



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization

# Advocacy Kit for Promoting Multilingual Education: *Including the Excluded*



Yu We Goll



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**Advocacy Kit for  
Promoting Multilingual Education:  
*Including the Excluded***

**Overview of the Kit**

***Advocacy kit for promoting multilingual education: Including the excluded.***

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5 booklets.

[content: Overview of the kit; Language in education policy and practice in Asia and the Pacific; Policy makers booklet; Programme implementers booklet; Community members booklet]

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# Foreword

The Asia and Pacific region is characterized by rich ethnic, cultural, and linguistic diversity. At the same time, however, this diversity makes educating children from different backgrounds a major challenge. At the World Education Forum in Dakar in 2000, one of the main agreed goals was *“to ensure that by 2015 all children, particularly girls and children from ethnic minorities, have access to complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality”*. Another of the goals involved *“...improving levels of literacy, particularly among women”*. Achieving these goals and making educational opportunities more equitable means dealing explicitly with learners from ethnic/linguistic minorities through affirmative measures. Since effective teaching depends on clear and understandable communication, the language of instruction is at the heart of any learning process. For this reason, mother tongue-based instruction is crucial to providing children with early access to education and to enabling them to participate in learning processes according to their evolving capacities.

Unfortunately, in many countries in this region, the true panorama of languages found in a nation’s population is rarely reflected in their education systems, and large numbers of learners are confronted with either a foreign medium of instruction or a language that is different from their mother tongue. This may be further exacerbated in the case of certain groups who are already in situations of educational risk or stress, such as illiterates, minorities and refugees. It is an obvious yet not generally recognized truism that learning in a language that is not one’s own provides a double set of challenges: not only of learning a new language but also of learning new knowledge contained in that language.

In some countries in Asia, bi/multilingual education programmes, through non-formal education, are helping to prepare ethnic/linguistic minority learners for literacy in both mother tongue and national languages. However, there is a serious lack of recognition and understanding of the role that bi/multilingual education can play in increasing enrolment, retention and achievement in the formal school system. This kit advocates making education systems more responsive to cultural diversity. It provides important insights into the value of mother tongue-based multilingual education, which respects the rights of children and learners and encourages readers to think about the importance of language issues and to investigate them further. It builds on research findings and experiences gained over many years by many organizations and individuals working on mother tongue-based multilingual education. I hope you will find the booklets in this kit useful in advocating and gaining support for mother tongue instruction as a means of improving educational quality as well as saving the world’s may endangered languages.



Sheldon Shaeffer  
Director, UNESCO Asia and Pacific  
Regional Bureau for Education

## Acknowledgements

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We gratefully acknowledge the sources used in the Kit and encourage users to make use of them, as well.

We also thank participants of the workshop on Mother Tongue/Bilingual Literacy Programmes for Ethnic Minorities held in December 2005 in Chiang Mai, Thailand, for their valuable contributions to the improvement of the Kit.

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# Overview of the Kit

Education for All (EFA) means a quality education for all. Since the start of the EFA movement, many countries have increased their efforts to meet the educational needs of children and adults. Even though much has been done, certain groups remain excluded – girls and women, people who are in poverty, disabled, people living with HIV/AIDS and people whose mother tongue differs from the official/national language.

Can quality education for all be achieved when education is packaged in a language that some learners neither speak nor understand? This is the situation faced by many children from ethnic minority groups when they enter formal school systems – the official school language is very different from the language they speak at home. Forcing children to learn in a language they do not understand creates an educational handicap that should not exist.

In some countries in the Asia and Pacific region, bi/multilingual education programmes established in non-formal education systems help ethnic/linguistic minority learners to become literate in their own languages and in the national language. But at the national policy level there is a serious lack of recognition and understanding of the role that bi/multilingual education can play in increasing enrolment, retention and achievement in the formal school system. On the other hand, it should be acknowledged that policy makers and education practitioners are faced with difficult decisions with regard to the language of instruction when technical and political factors are in competition. Therefore, understanding the true panorama of providing education in learners' mother tongue is one of the crucial steps towards achieving quality education for all.

## Who Can Use This Kit?

This kit was prepared for all of those who want to ensure that "Education for All" does, indeed, include everyone! The kit will be especially valuable for policy makers, education practitioners and specialists who want to improve access to and quality of education for those excluded by language. It will also be helpful for speakers of ethnic minority languages who want to improve the education situation in their own communities.

This kit is designed to raise awareness on the importance of mother tongue-based multilingual education (MLE). It presents key arguments and facts about MLE and provides important insights about the value and benefits of providing education in learners' mother tongue. The kit also presents ideas, research findings and concrete examples that you can use to think about your own situation and suggests steps for taking actions to make your school system more responsive to linguistic diversity.

The kit is not a definitive textbook, and it will not have an answer for every problem that you might face. To help you as much as possible, at the end of each booklet we have included lists of references. In addition, each booklet contains a glossary of terms and, at the front of each booklet is a one-page summary of its contents.

## How Can You Use This Kit?

This kit contains three main booklets. Each booklet has a designated audience: 1) policy makers, 2) education programme planners and practitioners and 3) community members. Please remember that developing MLE requires contributions from everyone at all levels. For that reason, we encourage you to use all three booklets along with other available resources as you work together to plan, implement and sustain your MLE programmes.

This kit can be used in many different ways. For those who are already involved in MLE programmes, you might use these ideas to help you to promote mother tongue instruction and strengthen your programme. Those who are not familiar with multilingual education but want to improve educational access for minority language students might use these booklets to identify specific points that they can investigate and discuss in their own contexts.

## Glossary of Terms

Each booklet contains its own glossary of terms and there is also a master list of terms used throughout the kit. Please consult these glossaries as necessary.

## A Note for Translators

This kit was developed originally in the English language. But for it to be used widely, it will need to be translated into different languages and may be adapted to fit different contexts. For those of you who will be given the task of translating and adapting this kit, please remember the following important points.

This kit is meant to be user-friendly. For this reason, it is written in an informal, conversational style, as if you were talking to a person rather than simply writing for her or him. You are encouraged to use this style in your translation, instead of using a formal – often overly complicated – one.

Although this kit was written in English, we “pre-tested” it at a regional workshop (December 2005, Chiang Mai, Thailand) to see if it was understandable to persons whose mother tongue is not English. In order to make it understandable, this kit uses a simple vocabulary. We intentionally tried not to use complex terms. However, some special terms can be difficult to translate. For example, terms “multilingual education” or “gender” may not exist in your language, but it is important to translate them accurately. If you find terms that you are not sure how to translate, please check with professionals or agencies who may already be

using the terms and may have already translated them. If educators in your country have not translated the terms (or it is translated inaccurately), check with other national and international organizations that work in these areas to see how they have translated them.

Please include the following statement in your edition: "This kit is a translation and adaptation of Advocacy Kit on Multilingual Education [ISBN 92-9223-110-3] ©UNESCO Bangkok". We seek your cooperation to send two copies of all translations and adaptations to the following address:

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## Glossary of Terms – Languages

<b>Dialect</b>	Manner of speaking a language that varies according to region or social group (see also <b>variety</b> )
<b>Dominant language</b>	Language spoken by the dominant social group, or language that is seen as the main language of a country <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ <i>May have official or national language status even if it is not spoken by a numerical majority of the national population</i></li></ul>
<b>Foreign language</b>	Language that is not spoken in the immediate environment of the learner
<b>Heritage language</b>	Language of a person's ancestors or ethnolinguistic group
<b>Home language</b>	Language spoken in the home (see also <b>L1, mother tongue</b> ) <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ <i>Some people have more than one home language</i></li></ul>
<b>L1</b>	First language, native language (see also <b>mother tongue, home language, local language</b> ) <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ <i>Refers to language or languages learned from birth</i></li></ul>
<b>L2</b>	Second language, non-native language, language of wider communication, or foreign language <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ <i>Often refers to contexts where the language is spoken in the wider society outside the home; in bilingual education, refers to second (official, foreign) language introduced after the L1</i></li><li>▶ <i>For ethnolinguistic minorities, the L2 is usually an official and/or national language</i></li></ul>
<b>Language of instruction</b>	Language used for teaching and learning the school curriculum, also called medium of instruction
<b>Lingua franca</b>	Widely spoken language used for communication between ethnolinguistic groups <i>Example: Tok Pisin in PNG</i>
<b>Local language</b>	Language spoken in the immediate community <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ <i>May refer to languages that are not yet fully developed in written form</i></li></ul>

<b>Majority language</b>	Language spoken by the majority of people in a region/country
<b>Minority language</b>	Language spoken by a social and/or ethnic minority group <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ <i>Sometimes used to refer to the language of a numerically large group that is not dominant</i></li> </ul>
<b>Mother tongue (MT)</b>	First language, native language (see also <b>L1</b> , <b>home language</b> , <b>local language</b> ) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ <i>Language that a person: (a) has learnt first; (b) identifies with or is identified as a native speaker of by others; (c) knows best; or (d) uses most</i></li> </ul>
<b>National language</b>	Language considered to be an important, widely-spoken language in a country; sometimes also an official language <p><i>Example: India recognizes two official and 22 national languages; Bahasa Indonesia is both national and official language of Indonesia</i></p>
<b>Official language</b>	Language adopted by a country for public administrative and institutional use, often including schools <p><i>Example: India has Hindi and English as official languages of the country and a number of different official state languages</i></p>
<b>Unwritten language</b>	Language that is spoken, but not yet used for reading/writing
<b>Variety</b>	Manner of speaking a language that varies according to region or social group (see also dialect)

## Glossary of Terms – General

<b>Advisory committee</b>	Group of leaders committed to supporting an MLE programme <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ <i>Usually composed of mother tongue speakers and members of partner agencies</i></li></ul>
<b>Alienation</b>	Being disconnected from one's own language and culture <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ <i>Minority language speakers in dominant language education may later reject their own language and culture</i></li></ul>
<b>Awareness-raising</b>	Providing information that can help people achieve the goals and needs that they have identified for themselves
<b>Bilingual</b>	<i>Individual:</i> Ability to speak/understand (and sometimes read/write) two languages <i>Society:</i> Presence of at least two language groups
<b>Bilingual education</b>	Use of two languages for literacy and instruction <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ <i>Ideally, literacy and learning begin with the learner's first language, and a second language is introduced gradually</i></li></ul>
<b>Competencies</b>	Knowledge, abilities or skills in language or other subjects of the school curriculum
<b>Curriculum</b>	Teaching plan, content and instructional materials for an education programme
<b>Dominant group</b>	Most powerful social group of the country due to population (numerical majority), economics (wealth) and/or politics (power)
<b>Facilitator</b>	Person who helps others to learn; teacher
<b>First Language First MLE</b>	Schooling beginning with the L1 for reading, writing and learning, while teaching the L2 (see <b>multilingual education</b> )
<b>Fluency</b>	High competence in speaking, reading and/or writing
<b>Gender equality</b>	Situation in which women and men, girls and boys have equal conditions for realizing their full human rights and contributing to, and benefiting from, economic, social, cultural and political development

<b>Illiterate</b>	Person who has not yet had the opportunity to learn reading and writing in a language she/he understands
<b>Implementation</b>	The process of mobilizing people and resources to carry out a new programme
<b>Indigenous</b>	Person or group descended from original or early inhabitants of a region or country
<b>Interculturalism</b>	Promotion of mutual understanding and tolerance between ethnolinguistic and/or social groups
<b>Language development</b>	<i>In education:</i> Teaching someone to speak, read and write a language well  <i>In minority language communities:</i> Promoting oral and written use of a language, for example by expanding its vocabulary, agreeing on a written form, and creating books and school materials
<b>Language minority</b>	Group of people who share a language and often have less power in society due to population (numerically fewer), economics (less wealth) and/or politics
<b>Literacy</b>	Ability to read, write, calculate and otherwise use a language to do whatever is needed in life
<b>Mainstream</b>	Language and culture of the dominant group  ▶ <i>Often refers to schools designed for members of the dominant group that do not meet the needs of linguistic minorities</i>
<b>Migrant</b>	Person or group that has moved from one region to another
<b>Mobilization</b>	The process of organizing a community (and its supporters) to work together to plan and implement a programme
<b>Multilingual</b>	<i>Individual:</i> Ability to speak/understand (and sometimes read/write) more than two languages  <i>Society:</i> Presence of more than two language groups
<b>Multilingual education (MLE)</b>	Use of more than two languages for literacy and instruction  ▶ <i>Ideally this begins with developing the L1 and adding other languages gradually</i>
<b>Non-Governmental Organization (NGO)</b>	Agency that is not part of any national government, often working for community development
<b>Orthography</b>	Standardized system for writing a language, including a script and rules for spelling and punctuation (see also <b>writing system</b> )

<b>Partners</b>	Individuals, organizations and agencies that collaborate with communities to implement a new programme
<b>Submersion</b>	Use of a second/foreign language for all instruction, with little or no help for learners
<b>Sustainability</b>	Setting up a programme so that it will continue for a long time
<b>Transfer</b>	What is learned in the L1 contributes to competence in other languages; one only needs to learn to read once
<b>Writing system</b>	Graphic representation of a spoken language (see also <b>orthography</b> )



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# Language in Education Policy and Practice in Asia and the Pacific

## 1. Language in Education Policy and Practice in South-East Asia

### Brunei Darussalam

It is estimated that 17 languages are spoken in Brunei. Standard Malay is the official language, but the most widely used language in the country is Brunei Malay. Languages used as the medium of instruction are Standard Malay and English. Local languages are not used.

