provide context for 
participants’ views. The 20 participants interviewed named 62 offspring. Of those, 9 were not in school 
because they were considered ‘too young’ (ranging in age from 1–6 years). Another 28 were considered 
adults because they are married or above a certain age. The remaining 25 were school-age children. The
education experiences of the participants’ adult offspring\textsuperscript{10} (figure 4) make an interesting point of comparison with levels of school engagement among participants’ school-age children (figure 5).

![Figure 4](image)

**Figure 4. Education level of participants' adult offspring.**

![Figure 5](image)

**Figure 5. Education level of participants' school-age children.**

A comparison of these data sets suggests an encouraging picture of increasing school participation across generations. This interpretation is somewhat complicated because exact ages are not known for many children and Sama individuals are considered ‘adults’ once they are married, typically around age 15–18 (D2; P20, p. 27). Once married, they are expected to drop out of school to work (D2; P19, pp. 19,

\textsuperscript{10} This study included participants from multiple generations of the same families, so some of the adult offspring of participants are in fact participants themselves. As such, there is some overlap between this data and the data on the participants’ own education levels in figure 3.
Therefore, those considered ‘adults’ are less likely to still be in school by definition because they are already married, while an unmarried person of the same age would not necessarily be defined as an ‘adult.’ Even so, there are more school-age children enrolling in school initially than in years past, according to this data: 12 out of 28 (43%) adult offspring never enrolled while only 1 out of 25 (4%) school-age children never enrolled. Overall, I would conclude that initial enrolment may be increasing but drop-out is still a problem to some degree.

Participants also reported engagement in two community-based preschool programmes. Approximately 10–15 children attend a programme meeting outside the community (at a nearby convent) and taught by a community member in Sinama for about 2.5 hours per day (D2; P20, pp. 34–35, 64–65). Another 15–20 children attend a programme meeting inside the community, taught by another community member in Sinama and lasting 2 hours per day (D2; P19, pp. 60–64). Most children involved in these programmes are younger than school-age, but some are school-age and attend preschool because they are embarrassed to enrol in elementary school due to their advanced age (P19, p. 63).

4.5.2 Reasons for lack of school participation

A variety of reasons were discussed for low enrolment and high drop-out: preferring to work, marriage, lack of money, difficulties students face in school, preferring to play, and lack of discipline or vision for the future. Many children prefer work over going to school, and some parents also preferred for children to work, either to supplement family income or because they were married (P20, pp. 24–25; P19, pp. 23, 27; D2). Once Sama adolescents reach typical marriage age (15–18), they are encouraged to marry relatively quickly (P20, p. 43). Married men are expected to work, and once a couple has children, women’s options for education are constrained by the need to provide childcare and perform household duties (D2; P19, p. 27; P20, pp. 43–44). This shortens the window for Sama students’ education.

Many participants also spoke about school-age children who would rather stay home and play, indicating they were not developmentally ready for school (P1, p. 6; P20, pp. 23–24). Such children often begin school at age 7 or 8, rather than the typical starting age of 5, shortening the window for education even further.

Lack of money impacts school participation in multiple ways: a poor household is more likely to rely on children’s labour to supplement their income and they also struggle to afford the costs associated with school (D2). Participants described the regular, ongoing costs of sending a child to school (estimated at 1000 Php per week for secondary school, equivalent to 2–3 days’ wages), as well as the unpredictable costs of school projects (D2).

Participants cited a variety of academic difficulties that lead Sama students to drop out, including the language barrier with Bisayan teachers, difficulties learning in Filipino and English, and struggles with reading (P1, p. 5; P20, pp. 25, 43). Finally, some participants believe students are not motivated because there are few examples of successful Sama students to emulate (P19, p. 23; P1, p. 7). According to the participants, all these factors contribute to low initial enrolment and early drop-out.

They also discussed erratic school attendance, particularly children leaving class before the school day ends. Some of the same factors mentioned above are relevant, specifically children’s preference for play and lack of motivation to study. In addition, one key informant shared examples of Sama children encouraging each other to leave school early, without their parents’ knowledge or approval (P19, pp. 52–53). Finally, some participants connect this problem to the language barrier between teachers and students, suggesting children do not listen to or obey the teacher because they cannot understand her (D2). Table 3 summarises the key reasons for lack of school participation, according to participants.
Table 3. Reasons for lack of participation in school

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Contribute to Low Enrolment and Drop-Out</th>
<th>Contribute to Erratic Attendance</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prefer to work</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marriage/childcare</td>
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<td>Lack of money</td>
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<tr>
<td>Difficulties with language barrier, learning to read and write</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prefer to play/not developmentally ready</td>
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<tr>
<td>Children not motivated/lack role models</td>
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<tr>
<td>Peer influence</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Teacher lacks authority because of language barrier</td>
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</table>

4.5.3 How to increase school participation

Asked to reflect on how school participation could be increased, participants focused on changes to kids' behaviour and attitudes, and the parents' role in bringing about those changes. Many talked about parents' responsibility to ensure children go to school, saying parents should 'make them go', 'bribe them', 'physically take them to school', and discipline them if they do not go (P1, pp. 7, 24–25; P20, p. 23; P19, p. 27; D2). They also talked about the responsibility parents have to teach children the value of education and encourage them in their studies (P1, p. 6; P19, p. 57). One key informant believed parents could have an essential role in changing the cultural norms surrounding marriage by encouraging children to graduate from secondary school before getting married, as her parents encouraged her to do (P19, p. 26).

Participants suggested that as more Sama students reach higher levels of education, it will have a snowball effect on school participation because younger children will have role models to show them that Sama students can succeed and become professionals. Participants also recommended making formal school more appealing to children by providing school lunches (which has been effective in the community-based programmes), or adopting a half-day schedule for Sama students, which ends at midday, to make it better suited to the rhythms of life in the Sama community (P19, p. 61; P20, pp. 49–50).

Finally, participants coalesced around a proposed solution for the problem of children leaving school early. They suggested a parent volunteer be assigned to classes with Sama students to ‘watch over’ the students, help the teacher manage classroom behaviour, and keep Sama students from leaving school early. This idea sprang from the experience of a parent who occasionally sat in class to help her child adjust to the school environment. The teacher noticed that when the parent was present, Sama students did not attempt to leave the classroom prematurely (D2; P1, p. 27). The community leader approved this plan and suggested parents take turns volunteering (D2).

4.6 Getting to quality education (Q3)

Participants were happy with how well children are learning the knowledge and skills taught inside the community, values/traditional ways and cultural/livelihood skills (see section 4.4). As a result, they focused their discussions about improving children’s education on school, where Sama children face a language barrier in spite of the implementation of MTB-MLE. First, I describe their suggestions for
changes to be implemented in the community and then, the ways they believe MTB-MLE could be better implemented at the elementary school to meet their children’s needs.

4.6.1 Changes in the community

Participants believe children’s education could be improved by accessing financial and academic help from others, enriching home learning and expanding community-based schools. They discussed the role scholarships have played in improving children’s access to education in the past, particularly at the secondary and college level. Increasing financial assistance will be essential to increase the number of Sama students who graduate (P19, pp. 58–59; P20, pp. 56–57; D2). They also pointed to students’ need for academic tutoring, either from educated Sama community members or their classmates and teachers (P20, pp. 59, 61–62; P19, p. 17).

Participants believe learning at home, prior to starting school, would be greatly enriched if parents were literate (P19, p. 63; P20, pp. 67–68). Only 39% of participants were literate (see section 4.2), so increasing adult literacy in the community is one avenue to support children’s readiness for school. One key informant, who teaches at a community school, wants to teach adult literacy classes in the community, particularly for mothers (P19, p. 46, 66–67). Other participants suggested an ALS programme with Sinama as MOI could be beneficial for increasing adult literacy in the community (D2).

The two key informants teaching in community-based schools believe that continuing and expanding those programmes would better prepare Sama children for school, reducing drop-out related to academic struggles. Both community schools provide children an opportunity to develop a foundation in Sinama oral language, build their pre-literacy skills, and be introduced to L2s orally (P20, pp. 33–34; P19, pp. 63–34).

4.6.2 Changes at the elementary school

At the elementary school, the language barrier between Sama children and Bisayan teachers and the use of Bisayan as MOI concerned participants, so they discussed how to address the situation. The need for Sinama-speaking teachers was clear. One participant said if the community sends more Sama kids to school, there could be more Sama teachers in time, and he believed scholarships for Sama college students would accelerate that (P20, p. 48, 68). In the meantime, he suggested DepEd assign qualified Sama teachers from other parts of the Philippines to Davao City (P20, p. 48). Another key informant recommended that current Bisayan teachers learn Sinama, citing a Bisayan teacher who had done so in the past (P19, pp. 50–51).

Other participants suggested that the parent volunteering in class to prevent students from leaving school early (see section 4.5.3) could act as a bilingual interpreter or bilingual teacher’s assistant, with some training (D2). They proposed that parents should be on a rotation in this role to allow time for their family responsibilities and, ideally, they should be paid (D2).

Participants were prompted to consider whether it would be best for children to continue in multilingual classes, with a mixture of Sama and Bisayan students, or if it would be preferable to organise sections by language. While they noted some advantages to organising sections by language, they all placed greater value on the advantages of mixed classes (P20, p. 53). Namely, being in class with Bisayan students helps Sama children to learn Bisaya, to develop cross-cultural friendships, and to learn how to conduct themselves in wider society (P19, p. 54; P20, p. 53; P1, p. 27). In terms of how teachers should manage a multilingual class, they proposed different methods, all of which involved using both Bisaya and Sinama as MOI in the classroom, which would require either a bilingual teacher or a bilingual teaching team (P20, pp. 50, 54).

Thus, participants’ ideal vision of MTB-MLE at the local elementary school involves mixed classes of Sama and Bisayan students in which both L1s, Sinama and Bisaya, are employed as MOI with either a bilingual teacher, a bilingual teaching team with one Bisayan and one Sama teacher, or a Bisayan teacher assisted by a Sama community member.

In the next chapter, I discuss and analyse these findings in relation to relevant academic literature and make recommendations based on the results.
5 Discussion and Recommendations

In this chapter, I discuss how the findings of this study relate to existing theory and research, where they echo or provide context for established findings, how they shed new light on the subject and what recommendations can be made for improving education in the Sama community, which may be relevant for other NDL communities situated in multilingual cities. In section 5.1, I explore what the findings reveal about participants’ underlying attitudes towards language through the framework of orientations to language planning. Then, I consider the findings related to school participation in section 5.2, and the parents’ preoccupation with children learning English in section 5.3. In section 5.4, the community’s vision for strong implementation of MTB-MLE in their context is considered and in section 5.5, I focus on the community’s role in children’s education. Finally, in section 5.6, I summarise the recommendations to be drawn from this study.

5.1 The community’s orientations to language planning

As discussed in section 2.3, Ruíz’s (1984) framework of three ‘orientations’ is useful for analysing the values about language held by various stakeholders of MLE programmes (Hult and Hornberger 2016:42). The stated views and goals of stakeholders can be interpreted to reveal an underlying language-as-problem, language-as-right or language-as-resource orientation. In this study, some of the community’s goals for children’s education point toward a language-as-resource orientation on the surface, but on closer inspection, their description of ideal outcomes for the MTB-MLE programme reveal a deeper language-as-problem orientation.

Participants expressed a desire for children to become multilingual (in Bisaya, Filipino and English), while maintaining and valuing their own language and cultural practices. These goals reflect a language-as-resource mentality, supporting MLE that works toward additive multilingualism (Hult and Hornberger 2016:41). However, on deeper analysis, participants’ responses revealed that they do not consider the MTB-MLE programme to have a role in the continuing development of children’s L1 or the maintenance of their cultural identity. For instance, while listing the languages they wanted children to learn, participants failed to mention Sinama until they were prompted by the facilitator with the question, ‘What about Sinama?’ (D1). Their responses included statements like ‘They already know it really,’ and ‘Of course!’ Although they want their children to speak Sinama, it did not come to mind when they were considering what children should learn, which suggests they consider it a given that children will learn it, not something that their education should develop further.

Additionally, participants praised the MTB-MLE policy primarily for its utility to solve the language barrier ‘problem’ that children face, pointing out that being taught in the L1 will increase students’ level of understanding and help them learn to read more easily. Several participants also emphasised a desire for their children to learn Bisaya from their Bisayan classmates, so they are able to assimilate into the wider society (P19, p. 6, 55; D1). In their view, culture and language learning are only necessary and beneficial for the NDL-speaking students. While they see their language and culture as personal and community resources to pass on to their children, they do not view them as societal resources of value to those outside their community. This perspective reflects a language-as-problem orientation, which emphasises what NDL students lack and prioritises their transition to the DL (Hult and Hornberger 2016:34).

Although Sama participants want their children to be multilingual, with fluency in their own language and the languages that give access to educational and vocational opportunities outside their community, their attitudes towards languages-in-education reflect the same fundamental language-as-problem orientation that underlies the ‘early-exit’ transitional model of MTB-MLE being implemented by DepEd (see section 2.3). Prioritising students’ acquisition of Bisaya and the transition to Bisaya as MOI will likely lead to using their L1 in education for a very short period of time. Monje et al. (2019:36) found similar views were prevalent among parents elsewhere in the Philippines, who did not see the value of teaching learners’ L1 beyond grade 3.
Although research shows that using learners’ L1 in the early years of school would be more advantageous to Sama learners than ignoring their L1 altogether, it is a weak approach that does not help students develop a strong foundation in the L1 nor adequate proficiency in the L2 to be prepared for the transition to learning through the L2 as MOI (Benson 2016:6). And in the case of Sama students, after transitioning to learning in their L2 (Bisaya), they make other transitions in quick succession when English and Filipino become the MOI in grade 4.