### Cambodia

About 20 languages are spoken in Cambodia. The largest ethnic group, the Khmer, make up approximately 90 percent of the population. In Cambodia, the medium of instruction at all levels is the national language, Khmer. Recently, several minority languages have been introduced as the medium of instruction in pilot projects in the eastern highlands. These projects provide bilingual education in both formal and non-formal systems of education for adults as well as children. The draft of the education law of 2003 gives ethnic minorities the right to instruction in their mother tongue. However, the law has not yet been approved.

### Indonesia

Indonesia, with more than 700 languages, is linguistically the most diverse country in all of Asia. The official language, Indonesian, is the medium of instruction at all levels of education, yet only about ten percent of the population speak Indonesian as their mother tongue. The constitution and an education act support the use of students' mother tongues as mediums of instruction in the early grades. In practice, however, local languages are rarely used in formal government schools apart from being taught as subjects in some areas. Local languages are more widely used in non-formal education, particularly in adult literacy.

### Lao PDR

The estimated number of languages spoken in the Lao People's Democratic Republic is 82. The language of instruction at all levels of education is Lao, the official language, which is spoken as a mother tongue by about half of the population. At present, local languages are

not used in education; nevertheless, they are widely used in oral form in schools in ethnic minority areas.

## Malaysia

About 140 languages are spoken in Malaysia. Malay is the official national language. Most schools use Malay as medium of instruction. In 'national-type' primary schools, languages such as Mandarin, Tamil or other Indian languages are used as mediums of instruction. In Malay-medium schools, Tamil, Mandarin and some indigenous languages can be studied as subjects. Since the late 1990s, several indigenous groups of East Malaysia have begun education programmes using local languages, taught mainly as school subjects. However, these endeavours cannot yet be considered bilingual education because they are not officially used as mediums of instruction.

## Myanmar

More than 100 languages are spoken in the Union of Myanmar. The language of instruction in the government system of education is Bama (Burmese), the official language, and local languages are not used in the government system of education. However, local languages are widely used in non-formal education and adult literacy by civil society organizations and language communities, particularly in the northern states inhabited predominantly by ethnolinguistic minorities.

## Philippines

Some 170 languages are spoken in the Philippines. Most languages have writing systems, and there is some literature written in more than 100 of them. English and Filipino are the official languages of education and literacy for the nation. Local languages have been used in some government schools as "transitional" or "auxiliary" languages for initial instruction in early primary grades. However, local languages are mostly used in oral form to explain the curriculum. Local languages are used more widely in the non-formal sector, with a focus on adult literacy. Such education projects are usually run by NGOs and community organizations.

## Singapore

More than 20 languages are spoken in Singapore, a nation aiming at societal multilingualism and bilingualism among its population. Three quarters of the population are ethnic Chinese speaking many different varieties of Chinese. English is the sole medium of instruction at all levels of education, and three other official languages, i.e. Malay, Mandarin Chinese and Tamil, are taught as second languages called "mother tongues". Speakers of other languages can freely choose from those offered in the school curriculum, but there is no provision for education in local languages as such, unlike in most nations in South-East Asia.

## Thailand

More than 70 languages are spoken in Thailand. Standard Thai is the de facto official and national language of Thailand, and the medium of instruction at all levels of education. In some areas, local language classes are taught in the “local curriculum” slot. Some local languages are used in non-formal education, mainly adult literacy, run largely by local NGOs. Government agencies also support some pilot projects that use local languages in education. None of these projects, however, can be considered actual bilingual education. Since 2004, the debate on the use of local languages in education has increased in the Ministry of Education as well as in the media.

## Viet Nam

Approximately 100 languages are spoken in Viet Nam. The national language is Vietnamese, and it is spoken as the first language (or one of first languages of bilingual people) by approximately 90 percent of the population. Bilingual education and the use of local languages in education are strongly supported by various policy documents, yet Vietnamese remains the main medium of instruction at all levels of education, even in predominantly non-Vietnamese speaking areas. Local languages are used in education in some areas, and are mostly studied as subjects, making up as much as 20 percent of the primary education curriculum. Since 2006, new pilots in some minority languages have been started.

## 2. Language in Education Policy and Practice in East Asia

### People’s Republic of China

More than 200 languages are spoken in the People’s Republic of China. Mandarin Chinese is the official language. There are laws and policies supporting the use of ethnic minority languages as medium of instruction in minority areas. However, such policies are not implemented everywhere, and they apply only to the 55 designated national minorities. There is a lot of variation in the use of local languages in education, depending on geographical area and ethnolinguistic group. Some half a dozen local languages are used as medium of instruction from primary school through high school. In these cases, Mandarin is taught as a second language. However, the most common bilingual programmes using local language in China are those which start with the students’ mother tongue, but transfer to Mandarin fairly quickly. In many minority areas, local languages are taught as a subject at different levels of education.

### Mongolia

It is estimated that 12 languages are spoken in Mongolia. About 90 percent of the population are Mongols who speak a variety of the official language, either Halh or Khalka Mongolian. Mongolian is used as the medium of instruction at all levels of education, although English is playing an increasing role at the university level. Halh Mongolian is spoken as a second language by practically all ethnic minorities. The constitution of 1992 supports the use of

minority languages as medium of instruction. However, only Kazakh is currently used in bilingual education.

## Japan

Two indigenous languages are spoken in Japan, Japanese and Ainu, along with 11 distinct dialects of Japanese-Ryukyuan, regarded by some to be their own family of closely related languages. Japanese is the national language of Japan, spoken by approximately 99 percent of the population. In recent decades, immigration trends have seen an increase in the number of native languages spoken by registered aliens, who now make up 1.4 percent of the total population. The official language of instruction is Japanese. However, recently the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology issued policies aimed at the children of immigrants to Japan and non-Japanese to: improve instruction in Japanese as a second language at schools; provide instruction, where possible, in the students' mother tongue through team-teaching and other methods; and use the experiences of non-Japanese or returning Japanese children at schools to improve international and cross-cultural understanding between Japanese and non-Japanese students.

## 3. Language in Education Policy and Practice in South and West Asia

### Afghanistan

About 30 languages are spoken in Afghanistan and eight of them are spoken widely: Pashto, Dari, Uzbek, Turkmen, Pashae, Nooristani, Balochi and Shighnani. Pashto and Dari are the national and official languages of Afghanistan and are used as mediums of instruction in all levels of education. Because the Constitution advocates the mother tongue as a medium of instruction for basic education, the Ministry of Education plans to use minority languages in formal and non-formal education, as well as teaching some of the minority languages as subjects.

### Bangladesh

Bangladesh is home to around 40 languages. Bangla is the official and national language of Bangladesh, and the medium of instruction at all levels of education. Among the population of more than 140 million, 98% speak Bangla. English is also used as a medium of instruction in tertiary education. In both governmental and non-governmental schools and literacy classes, the medium of instruction is Bangla. There is no provision to use so-called tribal languages in these schools. The languages of some ethnolinguistic minority groups are used orally as "transitional" or "auxiliary" languages to explain the curriculum. For this reason, many minority groups are facing loss of their linguistic and cultural heritage and, simultaneously, lack access to relevant education in a language that they speak and understand.

## Bhutan

There are 18 languages spoken in Bhutan. Dzongkha is the national language of the country and is seen as one of the symbols of the kingdom's unique identity. The medium of instruction in the government school system is primarily English, but Dzongkha is used in some classes. Non-formal education is conducted throughout Bhutan in Dzongkha. The government has commissioned the linguistic description of a number of minority languages, but most language development efforts are directed toward Dzongkha.

## India

There is constant dispute regarding the number of languages versus dialects or varieties in India. The 1961 census lists 1,652 languages, while the 1991 census lists only 114. The Ethnologue lists about 430. Presently, 22 languages are listed in the 8th Schedule of the Constitution, with Hindi listed as the official language, and English the associate official language.

Several articles in the Constitution of India concern language. Of note is Article 350-A, which says that "it shall be the endeavour of every state and of every local authority within the state to provide adequate facilities for instruction in the mother-tongue at the primary stage of education to children belonging to linguistic minority groups".

A complicated "three-language formula" was proposed by the Central Advisory Board of Education in 1957 and was fully endorsed by the chief ministers of the states in 1961. It covered the teaching of three national languages at different grades. Other than in a few states such as Orissa and Maharashtra, the formula was violated more often than it was adhered to.

In the *National Curriculum Framework For School Education*, which is issued by NCERT every five years, it is stated that the mother tongue should be the medium of instruction "at all stages of school education" (NCERT 2000, p. 76). The Framework acts only as advice, not as legislation.

Education normally takes place in local, regional (Schedule 8) or official languages. It is considered prestigious to have English as the medium of instruction. Political discussions are therefore focused on the choice between major Indian languages and English rather than on use of the mother tongue. Several states with high proportions of so-called tribal people have made attempts to use tribal languages in education. This has been reasonably successful in the states of Assam and Nagaland. Attempts in Rajasthan, Orissa and Andhra Pradesh experienced difficulties during the implementation stage, but new attempts are currently being undertaken.

## Nepal

Some 90 languages are spoken in Nepal. The language of instruction in the government system of education is Nepali, the official language. Many private schools provide English-medium education. The Constitution of Nepal suggests that the mother tongue can be used in the early stages of education, but in fact there has been little implementation of this

provision at the grassroots level. As a result of external funding, the Text Book Production Centre has prepared some basic elementary readers in nine different ethnic languages, but it is hard to ascertain to what extent these primers are in use. Some NGOs have begun experimental classes using the mother tongue in non-formal education contexts. There is a growing awareness of the importance of mother tongue-based education, but current political unrest makes it difficult to implement changes in local contexts.

## Pakistan

Pakistan is a multilingual country with six major and over 57 minor languages. The major mother tongues are: Punjabi (44%); Pashto (15%); Sindhi (14%); Siraiki (11%); Urdu (8%); Balochi (4%) and minor languages (5%). The national language is Urdu, while the official language is English. Urdu is widely used as a second language in urban Pakistan because it is the medium of instruction in most government schools and religious seminaries. It is also used in colleges and universities to teach all except scientific and technical subjects. Urdu is the language of the medium, the lower official domains, commerce and entertainment, and thus it is more useful for employment than any other Pakistani language. The only other language which is useful for employment, though only at the lower levels and then only in parts of Sindh, is Sindhi, which is also used in education, the medium and some official domains. Pashto is used as medium of instruction in some schools up to Grade 5, but is not used in most other domains. Only about 2 percent of Pakistanis speak English competently. Though an additional 15 to 18 percent may have some knowledge of it, it is the language of all elite domains of power: the government, higher bureaucracy, army officer corps, medium, higher education, research, commerce, and so on. English is also the most useful language for would-be emigrants and upwardly mobile people. As such there is a tremendous demand for English courses, which are available to the elite through private English-medium schools or schools run by the armed forces (e.g. cadet colleges). State policies that designate English and Urdu as official languages have put immense pressure on the other languages of the country, to the extent that smaller languages are becoming heavily mixed with more powerful languages or endangered.

## 4. Language in Education Policy and Practice in Central Asia

### Kazakhstan

In Kazakhstan, 48 percent of the population are Kazakhs and 34 percent are Russians; in addition, there are over 120 nationalities. Among them, there are over 800,000 Ukrainians, 500,000 Germans, 400,000 Uzbeks, and more than 300,000 Tatars. Kazakh is the state language and Russian is the official language (which is used alongside the state language). There are 3,647 (45%) general secondary schools with Kazakh as language of instruction, 2,122 (26%) with Russian, and 2069 (25%) with both Kazakh and Russian. The other 4 percent of secondary schools are “national-type” schools with Ukrainian, Uighur, Tajik, and Uzbek as the medium of instruction.