Students have been shown to be much more successful when they are allowed to learn through their L1 beyond the first few years of elementary school (Benson 2016:6). Even continuing the study of L1 as a subject through the end of elementary school can be a significant improvement over early-exit models, helping learners to continue developing and maintaining their L1 literacy skills, which will easily transfer to other languages (Benson 2016:6; Cummins 2009:25). At present, however, neither DepEd policymakers nor the Sama community appear to hold the language-as-resource orientation that would lead to advocacy and support for a late-exit model of MLE for Sama students. If advocates for Sama students (like myself) wish to see a model of MLE implemented that does not prioritise transition to Bisaya over the continued development of students’ skills in Sinama, advocacy and awareness-raising within the Sama community will be necessary, along with efforts to persuade DepEd educators of the benefits and feasibility of such a programme.

5.2 School participation

The results of this study showed that community members consider lack of school participation to be a significant issue affecting their children’s education, which corroborates reports from local teachers and school administrators, as well as findings from country-wide research (see section 2.4.3). The ‘myth of parental indifference’, widespread among local educators, but disproven by empirical research, is further refuted by the findings in this study (UNICEF 2013:38). Sama participants were united in their desire for children in the community to attend school, linking success in school with several goals they have for children, like becoming literate and getting jobs outside their community. As Albert et al. (2012) found to be true elsewhere in the Philippines, Sama parents value education highly, but poverty limits their ability to ensure children enrol and persevere in school, either because they struggle to afford the costs associated with school or because financial pressures lead to children, especially boys, entering the workforce (UNESCO 2018:6). Low achievement in school is another risk factor for drop-out in the Philippines, according to UNICEF (2013:20), and participants similarly reported that academic struggles, especially due to the language barrier, cause some Sama children to drop out.

Participants also raised marriage as a factor affecting school drop-out for both boys and girls. Although early marriage is not mentioned in recent studies focused on out-of-school children in the Philippines, its effect on school participation is widely attested elsewhere in the world. Nguyen and Wodon (2012) point out that it is difficult to assess the nature of its impact because education and marriage decisions are often made jointly. However, statistical analyses have shown in many parts of the world that delaying marriage is associated with increased schooling and a higher likelihood of literacy, particularly for girls (Nguyen and Wodon 2012). It was outside the scope of this study to thoroughly investigate how marriage and education decisions are made by Sama families, but further research into this issue should be conducted since it was identified by the community as a factor in school participation.

Many of the suggestions participants made for increasing school participation echoed experts’ recommendations in the literature. Parents believe that they themselves have the primary responsibility for ensuring children go to school (UNICEF 2013:33). Education grants, financial assistance for poor families and school feeding programs were also raised by participants as potential methods for increasing school participation, all of which have proven effective to varying degrees elsewhere in the Philippines (UNICEF 2013:62, 64–65).

UNICEF (2013:63) found that many early grade teachers in the Philippines use developmentally inappropriate teaching strategies and hypothesised that late enrolment was partly related to unrealistic expectations for young children in the classroom. Participants in this study frequently mentioned children’s preference for play over going to school, among schoolchildren who were leaving midway
through the day and also among children who were old enough to enrol but considered by their parents ‘not yet ready’ for school. Sama children who struggle to stay in school for the whole day and those who are uninterested in starting school at age 5 or 6 may be responding to a classroom environment and teaching style that is not developmentally appropriate for young children, who learn best through play and interaction. To address this issue, teachers should be trained in child development and appropriate teaching strategies, so that their approach and expectations are suitable.

The problems of late enrolment and school drop-out also raise the issue of school readiness. Although participants did not explicitly make the connection between preschool and elementary school participation, they did report that children who had participated in one of the community-based preschool programmes performed better academically in grade 1. This is not surprising because improved academic achievement has been shown by many studies to be a benefit of early childhood education (ECE) (Manji 2018:5). Other proven benefits of quality ECE programmes include improved school readiness, timely enrolment in primary education, and reduced drop-out rates (Manji 2018:5). It is likely, therefore, that increasing children’s participation in the existing community-based ECE programmes and ensuring they provide high quality instruction would increase on-time enrolment in elementary school and reduce drop-out.

Participants’ plan to involve community volunteers in managing classroom behaviour and discouraging students from leaving school early is interesting. I could not find research literature documenting anything similar, but it is worthwhile for the community to try their approach and test its effectiveness, hopefully with the support and cooperation of teachers and school administrators. Although it may be unconventional, it has the advantage of coming from the Sama community and as Young (2017:113) points out, the involvement of NDL communities in planning how to adapt MLE to their local context will add to the quality and sustainability of the programme. In fact, an investigation into the best practices in MTB-MLE in ‘exemplar schools’ in the Philippines found that a context-informed, localised approach was something all the exemplary schools shared (Metila et al. 2017:21).

Because participants identified nonparticipation in school as a significant issue affecting their children’s education, planning for the implementation of MTB-MLE in this context and the education of Sama children in general must include measures to increase school participation and retention. These could include helping Sama families access scholarships and other financial assistance, making early grade teaching methods more developmentally appropriate, expanding participation in ECE to increase school readiness, and involving Sama parents in the classroom to ensure consistent attendance. It was also important to participants that the educational needs of students who have already dropped out (and are unlikely to re-enrol) are met. This could involve community-based approaches (like the adult literacy classes that one key informant hopes to teach) or Sinama-medium ALS adult education programmes, as other participants suggested.

5.3 Parents’ emphasis on English

Throughout the data, parents’ desire for children to learn English and their belief that educational success depends on English proficiency were prominent themes. One participant expressed concern that children are not learning English well through MTB-MLE, although Sama students educated under BE also reported experiencing difficulty with English. This joins a large body of evidence that NDL-speaking parents equate knowing English with being educated and having opportunity, even in places where that ideology may perpetuate inequalities that disadvantage their own children (Tupas 2015; Mahboob and Cruz 2013; Nyaga 2013).

Research shows that strong MTB-MLE programmes can actually help students learn English better in the long run, although they spend less time using English as MOI (Walter and Dekker 2011:678). In fact, a 2017 study in the Philippines found that the development of strong L1 reading skills through MTB-MLE predicted higher achievement in Filipino and English (EDC 2017:ix).

However, there are a variety of reasons why MTB-MLE might not live up to the promise of improving L2 acquisition and there is potential for backlash against MTB-MLE in the Sama community (and indeed, across the Philippines) if it is judged to be ineffective at teaching children English. Unfortunately, a study on English language teaching and bridging concluded that the benefits of MTB-
MLE for English language learning have not been fully realised in the Philippines (Perfecto 2020:23). The author attributes this to the move to an early-exit model of MLE and a lack of guidance for teachers regarding bridging (Perfecto 2020:24).

In the case of the Kana’an community, English acquisition may not improve with the implementation of MTB-MLE unless instruction is provided in Sinama and Sama students can develop a strong foundation in their L1. Otherwise, the programme will not be truly L1-based for Sama students and will instead be a weak, early-exit model of MLE, which is unlikely to lead to good outcomes for L2 acquisition or any other indicator (see section 5.1). Researchers in the southern Philippines have also observed that the methods for teaching English as an L2 have not changed with the shift from BE to MTB-MLE. Unless more pedagogically sound L2 teaching methods are adopted, MTB-MLE will not facilitate better learning of English than BE (de los Reyes 2018:2). In order for MTB-MLE to successfully help Sama children learn English, thereby fulfilling an important goal the community has expressed, plans must be made to address both the need for sufficient instruction to build a strong foundation in their L1 and to train teachers in effective pedagogy for L2 instruction in English.

5.4 Implementing MTB-MLE in their multilingual context

Participants identified the lack of Sama teachers as a significant obstacle for MTB-MLE and proposed methods to address it, all strategies which have also been put forward in the literature by researchers and practitioners. These include supporting current Sama students so they will eventually graduate and become teachers, helping Bisayan teachers learn Sinama, and parents or community members acting as bilingual interpreters or assistant teachers (Benson 2017:105; Benson and Young 2016:4). The final option is perhaps the most practical in the short-term and was favoured by the participants.

It would require a close partnership between school administrators, teachers and the community, as well as training, mentoring and well-defined roles for the teachers and interpreters/assistant teachers to work together effectively as a team. The most recent DepEd guidelines for MTB-MLE implementation provide explicit permission for parents or community volunteers to take on this role in situations where teachers who speak the learners’ L1 are not available (DepEd 2019:122, 131).

Although community members could volunteer, participants believed that in order for it to be sustainable, they should be paid. Elsewhere in the Philippines, assistant teachers’ salaries have been funded by LGUs, which is also what the DepEd guidelines recommend (DepEd 2019:124). The school’s operating budget or DepEd’s IP education programme might be additional sources of funding. A programme that took a similar approach to educating NDL children in Thailand found that paying local assistant teachers a salary high enough to retain them was a challenge that threatened the sustainability of the programme long-term (Dooley 2013:29, 44).

However, as participants pointed out, such an approach would only need to be carried out for a limited time, until enough Sama students have graduated to produce a crop of Sama teachers. If they implemented this plan with Sama community members acting as interpreters or assistant teachers, it could be an expansion of the community’s plan to enlist parent volunteers to keep children from leaving school early. With training, the assistant teachers could help manage Sama student behaviour and work with the Bisayan teacher to deliver bilingual instruction to the students.

DepEd (2019:129) allows for the possibility of sectioning classes according to learners’ L1 at linguistically diverse schools. However, participants showed a strong preference for classes to remain linguistically mixed, rather than organising them by language, arguing as Nolasco (2015) did that classes separated by language could be discriminatory or segregationist and that children would benefit from multilingual interaction in the classroom. They believe children’s language learning will be enhanced as they negotiate meaning with their peers while working in pairs or groups, although they could work in groups organised by L1 for certain activities as well (Nolasco 2015). Metila et al. (2017:20) observed both of these strategies in use among successful MTB-MLE schools with linguistically diverse populations.

As far as MOI, the participants believe that both Bisaya and Sinama should be used as MOI with a mixed group of students. They were not certain of the strategies teachers might use to teach bilingually. Perhaps Benson and Young’s (2016:10, 12) suggestion to incorporate principles from the Integrated
Plurilingual Curriculum would be appropriate: drawing on the students’ existing linguistic resources, communicating strategically in both languages, and comparing and contrasting languages could all be practiced in something like a two-way immersion programme. This would require significant training and preparation for the teachers or teaching teams (if assistant teachers from the community are to be utilised). It would also require better data about children’s language proficiencies as they start school, to understand what linguistic resources they bring with them.

At Matina Aplaya Elementary School, one or more sections in each grade could be designated multilingual, combining both Sama and Bisayan learners, with a Bisayan teacher assisted by a Sama assistant teacher (or, in future, taught by a qualified, multilingual Sama teacher). The bilingual teaching could begin with kindergarten and be slowly extended into higher grades incrementally. Implementing MTB-MLE in this way would likely raise several challenges that could only be addressed with considerable planning and cooperation between the Sama community, the school and the other communities in the school’s catchment area. The need for training and coaching teachers in bilingual teaching methods has already been mentioned.

Additionally, as participants in this study pointed out, the MOI and languages of literacy are constrained not just by the teacher’s lack of language proficiency, but also by the availability of learning materials, literature and textbooks in the relevant languages. A two-way immersion programme would require all types of materials in Sinama and Bisaya, along with bilingual materials. The existing MTB-MLE curriculum would also need to be adapted significantly and new lesson plans written in the appropriate languages. Finally, the most difficult hurdle might be getting support from Bisayan parents and the wider community for some Bisayan children to be educated in a two-way immersion programme with the goal of gaining proficiency and literacy in both Sinama and Bisaya.

If a two-way immersion programme could be developed and implemented for K–3, the years when DepEd policy calls for learners’ L1 as MOI, with the goal of a diverse student body, growing in proficiency in both Bisaya and Sinama, with increasing multicultural understanding and awareness, it would be a significant step towards and even beyond the vision Sama participants articulated for their children’s education.

5.5 Greater role for parents and community

Participants emphasised the role of parents and the community in children’s education across several topics. They believe that issues with school participation (like children leaving class early) and the language barrier between students and teachers would be best addressed through parent involvement in the classroom. NDL parents and communities also have a crucial part to play in developing L1 materials and helping DL teachers to adapt and enrich the curriculum to be culturally appropriate for NDL students (Young 2017:111). If Sinama is to be used as MOI in school as participants proposed (see section 5.4), then the production of a large quantity of materials in Sinama as well as bilingual materials in Sinama and Bisaya will be necessary and community involvement will be key.