## Kyrgyzstan

Kyrgyz and Russian are the official languages in Kyrgyzstan. In 2001, the Kyrgyzstan legislature declared Russian as an official language, equal in status to Kyrgyz. The population is made up of Kyrgyz (52%), Russian (18%), Uzbek (13%), Ukrainian (3%), German (2%) and other (12%). There are schools with Kyrgyz (66%), Russian (7%), Uzbek (7%), and mixed Russian and Kyrgyz (20%) as languages of instruction.

## Tajikistan

Tajik is the state language of Tajikistan, while Russian is the language used for inter-ethnic communication. All ethnic groups have the right to speak their mother tongues. Tajik and Russian are used in the mass media. Most schools use Tajik and Russian as mediums of instruction. However, there are some schools for ethnic minorities that use Uzbek, Kazakh, Turkmen and others. Seventy-three percent of secondary school students receive their education in Tajik, but for 24 percent of secondary school students, Uzbek is the medium of instruction, 2 percent in Russian, and others are educated in Kyrgyz, Kazakh and Turkmen schools.

## Uzbekistan

Uzbekistan is a multiethnic and multilingual country with more than 100 languages. Based on the provisions of the Constitution of Uzbekistan, equal legal status, rights, freedoms and opportunities are guaranteed regardless of sex, race, ethnic origin, language, religion, social background, convictions, personal or social status (Article 18). The education of children from ethnic and linguistic minorities is an important policy issue. So far, the government has maintained its political commitment to provide basic education in the seven national languages, including Uzbek. At present, over 10 percent of schools in Uzbekistan provide instruction in the languages of ethnic minorities (Russian, Kazakh, Tajik, Karakalpak, Turkmen, and Kyrgyz), accounting for about 15 percent of the total enrolment in basic education.

## 5. Language in Education Policy and Practice in the Pacific

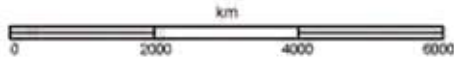
### Papua New Guinea

About 850 languages are spoken in Papua New Guinea (PNG), where pre-school and early primary education are provided in some 350-400 languages. No other country in the world uses local languages as widely as PNG. Previously, the formal education system used English as the medium of instruction, but based on positive experiences in using local languages in non-formal education, the formal system was reformed. In the new system, the first three years of formal education is taught in the mother tongue of the learner. English becomes the medium at later grades. Elementary schools that use local languages are run by local communities. Reasons for the successful use of local languages include strong community participation, decentralisation, local relevance, cost-effectiveness, and the active role of NGOs.



# LANGUAGES OF THE WORLD

EACH DOT REPRESENTS THE PRIMARY LOCATION  
OF A LIVING LANGUAGE LISTED IN THE ETHNOLOGUE.



Source: [www.ethnologue.com](http://www.ethnologue.com)





United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization

**Advocacy Kit for  
Promoting Multilingual Education:**  
*Including the Excluded*

**Policy Makers Booklet**





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***Advocacy kit for promoting multilingual education: Including the excluded.***

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5 booklets.

[content: Overview of the kit; Language in education policy and practice in Asia and the Pacific; Policy makers booklet; Programme implementers booklet; Community members booklet]

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# Booklet for Policy Makers

## Introduction

Since UNESCO first initiated its programme of Education for All in 1990, many governments have increased their efforts to meet the educational needs of children and adults in their countries. Although much has been done, certain groups remain under-served – girls and women, in general, people who are poor, people with special needs, people with HIV/AIDS, and people who speak non-dominant or minority languages.

Whether they are from indigenous or migrant communities, learners who do not understand the official language are at a great disadvantage when they begin school:

*It is an obvious, yet not generally recognised truism that learning in a language which is not one's own provides a double set of challenges: not only of learning a new language but also of learning new knowledge contained in that language. These challenges may be further exacerbated in the case of certain groups who are already in situations of educational risk or stress such as illiterates, minorities and refugees.<sup>1</sup>*

The best way to overcome these challenges is through “mother tongue-based multilingual education” (MLE). In strong MLE programmes, learners from non-dominant language communities use their own language for learning in the early grades as they are also learning the official language as a subject. As the learners gain competence in speaking, reading and writing the national language, teachers begin using it for teaching. The best MLE programmes encourage learners to use both languages for communication and for learning throughout primary school.

UNESCO's recognition of the important relationship between language and education is clear in the organization's three-part rationale for supporting multilingual education:

1. *UNESCO supports mother tongue instruction as a means of improving educational quality by building upon the knowledge and experience of the learners and teachers.*
2. *UNESCO supports bilingual and/or multilingual education at all levels of education as a means of promoting both social and gender equality and as a key element of linguistically diverse societies.*

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1 UNESCO. 2003. Education in a Multilingual World. Paris, UNESCO.

3. UNESCO supports language as an essential component of inter-cultural education in order to encourage understanding between different population groups and ensure respect for fundamental rights.<sup>2</sup>

The rest of this booklet provides further information about mother tongue-based MLE programmes. Questions that are frequently asked about MLE serve as headings for the different sections. Answers to the questions include quotations from educators, government officials, researchers, and people from minority language communities around the world.

## Questions and Responses: Language and Education in Minority Language Communities

### Q1. *What is the educational situation for members of non-dominant or minority language communities?*

Many members of non-dominant or minority language communities, especially those living in remote areas, face significant challenges when they try to get a good quality basic education:

- Some have no access to school at all; others have access to schools, but not to trained teachers – or teachers of any kind.
- Even if schools are adequately staffed, many of the teachers use a language that the learners do not understand.
- Textbooks and lessons focus on the language and culture of the dominant group. If the learners are unfamiliar with that culture, as many are, it is very difficult for them to understand the concepts that are being communicated.
- Teachers who come from the dominant language society may consider the learners “slow”. They may fail to appreciate – or may even look down on – the learners’ heritage language and culture.

For these learners, school is often an *unfamiliar place* teaching *unfamiliar concepts* in an *unfamiliar language*. Such was the case described by an educator who visited a classroom in a minority language community in India in which Hindi was the language of instruction:

*The children seemed totally disinterested in the teacher’s monologue. They stared vacantly at the teacher and sometimes at the blackboard where some [letters] had been written. Clearly aware that the children could not understand what he was saying, the teacher proceeded to provide even more detailed explanation in a much louder voice.*

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2 UNESCO. 2003. Education in a Multilingual World. Paris, UNESCO.



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*Later, tired of speaking and realizing that the young children were completely lost, he asked them to start copying the [letters] from the blackboard. "My children are very good at copying from the blackboard. By the time they reach Grade 5, they can copy all the answers and memorize them. But only two of the Grade 5 students can actually speak Hindi," said the teacher.<sup>3</sup>*

Forcing children, or adults, to attend schools that use a language they neither speak nor understand hinders rather than helps them to develop their potential as productive members of society. When lessons constantly focus on the world outside their community and ignore all that they know and have experienced, the not-so-hidden message is that their own language, culture and experiences have no value. This is how schooling causes children to lose respect for their community, their parents and themselves. One parent in Papua New Guinea has described such a situation in this way:

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3 Jhingran, D. 2005. *Language Disadvantage. The Learning Challenge in Primary Education*. New Delhi, A. P. H. Publishing.

*When children go to school, they go to an alien place. They leave their parents, they leave their gardens, they leave everything that is their way of life. They sit in a classroom and they learn things that have nothing to do with their own place. Later, because they have learned only other things, they reject their own.*<sup>4</sup>

The result, in many cases, is that learners who want to succeed in the formal education system can do so only at great cost, by sacrificing their linguistic and cultural heritage:

*They [language minority communities] are allowed into that mainstream life – if at all – only by leaving behind their ethnic and linguistic identity and taking on the language and culture of the dominant society. This is not a new process. It is the long, well-known, well-documented, and sad history of minority communities throughout the world.*<sup>5</sup>

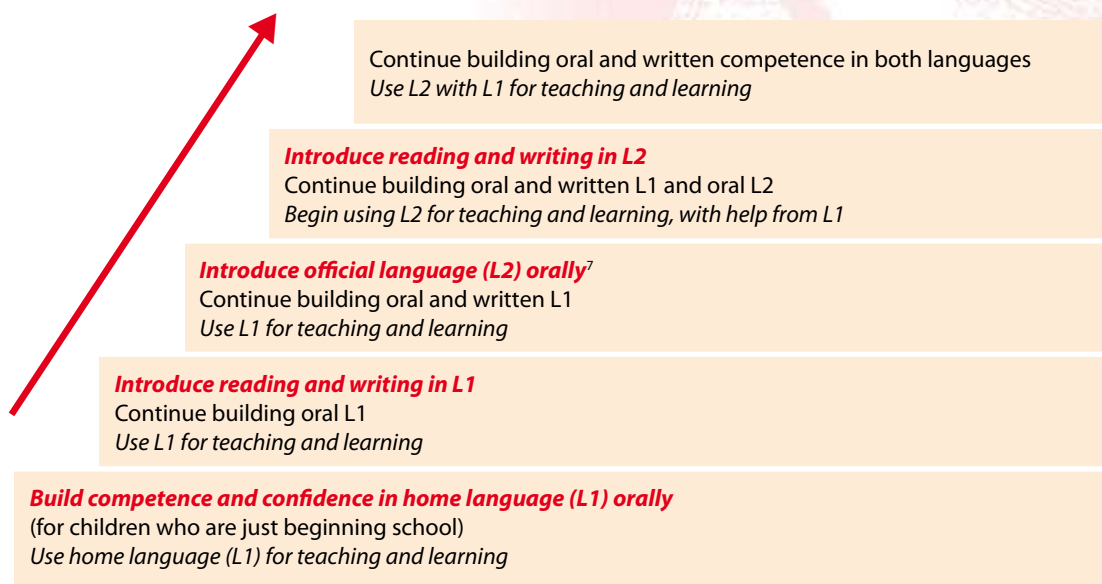
**Q2. How does mother tongue-based multilingual education (MLE) improve the educational situation for learners who do not understand or speak the official language when they begin school?**

Mother tongue-based MLE programmes enable learners to begin their education in the language they know best. As they use their own language for learning, they are introduced to the new (official) language and begin learning to communicate in that language. At the same time, teachers help the learners develop their academic vocabulary in the new language so they can understand and talk about more abstract concepts.<sup>6</sup> *In the best programmes, learners continue to develop their ability to communicate and to learn in both languages throughout primary school.*

The “steps” below help to illustrate the progression of language learning in strong MLE programmes:

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- 4 Delpit, L. D. and Kemelfield, G. 1985. *An Evaluation of the Viles Tok Ples Skul Scheme in the North Solomons Province*. ERU Report No. 51. Waigani, Papua New Guinea, University of Papua New Guinea.
  - 5 Shaeffer, S. 2003. (7-9 November) *Language Development and Language Revitalisation: An Educational Imperative in Asia*. International Conference on Language Development, Language Revitalization and Multilingual Education. Bangkok, Thailand.
  - 6 This process is based on the educational principle that concepts learned in one language are easily transferred to another language once the learners have developed the necessary vocabulary in the new language. (See Cummins, J. 2000. *Bilingual Children’s Mother Tongue: Why Is It Important for Education?*)





Having established an educational foundation in their home language, students begin learning the new language, first orally and then in written form. They do not stop using their first language as soon as they have achieved basic competency in the new language. Rather, they continue using *both* languages for learning, at least through primary school:

*When children continue to develop their abilities in two or more languages throughout their primary school years, they gain a deeper understanding of language and how to use it effectively. They have more practice in processing language, especially when they develop literacy in both, and they are able to compare and contrast the ways in which their two languages organize reality.<sup>8</sup>*

The most important features of this process are that:

- Education begins with what the learners already know, building on the language and culture, knowledge and experience that they bring with them when they start school;
- Learners gradually gain confidence in using the new (official) language, before it becomes the only language for teaching academic subjects; and
- Learners achieve grade level competence in each subject because teachers use their home language, along with the official school language, to help them understand the academic concepts.

7 Some researchers find that the L2 can be introduced early, as long as teachers continue to use the children's home language as one of the languages of instruction throughout primary school.

8 Cummins, J. 2000. *Bilingual Children's Mother Tongue: Why is it Important for Education?* <http://www.iteachilearn.com/cummins/mother.htm> (Accessed on 17 November 2006)



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### Q3. What is the relationship between mother tongue-based MLE and development in general?