To reach their goals for children’s education, increased partnership between the Sama community and the elementary school is needed for the purposes of planning, materials development and programme implementation. It would be advisable for the community to consider how to organise their involvement with the school, perhaps through the formation of a school management committee or a mother-tongue language association. The same committee or association could take a leading role in carrying forward the other changes participants hope to make within their community to further education, like supporting the community-based ECE programmes and overseeing an adult literacy class. There is a community-based organisation (CBO) that has formed in recent years, with help from a local NGO, to oversee development projects in the community. That CBO may be well-positioned to lead education efforts, too, although community leaders and members themselves must decide the best way to organise themselves.
5.6 Summary of recommendations

In this section, I summarise the recommendations stemming from the findings of this study. Because the results reveal a language-as-problem orientation among participants, the Sama community is less likely at present to advocate for their L1 to play a stronger role in their children’s education, focusing instead on the transition to Bisaya and assimilation into Bisayan culture and ultimately undermining their own goals for their children. If the weakened, early-exit model of MTB-MLE being implemented presently by DepEd is to be challenged, advocacy must take place both in the Sama community and with DepEd to raise awareness about the positive outcomes for students who are given the opportunity to learn in their L1 for as long as possible.

A variety of measures that were suggested by participants could be implemented to increase school participation among Sama students, such as helping poorer families access financial assistance or scholarships, training teachers to use developmentally-appropriate pedagogy in early grades, expanding Sama children’s participation in ECE, involving Sama parents in the classroom (as volunteers or perhaps interpreters/assistant teachers) to help manage student behaviour and ensure consistent attendance, and finally, providing opportunities for adult education, especially to develop literacy in Sinama. As interventions are implemented, their impact on school participation should be carefully monitored and evaluated.

To ensure Sama children learn English well, students should be given the opportunity to develop a strong foundation of linguistic competence in Sinama and teachers should be trained in sound, research-based methods for teaching English as a second language.

Implementing MTB-MLE in a way that meets the needs of Sama learners will require having teachers in the classroom who speak Sinama. In the short-term, this could be accomplished by hiring Sama parents or community members to work as interpreters or assistant teachers alongside the qualified Bisayan teachers. For the long-term, Sama students from the community should be supported and encouraged to graduate from college and qualify as teachers. Then, every effort should be made by DepEd to hire and assign them to the local school serving their community. Participants want Sama students to be together with Bisayan classmates in diverse classes, where both Bisaya and Sinama are used as MOI. Participants did not specify how the instruction should be carried out, but one possible plan was laid out in this chapter to implement a two-way immersion programme in some of the K–3 classes.

Finally, given participants’ desire for Sama parents and the community to be involved in the school in new ways, the community should develop a mechanism for organising their ongoing partnership with the school, whether by forming a new committee or association for that specific purpose or asking the existing CBO to take on that role.

In the next chapter, I will summarise the outcomes of this study, its limitations, and some directions for future research to conclude this paper.
Conclusion

This study sought to illuminate perspectives from Sama community members about the language-in-education policies affecting their children, their goals for children’s education and how they envision those goals being accomplished. In this chapter, I summarise the findings and recommendations resulting from this study, discuss some of its limitations, and explore directions for future research.

6.1 Summary of key findings

Participants demonstrated a fairly accurate understanding of the current language-in-education policies, except regarding how those policies relate to the use of Sinama in school. (It is allowed as MOI in K–3, if the community wants it.) (See sections 1.3–1.4). This confusion reflects the way rhetoric from DepEd confuses the term ‘mother tongue’, using it sometimes to refer to a student’s L1 and other times to an LWC designated as MOI in a particular area, such as Bisaya in Davao City.

This study revealed a variety of traditional values, skills and practices taught within the community that Sama parents want children to learn, and they are currently learning well. These findings offer a valuable starting point for contextualising the national curriculum to be culturally relevant for Sama learners, which is one of the stated goals of DepEd’s IP education programme (DepEd 2011a:4). Sama learners would benefit if new concepts were taught by building on what children already know (DepEd 2011a:4). For instance, math lessons could be designed around boat-building, or science curriculum could incorporate the wide variety of marine life Sama children are familiar with.

This study also discovered what community members want children to learn in school: literacy, additional languages (including Bisaya, Filipino and especially English), and the skills and knowledge needed to get jobs outside the community. They believe children are learning these skill sets fairly well, if they enrol and persevere in school. However, parents expressed concern that low enrolment and erratic attendance at school will hinder Sama children from learning the literacy, languages and skills they need. Based on quantitative data gathered in this study, initial enrolment in school appears to have increased compared with previous generations, although the picture is complicated somewhat by how early marriage impacts education decisions.

School drop-out and erratic attendance continue to be problems, however, and a number of potential interventions were suggested by participants, many of which are supported in the literature. Possible interventions include parents taking responsibility for children’s attendance, the school adapting its schedule to fit the community’s daily rhythms, developmentally-appropriate teaching strategies in the early grades, financial support for families of students, and parent involvement in the classroom to keep children from leaving class early (UNICEF 2013; Albert et al. 2012).

This study analysed how participants envision accomplishing their goals for children’s education, in light of relevant research in the field, and made recommendations for changes that could be made inside the community and at the local elementary school. Within the community, improving adult literacy rates (only 39% of participants reported being literate themselves) and expanding and enriching community-based ECE programmes were changes the community hoped to make. Recent research affirms both of these as beneficial for increasing school participation, helping children build a stronger foundation in their L1, and developing pre-literacy skills before starting school (Manji 2018; Albert et al. 2012).

The findings also included the outlines of how MTB-MLE could be implemented at the elementary school to fulfil participants’ goals. Parents believe that Sama children would be best served in linguistically-mixed classes with instruction in both Sinama and Bisaya, so they can better acquire Bisaya as an L2 through interaction with peers and to promote greater inter-cultural understanding between Bisayan and Sama students (Nolasco 2015). In the immediate term, Sama community members could assist Bisayan teachers as bilingual interpreters or assistant teachers, if funding could be secured (Benson and Young 2016). In the long-term, classes could be taught by bilingual Sama teachers given the necessary support to graduate and qualify as teachers, who have been hired and appropriately assigned by DepEd (Benson 2017). Either way, teachers or teaching teams would require training in bilingual...
teaching methods and strategies for managing linguistically diverse groups of students, as well as bilingual curriculum, lesson plans and teaching-learning materials (Benson and Young 2016; Nyaga 2013).

Analysis of participants’ responses revealed an underlying language-as-problem orientation and a strong desire among parents for children to learn English, both of which can lead stakeholders to prioritise early transition to using English or other LWCs as MOI (Hult and Hornberger 2016; Mahboob and Cruz 2013). Early exit from the L1 weakens MTB-MLE, not allowing an opportunity for learners to develop a strong foundation in their L1 before transition and paradoxically, undermining their acquisition of L2s, like English (Benson 2016; Heugh 2011; Walter and Dekker 2011; Malone and Paraide 2011; Cummins 2009; Alidou et al. 2006). Therefore, to ensure strong implementation of MTB-MLE for Sama learners, advocacy and awareness-raising are necessary with DepEd and in the Sama community to help stakeholders understand how a strong foundation and initial literacy in the L1 benefits students in the long-term, including in their acquisition of English and other L2s (EDC 2017:ix; Gove and Cvelich 2011:45).