Education programmes that exclude certain segments of the population make it difficult for those groups to take an active role in local or national development because such education

*... does little to equip them [students] with the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to contribute positively to community or national development.<sup>9</sup>*

Education-for-development should ensure that all learners – no matter which home languages they speak – can develop to their fullest potential and contribute to their own well-being as well as to that of their community and their nation:

<sup>9</sup> Department of Education. 1991. *Education Sector Review*. Waigani, Papua New Guinea, Department of Education.

The five million people of PNG speak over 800 distinct languages. Until 1993, English was the language of the formal education system. Recognizing the negative impact of English-only education, the PNG government revised its entire primary education system in 1995. By 2005, mother tongue-based MLE programs had been established in over 400 of Papua New Guinea's 800+ languages.

*The principle objective of a nation, we believe, should be to encourage and facilitate the development of all its members and the larger system(s) of which it is a part... National development is not so much a matter of what governments do as it is of what they enable the governed to do.<sup>10</sup>*



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All cultural groups, large and small, have acquired strategies for making the most of the world in which they live. Every language has the ability to communicate the knowledge and wisdom its speakers have developed over generations. The nation as a whole benefits when people from a variety of cultural backgrounds, speaking different languages and having different perspectives, share their ideas and plan together for a common future. One of the long-term goals of strong MLE programmes in non-dominant language communities is to ensure that their members will gain the knowledge, skills and confidence to participate in and contribute to the development of the nation as a whole:

*Our greatest national resource is the diversity of cultures in our country. Diversity means more viewpoints to clarify, more ways of solving problems, more creative ideas, a greater ability to deal with change... Where diversity is crushed... the nation becomes weak and divided.<sup>11</sup>*

10 Gharagedaghi, J. 1986. *A Prologue to National Development Planning*. New York, Greenwood Press.

11 Dr. John Waiko, Minister of Education PNG, 2001.

Government support for strong MLE programmes demonstrates to all citizens that minority languages, and those who speak the languages, are valued. MLE programmes that help learners to build a good “bridge” between their home language and the official languages help to build national unity without forcing people to sacrifice their unique linguistic and cultural heritage. Experiences around the world have demonstrated that denying or suppressing people’s linguistic and cultural heritage has been a cause for division and strife. MLE supports unity through *affirming* diversity rather than *instead* of diversity.

#### **Q4. What is the relationship between mother tongue-based MLE and gender equality?**

In 1993, linguistic researcher Corson found that the three groups most affected by unjust language policies and planning in education are women and girls, the poor, and groups with languages not represented in formal structures. The injustice is clearly greatest for those who experience all three conditions simultaneously. Gender research has demonstrated that unless girls and women are working in markets or factories, they are much less likely than boys and men to be exposed to an official language because their lives are more often restricted to the home and family where the local language is spoken. This means that girls are less likely than boys to understand school instruction. Unfortunately, this difference goes unnoticed because girls are given fewer opportunities to speak and are expected to perform less well than boys. In spite of increasing international awareness of the need to achieve gender equality in education, girls are still more likely than boys to be denied access to schooling, and girls from minority language communities are frequently the most disadvantaged of all.

Multilingual education provides more opportunities for girls to get a good education.

*Gender considerations cross cut...situations of educational risk, for girls and women may be in a particularly disadvantaged position. In most traditional societies, it is the girls and women who tend to be monolingual, being less exposed either through schooling, salaried labour, or migration to the national language, than their sons, brothers or husbands.<sup>12</sup>*

Mother tongue-based multilingual education provides specific benefits for girls from minority language communities:

- Parents may be more confident in putting their girls in schools that teach the community language, and, by association, a familiar culture and set of values. In addition, parents have access to information about enrollment and schooling processes in their language. Girls may be encouraged to stay in school longer if their language continues to be used, along with the official language.
- MLE programmes encourage communication between parents and teachers, enabling more community participation in school activities. This helps to ensure that schools respond to community needs and values.

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<sup>12</sup> UNESCO. 2003. Education in a Multilingual World. Paris, UNESCO.



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- Male teachers who come from the same linguistic and cultural communities as their students may be less likely to exploit their female students because they are more subject to social control. Teachers who interact socially with students' families are potentially more trustworthy and/or more subject to social control, reducing the risk that they will abuse girls sexually or otherwise.
- Because girls can communicate as freely as boys in their home language, they are able to demonstrate in the classroom that they learn as well as boys. Teachers are more likely to see that they should give girls the same opportunities that they give boys.
- Opportunities to teach in their home communities, with teacher training close by, encourages more women to become teachers. This provides female students with more role models and also provides more women with income-earning opportunities.<sup>13</sup>

13 Benson, C. 2005. *Mother Tongue-based Teaching and Education for Girls*. Bangkok, UNESCO. <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001420/142079e.pdf> (Accessed on 17 November 2006)

### **Q5. What about cost? Are multilingual education programmes expensive to implement and maintain?**

Some people oppose mother tongue-based MLE because they think that it will be too expensive to implement and maintain. However, studies in the field of language economics, analyzing the cost of language-related public policies, have found that MLE programmes have a very reasonable cost, especially given their long-term benefits:

*[T]he added expenditure entailed by moving from a monolingual to a bilingual education system is much smaller than commonly believed. Where evaluations have been made, they point in the direction of a 3-4 percent range, because even if the education system were to remain monolingual, children would have to be schooled anyway. Therefore, only comparatively modest additional financial outlays need to be factored in.<sup>14</sup>*

Perhaps it would help to put this issue into perspective if, rather than asking how much MLE costs, we ask: What is the cost of an educational system that results in failure for most learners who do not speak the official language at home?

If we compare the cost of establishing an MLE programme with the social and economic costs of inadequate or failed education for minority language learners, it is clear that multilingual education is a wise long-term investment, as some World Bank studies on cost-effectiveness have shown. For example, one study using Ministry of Education data from Guatemala compared the repetition and drop-out rates of two groups of Mayan students – one in a bilingual education programme and the other in an L2 (Spanish-only) programme and found the following:

*A shift to bilingual schooling would result in considerable cost savings, as a result of the reduced repetitions, saving the government more than 31 million quetzals (U.S. \$5 million), which equals the cost of providing primary education to about 100,000 students per year.<sup>15</sup>*

Another study using data from Guatemala and Senegal found that the cost of publishing in local languages represents only a fraction of a percent of the recurring education budget (0.13% in the case of Guatemala), and startup costs can be recovered after two to three years.<sup>16</sup>

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14 Grin, F. Economic Considerations in Language Policy. 2005. Ricento, T. (ed). 2005. *An Introduction to Language Policy: Theory and Method*. Oxford, Basil Blackwell.

15 Dutcher, N. 2004. *Expanding Educational Opportunities in Linguistically Diverse Countries*. Washington D.C., Center of Applied Linguistics. [http://www.cal.org/resources/pubs/fordreport\\_040501.pdf](http://www.cal.org/resources/pubs/fordreport_040501.pdf) (Accessed on 17 November 2006)

16 Vawda, A. Y. and Patrinos, H. A. 1998. *Cost of Producing Educational Materials in Local Languages*. Washington D.C.: World Bank.



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### Q6. What are the features of a strong and sustainable MLE programme?

MLE programmes require innovative thinking and cooperation among individuals, organizations and agencies – the “stakeholders” in the programme. The graphic below displays the “essential components” of the strongest programmes.<sup>17</sup>

Although policymakers are not usually involved in the actual implementation of mother tongue-based MLE programmes, their active support is essential for the programmes’ long-term success. One of their most important contributions is in establishing a political climate that supports strong mother tongue-based MLE. There is more international recognition than ever before that language and education policies are essential to providing access to better quality schooling for all, including those who speak non-dominant languages.<sup>18</sup>

17 Adapted from Malone, S. 2005. Planning community-based education programs in minority language communities. Resource manual for mother tongue speakers of minority languages engaged in planning and implementing education programs in their own communities.

18 Alidou, H., Boly, A., Brock-Utne, B., Diallo, Y. S., Heugh, K. and Wolff, H. E. 2006. Optimizing Learning and Education in Africa: The Language Factor. A Stock-Taking Research on Mother Tongue and Bilingual Education in Sub-Saharan Africa. Paris, Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA). [www.adeanet.org/biennial-2006/doc/document/B3\\_1\\_MTBLE\\_en.pdf](http://www.adeanet.org/biennial-2006/doc/document/B3_1_MTBLE_en.pdf) (Accessed 17 November 2006)



With respect to creating a supportive political environment, the best policies are those that establish multilingual education as an integral part of both formal and non-formal education systems and include clear directives for implementation and support. Important policy decisions include:

- Stating clearly which grades in primary school (and ideally, in secondary school) will be included in the programme.
- Institutionalizing the programme by establishing structures within an appropriate government agency to take responsibility for coordinating implementation and support.
- Establishing on-going sources of funding that are specifically designated for the MLE programme.

Policymakers also contribute to the success of mother tongue-based MLE by fostering an atmosphere of cooperation among all the supporting agencies – government, NGOs, universities and others – in working with local communities to develop and sustain strong programmes. A third and essential activity is helping to ensure that adequate funding is provided for planning, implementing and sustaining the MLE programme at national, sub-national and community levels.



**Q7. Can it be done? Can strong mother tongue-based MLE programmes be established and sustained?**

With encouragement and support from UNESCO, UNICEF and other multilateral and bilateral agencies, mother tongue-based MLE programmes have been and continue to be established throughout the world. In the Asia and Pacific region, programmes have been implemented or are being planned in Papua New Guinea, China, Thailand, Cambodia, Bangladesh, India and Solomon Islands, to name only a few. The hope is that these programmes will “light the path” for others who recognize the need but have not yet taken the steps to ensure that “Education for All” will, indeed, be for everyone.



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## UNESCO's Principles on Language and Education<sup>19</sup>

### Principle I:

UNESCO supports mother-tongue instruction as a means of improving educational quality by building upon the knowledge and experience of the learners and teachers.

- 1) Mother-tongue instruction is essential for initial instruction and literacy and should be extended to as late a stage as possible.
- 2) Literacy can only be maintained if there is an adequate supply of reading material, for adolescents and adults as well as for school children.
- 3) [All] educational planning should include at each stage early provision for training, and further training, of sufficient numbers of fully competent and qualified teachers of the country concerned who are familiar with the life of their people and able to teach in the mother tongue.

### Principle II:

UNESCO supports bilingual and/or multilingual education at all levels of education as a means of promoting both social and gender equality, and as a key element of linguistically diverse societies.

- 1) Communication, expression and the capacity to listen and dialogue [should be encouraged] first of all in the mother tongue, then, [if the mother tongue is different from the official or national languages] in the official [or national] language in the country, as well as in one or more foreign languages.
- 2) Emphasis should be given to the formulation of strong national policies designed to promote...languages teaching in cyberspace [and strengthening and extension of international support and assistance to developing countries] to facilitate the development of freely accessible materials on language education in the electronic form and to enhance human capital skills in this area.

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<sup>19</sup> UNESCO. 2003. Education in a Multilingual World. Paris, UNESCO.

**Principle III:**

**UNESCO supports language as an essential component of inter-cultural education in order to encourage understanding between different population groups and ensure respect for fundamental rights.**

- 1) Measures should be taken to eliminate discrimination in education at all levels on the basis of gender, race, language, religion, national origin, age or disability or any other factor.
- 2) The educational rights of persons belonging to... minorities, as well as indigenous peoples, should be fully respected through:
  - the implementation of the right to learn in the mother tongue and the full use of culturally-appropriate teaching methods of communication and transmission of knowledge;
  - the teaching of and through, not only the MT, but also the national or official languages...so that minorities and indigenous peoples will have the opportunity to participate in and contribute to the larger community.
- 3) Education should raise awareness of the positive value of cultural [and linguistic] diversity, and to this end:
  - Curriculum [should] promote a realistic and positive inclusion of the minority [or indigenous] history, culture, language and identity.
  - The cultural component of language teaching and learning should be strengthened in order to gain a deeper understanding of other cultures; languages should not be simple linguistic exercises, but opportunities to reflect on other ways of life, other literature, and other customs.