6.2 Limitations and directions for further research

Some limitations impacting this study have been mentioned already, including scheduling issues and technical difficulties with data collection. I was unable to gather sociolinguistic data from two participants and I was only able to conduct a key informant interview with one of the two community leaders (see section 3.6). The technical difficulties made it impossible to transcribe portions of the first participatory discussion (see section 4.1). I was able to reconstruct the content of missing portions from my notes, but I did not capture the participants’ exact words.

One potential limitation of using participatory methods is the risk that power relationships between participants will suppress or distort the participation of the less powerful (see section 3.4.2.2). In the participatory discussions, I observed participants of all social groups (men and women, more and less educated, older and younger, etc…) actively participating and willing to voice opposing viewpoints. In D2, however, the suggestion that community members act as classroom interpreters or assistant teachers was taken up vigorously after the community leader advocated for it. It is possible that this particular idea came to the forefront because other participants were hesitant to raise concerns about it after a leader had endorsed it. To determine if that was the case and perhaps explore more thoroughly potential drawbacks of this plan, further discussions could be conducted with different groups of community members without the community leader present.

The identity of the researcher and facilitators/interpreters who assisted with data collection introduced another limitation to this study. Many participants were aware of our prior support for developing reading materials in Sinama and advocacy for Sama children. Furthermore, I know some participants personally and I have expressed my own views about MTB-MLE and L1 literacy in conversation with them in the past. Although every effort was made not to introduce bias into the facilitation of data collection, participants aware of our views may have tailored their responses to avoid expressing opinions we might disagree with. Ideally, future research on this topic would be conducted by a neutral party, perhaps a member of the community, although any facilitator will introduce bias of some kind.

Another limitation of this study is the reliance on self-reported data, particularly to assess participants’ language proficiency and literacy levels and the degree of school participation in the community. Participants may not be accurately estimating their own L2 proficiency or literacy level or may have unconsciously altered their self-representation to save face with the researcher, who they know to be highly educated. Furthermore, because the participants involved in this study were relatively few and did not constitute a scientifically representative sample, the quantitative data cannot be extrapolated to describe the community as a whole.

Future research should seek to develop a more comprehensive and nuanced picture of literacy levels, language proficiencies and school participation in the community using objective measures like direct observation and assessments. Ideally, data should be gathered from the entire community or a larger, carefully chosen representative sample. For the purposes of education planning, it is especially
important to probe the finding of this study that more children are being raised bilingually in Sinama and Bisaya. Children’s language proficiencies should be assessed, especially at the age when they typically begin school, to determine what linguistic resources they bring to school.

The relationship between typical marriage age, cultural norms around marriage and how families make educational decisions should be investigated further to develop appropriate interventions to increase school participation and reduce drop-out as a result of early marriage. How and why families make decisions about school participation and the nature of poverty-related constraints on school engagement should also be researched in greater depth. Although that was not originally a focus of this study, it emerged as a topic of importance to participants directly related to their educational goals for their children.

Having explored the implementation of MTB-MLE for Sama children from the perspective of parents and Sama community members, it would be interesting to investigate it from the perspective of other stakeholders, such as Sama students, local elementary teachers, DepEd administrators, and the Bisayan community (especially to determine attitudes toward the two-way immersion classes proposed in this study). Furthermore, as MTB-MLE is implemented, robust data should be collected on students’ educational outcomes, with a baseline for comparison.

In order to determine how and whether findings from this study are relevant for other Sama communities or NDL communities situated in multilingual cities, it would be necessary to replicate this research in other, similar communities. It would also be interesting to conduct similar research in Sama communities that have higher or lower levels of education, literacy and school engagement for the sake of comparison.

6.3 Conclusion

The perspectives and priorities of parents and community members in the Sama community should be a key component of planning for MTB-MLE implementation in their context. The findings of this study provide a starting point for a collaborative partnership between DepEd educators, parents, children and other stakeholders to address the particular challenges for implementing MTB-MLE for Sama learners in a multilingual context and to provide quality education for Sama children that aligns with the priorities and goals of the Sama community.
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<th></th>
<th>SINAMA (Language Used for Facilitation)</th>
<th>ENGLISH (Translation)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Ai na pa'in saga kabilahianta pinata'u atawa pinasayu ma saga anaktam bang sigām paheya? Ai saga ba'an an addat tabi'at maka pangita'u atawa kapandayan kabilahianta ma anakta bo' sigām makabuwanan kabantugan atawa pahala' ma matto'a sigām? Amikilan kita bang ai saga kapandayan, addat tabi'at maka saga pangita'u, ubus gudlista ma dakayu' katas, paluwahanna saga kapandayan, ubus he' pikitta ma l'ppus.</td>
<td>What kinds of things do we want our children to learn or become aware of as they grow up? What kinds of values, knowledge and skills do we want them to have so that they will make us, as their parents, proud and blessed? Let's think of the skills, values and knowledge we want them to have, then we'll draw each one on a piece of paper, then we'll stick them to this Styrofoam.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Aniya' gi' saga ma kahinangan kamatto'a han atawa bubuwahan tagna kabilahianta pamaentom saga anakta atawa masi subay pinagbowa' e' sigām? Hinangta dakayu' paluwahan, ginudlis atawa nikulis.</td>
<td>Are there other traditional or cultural skills or art forms that we want to be remembered or that we want to pass down to our children? We’ll make a drawing for each one.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Buwattina'an, subay tugila'ta bang Bahasa ai usalta bo' kapagsuli-sulihanta ya ba'an an kapandayan, pangita'u maka addat tabi'at ma patta'-patta' bay talukis he tam. Ai na pa'in bahasa usalta atawa gunata pamasayuta ma saga anakta/bang pabissalahanta saga bay tugila'ta hē? Ai saga walna' usalta ma ____?</td>
<td>Now, let's talk about which language we use to talk about or do or teach each of the things in these pictures – the values, knowledge and skills. What are all the different languages that we use to talk to children and that are used to teach them? Which colour of string should we use for the language ______?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Buwattina'an, pagsuli-sulihanta/pagbissalahanta ya ba'an an tugila'ta hē' bang buwattingga sigām anganaraniya; labay saga min pagbassahan, atawa pangalehan, atawa pangnda'an, atawa kahinangan?</td>
<td>Now, let's talk about the various ways that our children learn these things: by reading, listening, watching or doing? We will draw symbols on each paper to represent how we believe our children learn those things – a book, an ear, an eye and a hand.</td>
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## Appendix B: Facilitation Script for Participatory Discussion #2