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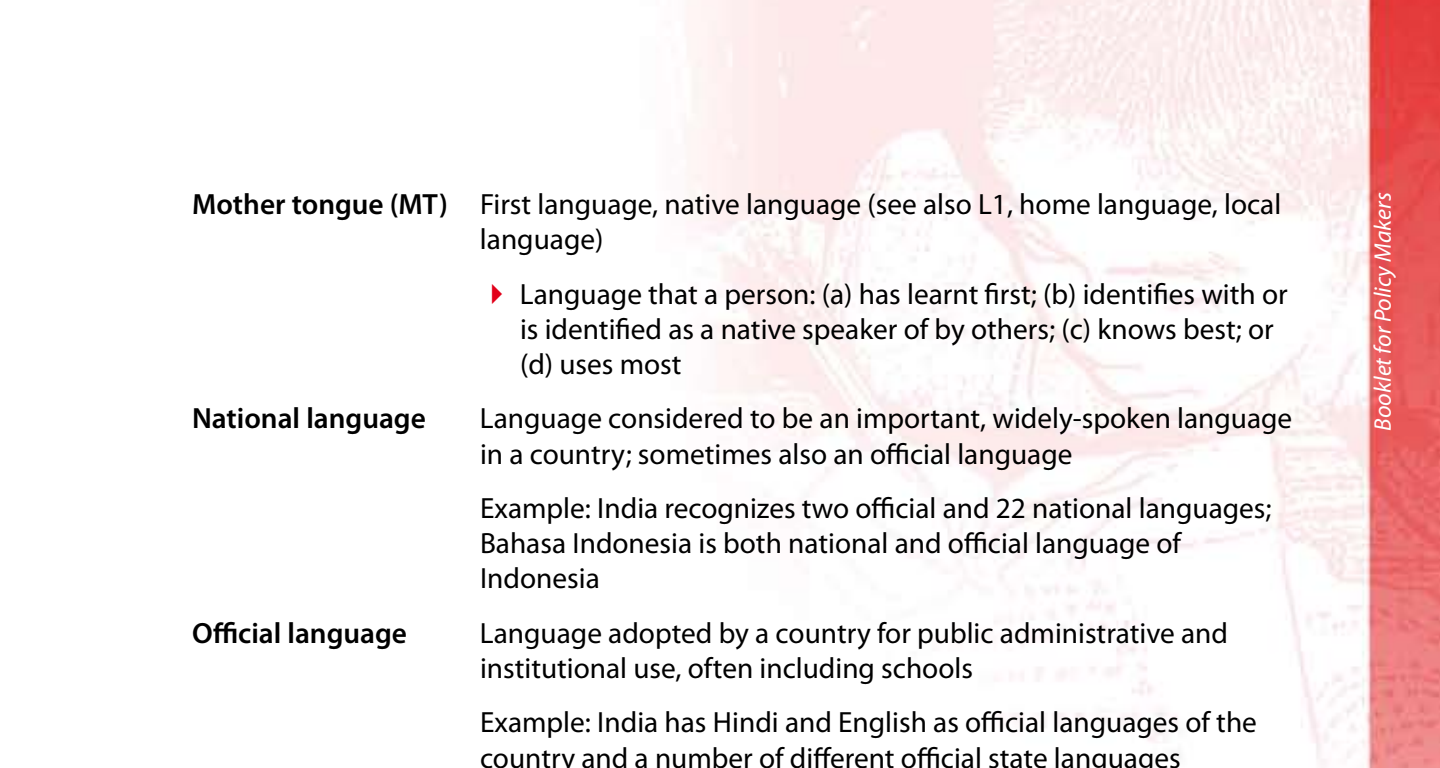
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## Glossary of Terms – Languages

<b>Dominant language</b>	Language spoken by the dominant social group, or language that is seen as the main language of a country <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ <i>May have official or national language status even if it is not spoken by a numerical majority of the national population</i></li></ul>
<b>Foreign language</b>	Language that is not spoken in the immediate environment of the learner
<b>Heritage language</b>	Language of a person's ancestors or ethnolinguistic group
<b>Home language</b>	Language spoken in the home (see also <b>L1, mother tongue</b> ) <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ <i>Some people have more than one home language</i></li></ul>
<b>L1</b>	First language, native language (see also mother tongue, home language, local language) <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ <i>Refers to language or languages learned from birth</i></li></ul>
<b>L2</b>	Second language, non-native language, language of wider communication, or foreign language <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ <i>Often refers to contexts where the language is spoken in the wider society outside the home; in bilingual education, refers to second (official, foreign) language introduced after the L1</i></li><li>▶ <i>For ethnolinguistic minorities, the L2 is usually an official and/or national language</i></li></ul>
<b>Language of instruction</b>	Language used for teaching and learning the school curriculum, also called medium of instruction
<b>Local language</b>	Language spoken in the immediate community <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ <i>May refer to languages that are not yet fully developed in written form</i></li></ul>
<b>Majority language</b>	Language spoken by the majority of people in a region/country
<b>Minority language</b>	Language spoken by a social and/or ethnic minority group <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ <i>Sometimes used to refer to the language of a numerically large group that is not dominant</i></li></ul>



<b>Mother tongue (MT)</b>	<p>First language, native language (see also L1, home language, local language)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ Language that a person: (a) has learnt first; (b) identifies with or is identified as a native speaker of by others; (c) knows best; or (d) uses most</li></ul>
<b>National language</b>	<p>Language considered to be an important, widely-spoken language in a country; sometimes also an official language</p> <p>Example: India recognizes two official and 22 national languages; Bahasa Indonesia is both national and official language of Indonesia</p>
<b>Official language</b>	<p>Language adopted by a country for public administrative and institutional use, often including schools</p> <p>Example: India has Hindi and English as official languages of the country and a number of different official state languages</p>

## Glossary of Terms – General

<b>Alienation</b>	Being disconnected from one's own language and culture <b>▶</b> <i>Minority language speakers in dominant language education may later reject their own language and culture</i>
<b>Awareness-raising</b>	Providing information that can help people achieve the goals and needs that they have identified for themselves
<b>Bilingual</b>	<i>Individual:</i> Ability to speak/understand (and sometimes read/write) at least two languages <i>Society:</i> Presence of at least two language groups
<b>Competencies</b>	Knowledge, abilities or skills in language or other subjects of the school curriculum
<b>Curriculum</b>	Teaching plan, content and instructional materials for an education programme
<b>Dominant group</b>	Most powerful social group of the country due to population (numerical majority), economics (wealth) and/or politics (power)
<b>First Language First MLE</b>	Schooling beginning with the L1 for reading, writing and learning, while teaching the L2 (see <b>multilingual education</b> )
<b>Gender equality</b>	Situation in which women and men have equal conditions for realizing their full human rights and for contributing to, and benefiting from, economic, social, cultural and political development.
<b>Illiterate</b>	Person who has not yet had the opportunity to learn reading and writing in a language she/he understands
<b>Implementation</b>	The process of mobilizing people and resources to carry out a new programme
<b>Indigenous</b>	Person or group descended from original or early inhabitants of a region or country
<b>Interculturalism</b>	Promotion of mutual understanding and tolerance between ethnolinguistic and/or social groups
<b>Language minority</b>	Group of people who share a language and often have less power in society due to population (numerically fewer), economics (less wealth) and/or politics



<b>Literacy</b>	Ability to read, write, calculate and otherwise use a language to do whatever is needed in life
<b>Mainstream</b>	Language and culture of the dominant group ▶ <i>Often refers to schools designed for members of the dominant group that do not meet the needs of linguistic minorities</i>
<b>Migrant</b>	Person or group that has moved from one region to another
<b>Mobilization</b>	The process of organizing a community (and its supporters) to work together to plan and implement a programme
<b>Multilingual</b>	<i>Individual:</i> Ability to speak/understand (and sometimes read/write) more than two languages <i>Society:</i> Presence of more than two language groups
<b>Multilingual education (MLE)</b>	Use of more than two languages for literacy and instruction ▶ <i>Ideally this begins with developing the L1 and adding other languages gradually</i>
<b>Non-governmental Organization (NGO)</b>	Agency that is not part of any national government, often working for community development
<b>Orthography</b>	Standardized system for writing a language, including a script and rules for spelling and punctuation (see also <b>writing system</b> )
<b>Sustainability</b>	Setting up a programme so that it will continue for a long time
<b>Transfer</b>	What is learned in the L1 contributes to competence in other languages; one only needs to learn to read once
<b>Writing system</b>	Graphic representation of a spoken language (see also <b>orthography</b> )



United Nations  
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**Advocacy Kit for  
Promoting Multilingual Education:**  
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***Advocacy kit for promoting multilingual education: Including the excluded.***

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# Booklet for Programme Implementers

## Introduction

*Fifty percent of the world's out-of-school children live in communities where the language of schooling is rarely, if ever, used at home. This underscores the biggest challenge to achieving Education for All: a legacy of non-productive practices that lead to low levels of learning and high levels of dropout and repetition.<sup>1</sup>*

This booklet is about education programmes that meet the learning needs of people who speak non-dominant or minority languages – those described in the quotation above. This booklet uses a question and answer format to discuss the following general topics:

- Educational situation for people who do not speak official school languages
- Definition and purpose of “mother tongue-based multilingual education” (MLE) programmes.
- Process of building a strong educational foundation in students’ first language and a good “bridge” to the official school language
- Planning and implementing effective MLE programmes

## Questions and Responses: Language and Education in Minority Language Communities

**Q1:** *What is the educational situation for people who do not speak official school languages?*

People whose home languages are different from official school languages are likely to suffer from a lack of educational access and/or quality:

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<sup>1</sup> World Bank. 2005. *Education Notes. In Their Own Language: Education for All*. Washington D.C., World Bank. [http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EDUCATION/Resources/Education-Notes/EdNotes\\_Lang\\_of\\_Instruct.pdf](http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EDUCATION/Resources/Education-Notes/EdNotes_Lang_of_Instruct.pdf) (Accessed on 17 November 2006)



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- Many, especially those in remote areas, have no access to schools at all, or have schools but no teachers.
- If there are schools and teachers, the teachers are unlikely to share the students' social and cultural background or to speak the students' language.
- Teaching materials and textbooks (if there are any) are in a language the students do not understand. Lessons ignore the students' own knowledge and experience, and give the impression that only the dominant language and culture are important.
- Because the students do not understand the school language – and therefore the lesson content – many of them do not do well in their classes. They have to repeat grades and eventually become discouraged and leave school altogether.

**Q2: *What is Mother Tongue-based Multilingual Education (MLE) and how does it help students do better in school?***

Mother Tongue-based MLE programmes begin in students' first or home language, help them build fluency and confidence in the official school language (and additional languages, as required) and encourage them to use both their own and the official language to achieve a quality education.

Effective MLE programmes help to overcome several specific educational problems experienced by minority students in mainstream, dominant language schools:

**Problem in mainstream schools:** Students are expected to communicate in the school language when they begin their education, even though they may not have heard it before.

- *MLE solution:* Students begin school using their home or first language. If students from several language groups are in the same class, a local lingua franca may be used.

**Problem in mainstream schools:** Students must learn increasingly abstract concepts using the new language before they have built the vocabulary in that language to understand or apply the concepts.

- *MLE solution:* In the early grades, teachers use the student's known language to teach academic concepts. At the same time, the students begin learning the new language, first orally and then for reading and writing.

As the children gain fluency in the new language, teachers begin to use that language for instruction. But they continue to use the home language to introduce new ideas, to review what the students have learned and to clarify things they did not understand.

Once students understand a concept in their first language, they do not need to re-learn it in the second language. They only need to learn the second language vocabulary to communicate what they know in that language. This is why many MLE teachers say, *"This is the first time that my students have understood these concepts!"*

Carefully planned Mother Tongue-based MLE programmes should produce students who are:

- *Multilingual* – they use two or more languages in their everyday interactions and for learning in school.
- *Multiliterate* – they read and write competently in both or all of their languages.
- *Multicultural* – they are comfortable living and working with people from outside their community while maintaining their love and respect for their home culture and community.

**Q3: What is the process by which children go from their first language to the official language in school?**

When teachers are professionally trained and have access to quality materials in both the students' home language and the official language, the process and pace of language education can be flexible. However, experiences in Asia and the Pacific have shown that when teachers lack professional training, when there are few teaching and learning materials and when the students have little exposure to the new language outside of school, it is best to proceed more slowly, so that neither students nor teachers are overwhelmed.

One of the underlying principles of mother tongue-based multilingual education is that students learn best when they use what they already know (their knowledge and experience, their own language) to learn what is new (new facts, new concepts, new languages). So MLE programmes focus on helping students build a good educational foundation in their first language and a good bridge to the new language.