<table>
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<th>SINAMA (Language Used for Facilitation)</th>
<th>ENGLISH (Translation)</th>
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</table>
| 1 | Buwattina'an, tugila'ta to'ongan bang ai saga kahinangan, pangita'u maka kapandayan ya bay tapamandu' ma saga anakta masi na pa'in pamandu' maka ai saga halam bay tapamandu' ma sigām. (Use red and green stickers; ask follow-up questions to prompt discussion.)  
• Ai bay tahinangta na, beya' na asak ma pagaddattantam?  
• Ai lagi' alam bay tahinang/tapamandu' ma kita/ma saga kanakantam? | [Begin by reviewing the outputs from Day 1, now organized by the language used to do/talk about/teach them.]  
Now, let’s decide which of these skills, knowledge and values our children are currently learning well and which ones they are not learning.  
(Use red and green stickers; ask follow-up questions to prompt discussion.)  
• What could be done differently so that our children will learn this thing well? |
| 2 | Tasayu kami aniya' saga onde' iskul min kaumanbi angiskul ma Matina Aplaya Elementary School. Bilahi kami anayu isāb bang tasayubi pila/hekana saga angiskul? Aniya' saga palabi min tonga' heka anak ma kauman? Atawa alam angabut katonga' saga heka min kauman? | We have talked about the fact that there are many children from your community attending Matina Aplaya Elementary School. We would like to know if you have an idea of how many of the school-age children in the community are attending school? Are more than half of the children in the community going? Less than half? |
| 3 | Aniya' gi' saddi iskul/panganaran e' saga kaonde'an, saddi min Matina Aplaya E.S.? | Are there other types of schools or learning centres that children are going to, apart from Matina Aplaya E.S.? |
| 4 | Buwattingga saga anak/onde alam gibay angiskul? Angay sigām alam angiskul? Ai to'ongan bang ma ka'am? | What about the children who do not attend school at all? What are the reasons that they don’t go to school? How does it make you feel/what do you think about it? |
### Appendix C: Structured Sociolinguistic Interview Script

| **SINAMA**  
(Language Used for Interview) | **ENGLISH**  
(Translation) |
<table>
<thead>
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</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Sai ōnu? / Ai ōnu?</td>
<td>What is your name?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Kata'uwanu pila umulnu atawa waktu/timpu ai kapanganakan ka'a?</td>
<td>Do you know how old you are or around what time you were born?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Aniya' h'llanu/h'nda'nu? Sai ōnna?</td>
<td>Are you married? What is your spouse’s name?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) Aniya' anaknu?</td>
<td>Do you have children?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Pilaheka anaknu? Sai ōnna?</td>
<td>How many? What are their names?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Kata'uwanu pila umul sigām atawa pagumulan sigām?</td>
<td>Do you know how old they are?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. (Specific follow-up questions to assess the schooling situations of each of the kids – have they/do they attend school? How many years? Where?)</td>
<td>Which children are in school? Where? For how long? Which are not in school? Have they ever been (to school)? If they left school, why? What are they doing now? Etc…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Bang kam magsuli-suli maka amissalahan anaknu, ai h'lling pagusalbi mareyom luma'?</td>
<td>When you talk to your children, what language(s) do you use inside the home?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Bang ka magsuli-suli ma h'nda'nu/h'llanu, ai h'lling pagusalnu?</td>
<td>When you talk to your spouse, what language(s) do you use?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) Aniya' usahanu?</td>
<td>What do you do for work?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 6) Bay ka makalabay angiskul? (follow-up questions as appropriate) | Have you attended school? (follow-up questions regarding length, type, reasons for leaving, etc…)
<p>| a. Ma h'lling ai pamandu' ma ka'am e' mastalbi? | What language(s) were you taught in? |
| 7) Maingga ka bay nianakan? Ai ōn lahat pamanakan ka'a? | Where were you born? |
| 8) Maingga ka atawa lahat ai bay ka pasuligannu? | Where did you grow up? |
| 9) At'gol na kam maittu maglahat? Sumiyan lagi'? | How long have you lived here (in this community)? |
| 10) Ya panubu'bi, bangsa ai? Mma'nu maka ina'nu? | Where are your parents from? What is their ethnicity? |
| 11) Ma h'lling ai ya h'llingnu min diki'-diki'nu? | What language did you speak from the time you were a child? |
| 12) Aniya' gi' saddi' h'lling kata'uwanu? | Do you speak other languages? |
| a. Ma kamemon h'lling kata'uwanu, h'lling ai ya katanamannu niusal? | Which (of those languages) do you know the best? Second best? Etc… |
| 13) (Only ask if married) | |
| a. A'a miningga h'llanu/h'ndanu? | Where is your spouse from? |
| b. Bangsa atawa tribu ai h'llanu/h'ndanu? | What tribe/people group do they belong to? |
| c. Ma h'lling ai ya bissala h'llanu/h'ndanu min diki'-diki' sigām? | What language did they speak when they were a child? |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>14)</th>
<th>Ata’u ka amassa maka anulat ma h’lling Sinama?</th>
<th>Do you know how to read and write in Sinama?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IF YES:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a.</td>
<td>Aniya’ pagbassabi katas tasulat ma h’lling Sinama?</td>
<td>What do you like to read in Sinama? / What is there for you to read in Sinama?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b.</td>
<td>Bang ka anulat ma Sinama, ai pagsulatbi?</td>
<td>When you write in Sinama, what do you write?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c.</td>
<td>Aniya’ tanda’bi guna atawa halga’ bang kita ata’u amassa atawa anulat ma h’lling Sinama?</td>
<td>Is it useful/valuable for you to read and write in Sinama? How so?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IF NO:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a.</td>
<td>Bilahi ka makasayu maka makata’u anulat maka amassa ma Sinama?</td>
<td>Would you like to learn to read and write in Sinama?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15)</td>
<td>Ata’u ka amassa maka anulat ma saddi’ h’lling min Sinama?</td>
<td>Do you know how to read and write in any other language(s)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Same follow-up questions as #14, based on answer, for each additional language.</td>
<td>Same follow up questions as #14, based on answer, for each additional language.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Appendix D: Semi-Structured Key Informant Interview Script**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part</th>
<th>ENGLISH (Translation)</th>
<th>SINAMA (Language Used for Interview)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| I    | 1. In your estimation, how many children in your community attend school? About half? More than half?  
   a. How many elementary, how many kindergarten?  
   b. About how many times per week do the elementary students attend?  
   2. What reasons are given for children who have never attended school?  
   3. What reasons are given for children who have attended school but not continued?  
   4. Have you encountered children in your community who don’t speak Sinama well?  
   a. If not Sinama, what language do they know? | 1. Bang ma tokorannu, ma reyom kaumanbi, saga pila puhu' onde' angiskul? Saga dantonga'? Labi min dantonga'?  
   a. Pila ma elementary, pila ma kinder?  
   b. Ya saga onde' mag-elementary, saga min pila ma reyom dapitu' sigām paluruk?  
   2. Bang ma saga onde' halam bay angiskul, ai kono' sababanna angkan halam?  
   3. Bang ma saga onde' bay angiskul, bo' halam palanjal ma pagiskul, ai kono' sababanna?  
   4. Aniya' tabāknu onde' ma kaumanbi ya mbal ba sakit ata'u magsinama?  
   a. Bang mbal Sinama, lling ai ya kata'uanna? |
| II   | 1. What can you say about law(s) in the Philippines regarding what language(s) are used in school? According to the government what language can be used in the classroom?  
   2. Which languages are used in the elementary?  
   a. Which language is used just in speaking/teaching, and which for reading and writing?  
   b. In grade one? Two? etc.  
   3. In teaching/schooling other than public school, such as kindergarten in the community, what language do you use?  
   a. Which language is used just in speaking/teaching, and which for reading and writing? | 1. Ai tapah'lllingnu pasal sara' ma Pilipinas, ya ma takdil ai bahasa/lling ya niusal ma reyom iskul? Bang ma parinta, lling ai tausal ma reyom classroom?  
   2. Ai kono' lling ya niusal ma elementary?  
   a. Ai lling niusal ma pagsuli-suli/pagpandu' hal, maka lling ingga ya binassa maka sinulat?  
   b. Ma grade one? Two? etc.  
   3. Bang ma pagpandu'/pagiskul ya ngga'i ka ma public, buwatna kinder ma reyom kaumanbi, ai lling niusal e'bi?  
   a. Ai lling niusal ma pagsuli-suli/pagpandu' hal, maka lling ingga ya binassa maka sinulat? |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part III</th>
<th>1. When people gathered on the shore last July, they listed what they want their children to know. Among them:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>i. Sinama, Bisaya, Filipino, English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ii. Sama skills and traditions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>iii. Reading and writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>iv. Values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>v. Job skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>At the present time, which of these are already being taught to Sama children, and which haven’t been?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>The knowledge and skills that aren’t yet being taught to Sama children, what should be done so that they can be taught?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a. in the school?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b. in the community?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>It is said to be difficult for Sama children to go to school, because of ____. In your opinion, how can this be improved so that Sama children can study?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| 1. Ma bay pagtimuk a'a, bulan July, ya ma bihing tampe, nilistahan saga kabilahi'an sigăm pinata'u/pinasayu e' onde' Sama. Beya' maiyu: |
| --- | --- |
|  | i. Sinama, Bisaya, Filipino, English |
|  | ii. Saga kahinangan/kapandaya'n maka usulan Sama |
|  | iii. Pagbassa maka pagsulat |
|  | iv. Addat-tabi'at |
|  | v. Ata'u magtrabaho ma reya |
|  | Ma buwattina'an, ingga ma saga itu ya asal tapamandu' ma saga onde' Sama, maka ingga halam? |
| 2. | Ya saga pangita'u maka kapandayan ya halam lagi' tapamandu' ma saga onde' Sama, ai subay nihinang supaya tapamandu' na? |
|  | a. ma iskul? |
|  | b. ma kauman? |
| 3. | Ahunit kono' pagiskul onde' Sama, ma sabab ____. Bang ma ka'a, buwattingga itu tapahāp, supaya maka'anad na saga onde' Sama? |
Appendix E: Thematic Framework for Coding Data

1. Language ecology
   1.1 Children’s L1
   1.2 Proficiency in Bisaya
   1.3 Children’s language use
   1.4 Parents’ language use with children

2. Languages-in-education
   2.1 MOI laws
   2.2 MOI in practice
   2.3 Sama teachers
   2.4 Student-teacher language barrier/mismatch
   2.5 Linguistically mixed classes
   2.6 Linguistically separated classes

3. School participation
   3.1 Out-of-school reasons
   3.2 Drop-out reasons
   3.3 School participation – numbers
   3.4 Encouraging participation
   3.5 Parents’ responsibility re: school participation
   3.6 Marriage and children

4. Areas of learning
   4.1 Addat Tabi’at
      (Discipline/morality/right behaviour)
   4.2 Kapandayan (Traditional skills)
   4.3 Usulan (Traditional ways/stories)
   4.4 Literacy
   4.5 Language acquisition
      4.5.1 English acquisition
      4.5.2 Filipino acquisition
      4.5.3 Bisaya acquisition
      4.5.4 Sinama acquisition
   4.6 Work mareya (inland/outside the community)
   4.7 Assimilation

5. Learning in the community
   5.1 Home learning
   5.2 Children teaching children
   5.3 Children teaching parents
   5.4 Playing school
   5.5 Literacy practices in the community
   5.6 Community schools and programs

6. Helps and hindrances
   6.1 Dreams/plans/goals
   6.2 Difficulties in school
   6.3 Help from others
   6.4 DepEd
   6.5 Government’s role
   6.6 Parents’ role
## Appendix F: What Participants Want Children to Know

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Sinama</th>
<th>Sinama + Other Languages</th>
<th>Other Languages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Locus</td>
<td>Inside Community</td>
<td>Inside and Outside Community</td>
<td>At School/Outside Community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>Moral Values and Traditional Ways</td>
<td>Cultural and Livelihood Skills</td>
<td>Literacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humility</td>
<td>Housework</td>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kindness towards others</td>
<td>Weave mats</td>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>Filipino</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect for elders</td>
<td>Fishing: spear-fishing, trap-fishing, line fishing, net fishing, long-line fishing</td>
<td>Reading signs on public transport</td>
<td>Korean, Japanese and other foreign languages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vision for their future</td>
<td>Building boats</td>
<td>Reading prescriptions</td>
<td>Bisaya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Importance of going to school</td>
<td>Making fishing equipment: oars, goggles, flippers, spear-guns</td>
<td>Reading the Bible</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discipline, good character</td>
<td>Free diving and holding breath</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditions and laws related to engagement and marriage</td>
<td>Gathering seafood in the strand zone</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History of the Sama people/genealogy</td>
<td>Sewing traditional clothes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural laws, taboos</td>
<td>Cooking traditional food</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sinama</td>
<td>Traditional style of dance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Play instruments typical at weddings</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
References


Walter, Stephen L. 2016. What can be done in contexts where teachers have inadequate oral fluency or literacy skills in one or more of the languages being used in the program? In Barbara Trudell and Catherine Young (eds.), Good answers to tough questions in mother tongue-based multilingual education, SIL International. Accessed 27 June 2018.  


Young, Catherine. 2001. Developing effective pedagogical and curricular approaches towards bridging practices from vernacular languages to major languages of education. M.Ed. thesis. University of Sheffield.