**Beginning in the first language.** In good MLE programmes, students begin to construct a strong educational foundation when they begin to learn in their first language – the language they speak and understand best. Lessons introduce new topics by relating them to the students' own knowledge and experience. Research has found that this foundation in the first language is the key to helping students learn additional languages successfully:

*The level of development of children's mother tongue is a strong predictor of their second language development... Children...with a solid foundation in their mother tongue develop stronger literacy abilities in the school language.<sup>2</sup>*



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2 Cummins, J. 2000. *Bilingual Children's Mother Tongue: Why is It Important for Education?* <http://www.iteachilearn.com/cummins/mother.htm> (Accessed on 17 November 2006)



**Bridging to the new language.** Having established an educational foundation in their home language, students begin learning the new language, first orally and then in written form. However, they do not stop using their first language as soon as they have achieved basic competency in the new language. Rather, they continue using both languages for learning, at least through primary school:

*When children continue to develop their abilities in two or more languages throughout their primary school years, they gain a deeper understanding of language and how to use it effectively. They have more practice in processing language, especially when they develop literacy in both, and they are able to compare and contrast the ways in which their two languages organize reality.<sup>3</sup>*

We can identify four general phases for language education, beginning in the students' first language and then adding the new language – first orally and then in written form. (Additional phases may be needed for each new language that is added.) Each phase builds on those preceding it, and at each phase teachers reinforce what the children have already learned.



Phases of language education at primary level<sup>5</sup>

3 Cummins, J. 2000.

4 L1 = the children's first/home/heritage language, the language they know best  
L2 = the children's second language/official/national language

5 Adapted from S. Malone, 2005b. *Planning Community-based Education Programmes in Minority Language Communities*. Resource manual for mother tongue speakers of minority languages engaged in planning and implementing education programmes in their own communities.

#### **Q4. What is involved in implementing strong and effective Mother Tongue-based MLE programmes?**

A study of MLE programmes around the world reveals that the most successful and sustained programmes share several characteristics:

1. Minority language communities share responsibility for planning, implementing, evaluating and maintaining their programmes.
2. Government agencies, NGOs, universities and other interested agencies work together in supporting the programmes.
3. Adequate funding is provided for all programme components, especially training, materials development, and provision of wages for local teachers.
4. Students, their parents and their communities recognize the benefits of the programme in helping them achieve their educational goals.



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The process of implementing and sustaining these programmes usually consists of the following general categories of activities:



Programme implementers may not be responsible for all of the activities listed in the diagram above. For example, they may not be involved in establishing supportive policies or securing funds for the MLE programme. They will, however, be involved in most of the other activities. The following sections provide a brief and very general overview of these activities.

**Gathering information for planning.** Successful programmes begin with good planning, and good planning requires good information. Answers to the questions below will help to provide some of the information needed for planning effective MLE programmes:

- How do people in the language communities describe their current educational situation? (*What are their goals for their children's education? What problems or needs do they identify?*)
- Which minority language communities are ready to begin an MLE programme? (*Are they committed to developing their language for educational purposes? Have they identified potential teachers and writers? Do they have a place to hold classes? Are they prepared to take their share of responsibility for implementing and maintaining their programme?*)
- What is the status of the local language? (*Does it have a written form that is acceptable to mother tongue speakers, to educators and to appropriate government officials?*)

- What resources can be mobilized? (*Where will training take place? Who will be the trainers? Who will supervise the classes? Who will help to develop the MLE curriculum? Who will create reading materials in the students' languages?*)
- What factors might hinder implementation and sustainability of the programme, and what are possible solutions to problems? (*Will transportation be a problem for training, supervision and distribution of materials? If so, are there local training facilities that can be used? Can "master teachers" be promoted to supervise other teachers in their vicinity?*)
- What is the current language and education situation according to available reports and other documents? (*What percentages of children from each language community enter the school system? What percentage of those who enter finish Grade 6? Grade 10? What percentages of adults are able to use print literature? In which language or languages?*)



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### Example from the Philippines: Preliminary Research for a Non-formal Adult Education Programme<sup>6</sup>

The Bureau of Non-formal Education of the Philippines has initiated First Language First bilingual education programmes in several language communities, but because of a lack of resources such as learning materials and trained facilitators, not all the programmes have been implemented as planned. One programme that has been sustained is the “Indigenous People’s Education Programme” of the Magbikin language community in Morong, Bataan. This action research project consisted of two phases. The first phase focused on identifying learning needs and developing local curriculum and learning materials. The second phase involved producing the learning materials, building capacity and organizing learning group sessions. A report of this programme identified several research strategies that programme facilitators used to learn from the community about their goals and needs:

- ▶ Project orientation sessions that focused on the purposes and processes for collecting information through action research
- ▶ Community dialogue sessions to establish rapport with leaders and other members of the community
- ▶ Group discussions on particular topics to generate information about the community
- ▶ Home visitations and interviews with key members of the community to validate and supplement the information gathered through group discussion

Needs and problems that were identified through these sessions were categorized and prioritized according to input from community members. Programme facilitators used these categories to develop a community-centered curriculum for the non-formal education programme.

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6 Valles, M. C. 2005. Action Research on the Development of an Indigenous Peoples Education Programme for the Magbikin Tribe in Morong, Bataan, Philippines. UNESCO, *First Language First: Community-based Literacy Programmes for Minority Language Contexts in Asia*. Bangkok, UNESCO, pp. 181-195.

**Raising awareness and mobilizing partners.** People need information about the purpose and benefits of multilingual education if they are to support MLE programmes. Awareness-raising and mobilization activities should provide information that will encourage people to work together in planning, implementing and supporting their programme. Activities can take place at the community level, at the district or province level, or nationally.

**Awareness-raising and mobilization in communities.** People from minority language communities who have experienced many years of discrimination and neglect may feel that their language and culture are of no value. They often believe that the best thing they can do for their children is to get them into the “language of power” as quickly as possible. They are afraid that if they use their own language in the classroom, their children will have fewer chances to learn the official or dominant language.

To overcome these perceptions, awareness-raising should focus on both the educational and the cultural value of multilingual education. Activities can include talking about MLE with parents and other community members, showing them reading materials in their own language, performing dramas or skits (for example, a skit to show a class with the teacher using a language the students don’t understand, followed by another skit with the teacher using the students’ home language) and then talking about the message that was communicated, visiting an MLE class in another community, or showing a video of an interactive MLE classroom.

### Example from the Philippines: Awareness-raising at the Community Level for a Primary School Programme<sup>7</sup>

Educators in the Philippines visited a local community to talk with parents about the MLE programme that had been established in their school. Some parents still did not fully understand the purpose of the programme and were worried that their children would not be able to learn Filipino and English (the official languages of the country) well. The visitors explained that the MLE programme was meant to help their children to build a strong educational foundation in their home language and a good bridge to the official languages. The visitors carefully answered the parents’ questions and gave examples from other parts of the country. At the end of the meeting, the parents told their visitors, “Okay. We’ll keep the programme. But you must go back and tell the people in Manila to be sure that they help our children to build a strong foundation and a good bridge!”

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7 From author’s personal communication. 2001. Philippines.

**Awareness-raising and mobilization at district and provincial levels.** If local, district and provincial officials in the education system do not understand the reason for using non-official languages in primary school, they will have difficulty supporting MLE. Education officials need information about the rationale, purpose and benefits of MLE, and assurance that the MLE programme will be worth the effort it will take to implement and support it.



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Mobilization activities can include:

- Group discussions (with members of the minority communities) about educational problems faced by students who do not speak the official school language;
- Visits to MLE classes, or viewing videos of classes, followed by discussions of what they observed;
- Participation in preliminary research, training workshops, and/or curriculum development; and
- Encouragement to think innovatively about ways to develop successful programmes.

### Example from Papua New Guinea: Awareness-raising for Pre-primary Education at the Provincial Level<sup>8</sup>

When members of the Kaugel language community initiated a pre-primary mother tongue education programme for their children, one of first things they did was to establish their own language and education association and register it officially with the government as an NGO. The coordinator of the programme, a former schoolteacher, understood that if the local programme were to be sustained, it would have to be accepted and approved by officials from the provincial education office. The coordinator visited the education office in the provincial capital, taking samples of graded Kaugel language reading materials that had been produced for the programme. He invited the provincial education officer to visit training workshops and classes, and he sent regular reports about the programme to the education office. In addition, the Kaugel coordinator offered to assist provincial education officers in training people from other language groups who wanted to initiate pre-primary programmes. The relationship between the Kaugel programme and the provincial education office was mutually beneficial: Kaugel trainers assisted with provincial teacher training workshops, and the provincial education office provided classroom supplies (and credibility) to the Kaugel programme. The Kaugel programme, initiated in 1984, has been successfully sustained for over twenty years and Kaugel-First education is now part of Papua New Guinea's formal education system.

***Awareness-raising and mobilization at the national level.*** Arranging visits to successful programmes within or outside the country is an excellent awareness-raising activity for policy makers and other national officials. Another strategy is to host a national or regional symposium or workshop that focuses on multilingual education.

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8 From author's personal experience working with the Kaugel language programme from 1982 to 1987.



### Example from India: Awareness Raising for Multilingual Education at the National Level<sup>9</sup>

In 2005, the “Workshop on Multilingual Education, with Special Focus on Tribal Education” was held in Mysore, India. The three-day workshop was sponsored by UNESCO, UNICEF, the National Council on Education, Training and Research and the Central Institute of Indian Languages.

The purpose of the workshop was to bring together members of the minority language communities, practitioners, scholars and policy makers to discuss issues relating to the educational needs of minority language speakers. Workshop planners hoped that participants would learn from each other while they talked about planning education programmes that were appropriate to the educational needs of the language communities and that affirmed the students’ languages and cultures.

Since policies are made at the state level in India, the workshop was intended particularly to raise awareness among government officials at that level. Speakers of the minority languages, members of NGOs that support MLE programmes and a number of national level scholars and government officials were also invited. The aim was to have a balance between grassroots workers, scholars and policymakers.

At the end of the workshop, participants identified four points that should be considered essential components of Mother Tongue-based MLE programmes in India:

- ▶ Community involvement from the beginning (including decisions about orthography)
- ▶ A curriculum that is rooted in the local context
- ▶ Mother tongue speakers from the children’s own communities as teachers
- ▶ A variety of reading materials in the children’s home languages

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9 From author’s experience.

**Developing orthographies (writing systems) for as yet unwritten languages.** Developing an orthography or system for writing a particular language involves selecting and testing the symbols/letters and spelling rules (capital letters, punctuation, hyphens, etc.) that will represent the important parts of the language.

Orthography development has two goals: 1) speakers of the language will approve the orthography and use it consistently, and 2) the orthography will be acceptable to the relevant government agencies. The process of orthography development usually includes the following activities:

1. *Language surveys:* Collecting information about the language – number of speakers, geographic area in which the language is spoken, number of dialects/varieties and the degree of similarity or difference between them, people’s attitudes toward their own language(s), and domains (e.g. social, economic, political, religious, cultural) in which the language is used.
2. *Language analysis:* Identifying the parts of the language that need to be represented by letters or symbols.



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3. *Trial orthography*: Conducting an orthography workshop in which mother tongue speakers of the language, with help from linguists as necessary, identify the letters or symbols that will represent their language and produce a tentative or trial orthography.
4. *Testing*: Testing the trial orthography both formally (through observing people's use of the written language and noting problems) and informally (by encouraging as many people as possible to use it as much as possible and by asking for their feedback).
5. *Revision*: Identifying alternative letters or symbols that can be used if problems are discovered with the original (or revised) selections.
6. *Approval*: Conducting a second orthography workshop to present the revised orthography to mother tongue speakers for their approval. Requesting approval from relevant government agencies, as well.

Ideally, developing a writing system for a previously unwritten language begins by analyzing the language to identify the parts that need to be represented by letters or symbols. Sometimes, however, community members want to begin an MLE programme quickly and do not feel they have time for extensive language analysis. Working together, ideally with support from linguists, mother tongue speakers can develop an initial orthography for their language. It is important to note, however, that the more quickly the orthography is developed, the more carefully it must be tested. Also, it is best not to produce expensive reading materials until the mother tongue speakers and relevant government agencies have approved the orthography.

## Example from Papua New Guinea: Developing Orthographies for Many Languages<sup>10</sup>

Alphabet Design Workshops<sup>11</sup> enable members of a minority language community to begin developing orthography (alphabet) for their language. The workshop plan is based on recognition that mother tongue speakers of a language have trustworthy perceptions about the way their language should be spoken and written.

An Alphabet Design Workshop for a language group usually lasts about ten days. At the workshop, mother tongue speakers, encouraged and supported by alphabet design specialists, write and edit stories, explore the sound patterns of their language and produce a Trial Spelling Guide that includes their new alphabet, spelling rules, and a short dictionary. Stories written during the workshop are collected in a separate book to be used later to test the new alphabet in the language community. Through these activities, participants develop a greater understanding of the structure of their language and the issues that should be considered in developing the trial alphabet.

Alphabet Design Workshops follow a basic pattern:

1. Participants write and then read stories in their language;
2. They identify problems with the alphabet as they go through the writing and reading process;
3. They discuss options for solving these problems;
4. They make decisions about which letters or symbols to use; and
5. They test their decisions.

These five steps are repeated as often as necessary in the decision-making process. This encourages participants to continue assessing their new alphabet and make necessary changes. The process also encourages them to understand that their writing system is not something that can never be changed but that it is a tool to be used and modified as needed by the language community.

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10 Easton, C. 2003 (7-9 November). *Alphabet Design Workshops in Papua New Guinea: A Community-based Approach to Orthography Development*. International Conference on Language Development, Language Revitalization and Multilingual Education. Bangkok, [http://www.sil.org/asia/ldc/parallel\\_papers/catherine\\_easton.pdf](http://www.sil.org/asia/ldc/parallel_papers/catherine_easton.pdf) (Accessed on 17 November 2006)

11 Alphabet Design Workshops were developed by SIL International in Papua New Guinea. See Easton, C. 2003. [http://www.sil.org/asia/ldc/parallel\\_papers/catherine\\_easton.pdf](http://www.sil.org/asia/ldc/parallel_papers/catherine_easton.pdf) (Accessed on 17 November 2006)

In Papua New Guinea, a country with five million people who speak over 800 languages, Alphabet Design Workshops have served a great need. When the National Department of Education embarked on an MLE programme in the mid-1990s, many language communities needed to develop writing systems so that they could enter the programme. Between 1998 and 2002, 47 Alphabet Design Workshops were held in which people from over 100 languages produced trial alphabets.

Developing an MLE-specific curriculum. Students in strong Mother Tongue-based MLE programmes (i.e. programmes that use the mother tongue as one of the languages of instruction for at least 6 years) should achieve three general learning outcomes:

1. They will understand and be able to apply grade-level academic concepts in the core subjects;
2. They will have begun to develop competence and confidence in using the official school language; and
3. They will have developed competence and confidence in using their own language, both orally and in written form, for a variety of purposes including using it for learning.



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The MLE curriculum should cover the same content as the mainstream curriculum so that students can move easily into mainstream classes at the end of primary school or once first language support is withdrawn. (Please note that the first language should not be withdrawn too soon.) The MLE curriculum should also include a specific “language development” focus (see points 2 and 3, above). Teachers will need to learn appropriate strategies for helping students build competence and confidence in hearing, speaking, reading and writing both their home language and the official language.

The following are some step-by-step suggestions for developing an MLE-specific curriculum:

- 1) *First, list the learning competencies for each subject in the mainstream curriculum.* Remember that these competencies were written for students who speak the official school language as their mother tongue.
- 2) *Go through the competencies for each subject and identify the essential concepts that students are to learn.* Note that essential concepts in math, science, social studies, health and other content areas are not “language-specific”; so the concepts can be learned in any language. Develop MLE competencies that focus on these essential concepts and are appropriate for students from non-mainstream languages and cultures.
- 3) *Next, develop MLE-specific language education competencies for the children’s home language and for the official language* (see the phases of language development above). Ensure that these competencies focus on using both languages for everyday communication and for learning academic subjects.
  - Competencies that relate to using the language for communication have a dual focus: Students will learn to use the new language meaningfully and they will learn to speak, read and write it correctly;
  - Competencies that relate to using the language for learning academic subjects focus on building academic vocabulary in the new language. (Some examples are math terms for multiplication or division, and science terms for condensation or photosynthesis). These tend to be abstract terms, which are more difficult for language learners to learn, remember and use, so they will require special teaching strategies.
- 4) *Provide suggestions for learning activities that MLE teachers can use to help learners achieve each of the competencies.* You may need to make use of internet or other resources for teaching language across the curriculum.
- 5) *Develop Teachers’ Guides that include a template in which teachers list ideas for including local content in each lesson.* (An example for a health lesson would be to write the title of a health-related story written in the home language about local people.) Even when the students are able to use mainstream textbooks, teachers should continue to add local content to the lessons, to ensure that students continue building knowledge in both their languages, based on their own experiences.

### Example from Thailand: Developing MLE-specific Instructional Materials for a Language Revitalization Programme in Primary School<sup>12</sup>

Members of the Chong language community in Chantaburi Province, Thailand, were concerned that their children were losing their language and culture. They wanted to include a Chong language time in the regular Thai-language primary school programme. Community leaders asked for and received permission from education officials to use the “Local Studies” class (part of the regular school curriculum) to teach their language and culture.

Members of the community took part in developing a curriculum for the Chong language and culture class.<sup>13</sup> They developed the language content for oral language lessons, prepared all the instructional and reading materials, and volunteered as teachers for the class.

The language curriculum for the Chong programme had two purposes: to help Chong children learn to understand, speak, read and write their language in an enjoyable atmosphere, and to help the children appreciate their language and be proud of their part in revitalizing their cultural heritage.

One group of older Chong speakers provided the sequence of key words for the mother tongue teachers to use in Chong language learning activities. Another group of adults wrote stories based on Chong culture and oral history. These were made into a series of Chong reading books. A third group of parents wrote stories for 27 “big books” – large books that a teacher could read with the whole class, a process called “shared reading”. Chong high school students contributed by preparing illustrations for the big books. Adult Chong speakers also provided traditional songs for the children to learn in class. A transfer primer was developed to help the Chong children, who already knew how to read and write Thai, to bridge back to reading and writing in their heritage language.

This experience highlights the fact that members of minority language groups are the most important resource people for developing curriculum for a multilingual education programme.

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12 Malone, D. and Suwilai P. 2005. Language Development and Language Revitalization in Asia. *Mon Khmer Studies*, Vol. 35, pp. 101-120.

13 This programme did not include use of the children’s first language for other subjects.

**Developing graded reading materials.** Reading is like riding a bicycle – we only need to learn once. Students who have learned to read in their own language can transfer what they have learned to reading in the new language, even if the new language has a different script. The most important factor in helping students become fluent readers in their first language and in the official language is a variety of reading materials in both languages.

Experiences in many MLE programmes have shown that students do not require expensive reading materials. Neatly printed booklets with firm paper covers and black-and-white line drawings are usually acceptable, especially in the early stages of the programme. The most important characteristics of the materials are that: 1) the content is interesting, 2) the language is clear and understandable, and 3) the illustrations are related to the text and appropriate to the local context.



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In addition to the benefits these materials provide for local MLE programmes, the outcome of this process – development of literature in many of the nation’s languages that records the histories and the “stories” of its people – adds to the richness of the national heritage.



### Example from China: Developing Graded Reading Materials<sup>14</sup>

The majority of the 1.6 million people who speak the Kam<sup>15</sup> language live in the mountainous rural areas of Guizhou Province in China. In 2000, Kam community leaders embarked on a bilingual education pilot project in their language area. In the project, teachers use the Kam language in the classroom during the two years of pre-school (with children ages 5-6) before introducing oral Chinese in Grade 1.

One of the “rules” of reading education is that, in order to learn to read well, children need to read often and to read a variety of interesting texts. This presents quite a challenge in minority language communities that have little or no written literature. Kam programme leaders realized that they needed to begin quickly and work hard to produce the reading materials that would be needed for their project.

Production of reading materials began with a writers’ workshop. Guided by a Kam cultural calendar and a list of cultural themes, mother tongue writers eventually produced a total of 160 easy-to-read stories in Kam for the first year of preschool and another 160 stories for the second year.

Kam educators recognized that the children would require more stories and texts as they progressed from Grade 1 through Grade 6. These books would help the children build fluency in their own Kam language as they were learning to read and write Chinese. So the Kam writers produced about 40 stories for each year of primary school. The stories are about topics that are relevant and interesting to Kam children. In addition to those stories, Kam speakers produced another 120 “extra-curricular” stories for children to practice independent reading.

This emphasis on providing Kam students with ample reading materials has helped the children build high competence in their own language and has given them the confidence to transfer what they know to reading and writing Chinese. Preliminary observations indicate that Kam children in the early grades of primary school are reading and writing Chinese better than they ever did before.

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14 Geary, N. and Pan, Y. 2001 (19-21 September) *Eight Hundred Stories for Dong Development: A Bilingual Education Pilot Project in Guizhou Province, China*. 6th Oxford International Conference on Education and Development. Oxford, United Kingdom.

15 “Kam” (pronounced like “gum” in English) is the name the people call themselves. Other people in China often refer to this group as the “Dong.”

**Recruiting and training MLE staff.** The most successful MLE programmes are those that have recruited motivated and respected individuals and helped them develop knowledge, skills, creativity and commitment for their assigned roles. Staff will be needed for both of the following categories of activities:

For multiple languages	For a single language
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Plan &amp; coordinate the programme</li> <li>▶ Develop the curriculum</li> <li>▶ Train the staff (including training trainers)</li> <li>▶ Oversee the development &amp; production of materials (in multiple languages)</li> <li>▶ Supervise classes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Plan &amp; coordinate the programme</li> <li>▶ Teach classes</li> <li>▶ Create the reading materials</li> <li>▶ Illustrate the materials</li> <li>▶ Edit the materials</li> <li>▶ Support the programme (create MLE support committee)</li> </ul>

One of the challenges faced by MLE programmes is that, because of nonexistent or ineffective education in the past, there may be few mother tongue speakers from the minority language communities with professional teaching qualifications. Over time, as effective MLE programmes are established and sustained, this situation should change. Until then, one solution is to identify individuals who are fluent in the local language, who understand and appreciate the local culture and who are respected by others in the community, and equip them to teach. Experiences in countries around the world have shown that non-professional teachers who have easy-to-use instructional materials, good quality pre-service and in-service training and regular, supportive supervision can function very well in the classroom. If local teachers are not proficient in the official language, a language-learning component needs to be included in teacher training courses. One effective practice is to use “team teaching”: an assistant teacher from the local community works with a regular primary school teacher from outside the community, and each is responsible for the classes in his/her own language.

### Example from Cambodia: Recruiting and Training Teachers<sup>16</sup>

The purpose of the Highland Children's Education Project in Ratanakiri Province in Cambodia is to establish village schools in minority language communities that have very limited or no access to education or other basic government services. The task of providing education is especially challenging in the remote highland areas because of a chronic and systemic teacher shortage, irregular school attendance, and lack of culturally appropriate teaching and learning materials.

Village school boards are responsible for management of their school and for selecting teachers. Teachers speak the local language as well as Khmer, the national language. Since teachers are from the children's home community, they also share the children's background knowledge and experiences. The challenge, as noted above, is that because of limited access to education in the past, none of the people selected to teach in the village schools have completed a primary school education.

The teacher-training course for the Highland Children's Education Project is designed to prepare these individuals to be teachers in remote bilingual and bi-cultural settings. The course aims to provide culturally appropriate teacher training to participants from indigenous minority groups by doing the following:

- ▶ Enabling participants to develop or extend their own academic knowledge;
- ▶ Equipping them with knowledge and skills in teaching methodologies;
- ▶ Preparing them to become reflective classroom practitioners who strive for ongoing self-improvement;
- ▶ Equipping them to contribute to community development through participatory forums and processes of schooling and education.
- ▶ Contributing to the enhancement of their social standing in their communities; and
- ▶ Supporting the development of indigenous perspectives on education.

Teacher training takes place in "learning cycles" in which trainees participate in cycles of intensive input followed by immediate practice and then evaluation. This is an "action research" approach which is recognized worldwide, particularly by educators, as a strategy for promoting effective learning and developing sound practices.

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<sup>16</sup> Middleborg, J. 2005. *Highland Children's Education Project: Good Lessons Learned in Basic Education*. Bangkok, UNESCO.

**Documenting and evaluating the programme.** In effective and sustained MLE programmes, evaluation and documentation begin at the planning phase and continue through the life of the programme. Following are components of the programme that should be documented and evaluated regularly and examples of questions that can help guide the documentation and evaluation process:

*Curriculum/teaching method.* Are learning outcomes clear? Do the teachers feel comfortable with the teaching methods? Does lesson content relate positively to the local culture? How can the curriculum be improved?

*Personnel.* Are teachers following the instructional plan? Do supervisors and trainers provide encouragement and support to local staff? What can be done to help staff at all levels build competence, confidence and creativity in carrying out their tasks?

*Training.* Do teachers who have completed teacher training workshops demonstrate that they understand the teaching method? Do writers who have completed writers' workshops demonstrate the ability to create, illustrate, edit and test their mother tongue materials? How can training be improved?

*Materials.* Are the instructional materials for non-professional teachers clear and easy to use? Do mother tongue speakers consider the reading materials appropriate? Can the students read them? Do they enjoy them? Is the system for producing reading materials as efficient as it needs to be? Is the distribution system effective and reliable? What parts can be improved?

*Student progress.* Do the students demonstrate that they are achieving the learning outcomes established for their grade level? Are they progressing successfully from one grade to the next? Are the students and their parents satisfied with their progress? What can be done to help students be more successful?

*Programme growth and quality.* Is the programme growing as planned? Are the people responsible for the programme, including members of the language communities, satisfied with the way it is growing? What can be done to ensure that the quality of the programme is maintained as it expands?

*Cost effectiveness.* Are stakeholders satisfied that the cost of the programme is worthwhile in terms of the benefits that have been achieved? If the programme is relatively new, are there ways to be more cost effective without sacrificing programme quality?

*Long-term impact of the programme.* What intended and unintended changes have come about as a result of the programme – for the minority language communities and for the wider society?

Developing sound evaluation instruments, documenting results and then using the information to make necessary changes helps to ensure that the programme will meet the expectations of those responsible for it and those who fund it. Most importantly, it helps to ensure that the programme meets the goals and expectations of the minority language communities. In addition, documentation of the strengths and weaknesses of existing programmes provides valuable information for those planning new programmes.

## Example of Documentation and Evaluation of MLE Programmes: The Longitudinal Research Project

Longitudinal research studies of MLE programmes in Europe and North America have found that the benefits of multilingual education become most apparent after an extended period of time. Accurate evaluations of MLE programmes, therefore, need to follow minority language students all the way through their MLE programme and beyond, to see how they do in the mainstream education system relative to students who have not had mother tongue schooling.

Until recently, very little research of this kind has taken place in Asia, the Pacific or Africa. To provide policy-makers and educators from these parts of the world with information about multilingual education, a Longitudinal Research Project (LRP) was initiated in 2003 by SIL International to collect and analyze data from MLE programmes over a ten-year period.

The LRP will track participants in experimental (MLE) and “control” (no home language) classes through primary school and into secondary school. Particular attention will be given to student attendance and retention data, results of student performance measures from local, district, provincial and/or national examinations, and evaluations of instructional materials and methods, teacher attitudes, training and supervision.

***Cooperation among supporting agencies.*** Governments alone cannot plan and implement strong, sustained MLE programmes without the participation of the minority language communities. The communities, even with help from NGOs, cannot sustain their programmes without governmental support at all levels. Strong and sustainable MLE programmes require cooperation and support from multiple agencies – government, universities, research institutes, NGOs and others – working alongside the communities in planning, implementing, and evaluating their programmes. Building cooperation among supporting agencies makes the best use of resources, including the experience and expertise of each partner.

**Q5: Can we afford to implement MLE programmes in multiple languages? Is it worth the effort?**

A better question might be, “Can we afford not to provide appropriate education for speakers of minority languages?”

*We have a few hundred years of evidence that submersion in the L2 is “highly inefficient,” if not downright wasteful and discriminatory, since such school systems are characterized by low intake, high repetition and dropout, and low completion rates. The costs to the individual, who sacrifices productive agricultural and family work time to go to school, only to experience failure and rejection, are high. The overall costs to the society, then, are clearly astronomical, and must be seen as at least partially to blame for the lack of inclusive, participatory governing in post-colonial countries.<sup>17</sup>*

In addition to educational and long-term financial benefits, MLE programmes serve a wider purpose. Government support for strong MLE programmes demonstrates to all citizens that minority languages, and those who speak the languages, are valued. MLE programmes that help learners to build a good “bridge” between their home language and the official languages help to build national unity without forcing people to sacrifice their unique linguistic and cultural heritage. Experiences around the world have demonstrated that denying or suppressing people’s linguistic and cultural heritage has been a cause for division and strife. MLE supports unity through affirming diversity rather than instead of diversity.

*Perhaps the best people to answer the question “Is it worth it?” are the members of the ethnic minority communities themselves. To end this booklet with a community voice, here is the viewpoint of one parent from Papua New Guinea:*

*When children go to school, they go to an alien place. They leave their parents, they leave their gardens, they leave everything that is their way of life. They sit in a classroom and they learn things that have nothing to do with their own place. Later, because they have learned only other things, they reject their own.*

*They don’t want to dig kaukau [sweet potatoes], they say it’s dirty; they don’t want to help their mother fetch water. They look down on those things. There are big changes in the children now. They don’t obey their parents; they become rascals. And this is because they have gone to school and left the things that are ours.*

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17 Benson, C. 2001 (20 April). *Real and Potential Benefits of Bilingual Programmes in Developing Countries*. Third International Symposium on Bilingualism. Bristol, England.

*Now my child is in a Tok Ples school. He is not leaving his place. He is learning in school about his customs, his way of life. Now he can write anything he wants to in Tok Ples. Not just the things he can see, but things he thinks about, too. And he writes about his place. He writes about helping his mother carry water, about digging kaukau, about going to the garden.*

*When he writes these things they become important to him. He is not only reading and writing about things outside, but learning through reading and writing to be proud of our way of life. When he is big, he will not reject us. It is important to teach our children to read and write, but it is more important to teach them to be proud of themselves, and of us.<sup>18</sup>*



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18 Delpit, L. D. and Kemelfield, G. 1985. An Evaluation of the Viles Tok Ples Skul Scheme in the North Solomons Province. ERU Report No. 51. Waigani, Papua New Guinea, University of Papua New Guinea. pp. 29-30.

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## Glossary of Terms – Language

<b>Dialect</b>	Manner of speaking a language that varies according to region or social group (see also <b>variety</b> )
<b>Dominant language</b>	Language spoken by the dominant social group, or language that is seen as the main language of a country <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ <i>May have official or national language status even if it is not spoken by a numerical majority of the national population</i></li></ul>
<b>Heritage language</b>	Language of a person's ancestors or ethnolinguistic group
<b>Home language</b>	Language spoken in the home (see also <b>L1, mother tongue</b> ) <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ <i>Some people have more than one home language</i></li></ul>
<b>L1</b>	First language, native language (see also <b>mother tongue, home language, local language</b> ) <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ <i>Refers to language or languages learned from birth</i></li></ul>
<b>L2</b>	Second language, non-native language, language of wider communication, or foreign language <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ <i>Often refers to contexts where the language is spoken in the wider society outside the home; in bilingual education, refers to second (official, foreign) language introduced after the L1</i></li><li>▶ <i>For ethnolinguistic minorities, the L2 is usually an official and/or national language</i></li></ul>
<b>Language of instruction</b>	Language used for teaching and learning the school curriculum, also called medium of instruction
<b>Local language</b>	Language spoken in the immediate community <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ <i>May refer to languages that are not yet fully developed in written form</i></li></ul>
<b>Majority language</b>	Language spoken by the majority of people in a region/country
<b>Minority language</b>	Language spoken by a social and/or ethnic minority group <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ <i>Sometimes used to refer to the language of a numerically large group that is not dominant</i></li></ul>

**Mother tongue (MT)** First language, native language (see also **L1**, **home language**, **local language**)

- ▶ *Language that a person: (a) has learnt first; (b) identifies with or is identified as a native speaker of by others; (c) knows best; or (d) uses most*

**National language** Language considered to be an important, widely-spoken language in a country; sometimes also an official language

*Example: India recognizes two official and 22 national languages; Bahasa Indonesia is both national and official language of Indonesia*

**Official language** Language adopted by a country for public administrative and institutional use, often including schools

*Example: India has Hindi and English as official languages of the country and a number of different official state languages*

**Variety** Manner of speaking a language that varies according to region or social group (see also **dialect**)



## Glossary of Terms – General

<b>Alienation</b>	Being disconnected from one's own language and culture <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ <i>Minority language speakers in dominant language education may later reject their own language and culture</i></li></ul>
<b>Awareness raising</b>	Providing information that can help people achieve the goals and needs that they have identified for themselves
<b>Bilingual</b>	<i>Individual:</i> Ability to speak/understand (and sometimes read/write) at least two languages <i>Society:</i> Presence of at least two language groups
<b>Bilingual education</b>	Use of at least two languages for literacy and instruction <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ <i>Ideally, literacy and learning begin with the learner's first language, and a second language is introduced gradually</i></li></ul>
<b>Competencies</b>	Knowledge, abilities or skills in language or other subjects of the school curriculum
<b>Curriculum</b>	Teaching plan, content and instructional materials for an education programme
<b>Dominant group</b>	Most powerful social group of the country due to population (numerical majority), economics (wealth) and/or politics (power)
<b>Facilitator</b>	Person who helps others to learn; teacher
<b>First Language First MLE</b>	Schooling beginning with the L1 for reading, writing and learning, while teaching the L2 (see <b>multilingual education</b> )
<b>Fluency</b>	High competence in speaking, reading and/or writing
<b>Implementation</b>	The process of mobilizing people and resources to carry out a new programme
<b>Indigenous</b>	Person or group descended from original or early inhabitants of a region or country
<b>Language minority</b>	Group of people who share a language and often have less power in society due to population (numerically fewer), economics (less wealth) and/or politics
<b>Literacy</b>	Ability to read, write, calculate and otherwise use a language to do whatever is needed in life

<b>Mainstream</b>	Language and culture of the dominant group <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ <i>Often refers to schools designed for members of the dominant group that do not meet the needs of linguistic minorities</i></li> </ul>
<b>Mobilization</b>	The process of organizing a community (and its supporters) to work together to plan and implement a programme
<b>Multilingual</b>	<i>Individual:</i> Ability to speak/understand (and sometimes read/write) more than two languages <i>Society:</i> Presence of more than two language groups
<b>Multilingual education (MLE)</b>	Use of more than two languages for literacy and instruction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ <i>Ideally this begins with developing the L1 and adding other languages gradually</i></li> </ul>
<b>Non-Governmental Organization (NGO)</b>	Agency that is not part of any national government, often working for community development
<b>Orthography</b>	Standardized system for writing a language, including a script and rules for spelling and punctuation (see also <b>writing system</b> )
<b>Partners</b>	Individuals, organizations and agencies that collaborate with communities to implement a new programme
<b>Submersion</b>	Use of a second/foreign language for all instruction, with little or no help for learners
<b>Sustainability</b>	Setting up a programme so that it will continue for a long time
<b>Transfer</b>	What is learned in the L1 contributes to competence in other languages; one only needs to learn to read once
<b>Writing system</b>	Graphic representation of a spoken language (see also <b>orthography</b> )





United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization

**Advocacy Kit for  
Promoting Multilingual Education:**  
*Including the Excluded*

**Community Members Booklet**





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***Advocacy kit for promoting multilingual education: Including the excluded.***

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[content: Overview of the kit; Language in education policy and practice in Asia and the Pacific; Policy makers booklet; Programme implementers booklet; Community members booklet]

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4. Mother tongue.

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# Booklet for Community Members

## Introduction

For many children from minority language communities, school is an unfamiliar place that teaches unfamiliar concepts in an unfamiliar language. The children's own knowledge and experience – learned from their parents and others in their home community – have no place in the formal school system. If the parents do not speak the official school language, they are effectively excluded from participating in their children's education. One parent described his community's experience with "mainstream" (dominant language) schools in Papua New Guinea:

*When children go to school, they go to an alien place. They leave their parents, they leave their gardens, they leave everything that is their way of life. They sit in a classroom and they learn things that have nothing to do with their own place. Later, because they have learned only other things, they reject their own.*<sup>1</sup>

This booklet describes learner-centered and community-centered education programmes in which children begin their education in their home language and also learn the official school language (and other languages, as required). In these programmes, the knowledge and experience the children have learned from their parents and communities are honored and form the foundation for further learning. These programmes, known as "Mother Tongue-based Multilingual Education" (MLE) programmes, are meant specifically for communities in which learners do not speak the language of formal schooling. Their purpose is to help learners achieve their educational goals without forcing them to sacrifice their home language and culture in the process.

The booklet is organized around a set of questions that are often asked by parents, teachers, administrators and other community members regarding MLE – why is it needed, how does it work, how does it benefit the learners, and what needs to be done to implement it?

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1 Delpit, L. D. and Kemelfield, G. 1985. *An Evaluation of the Viles Tok Ples Skul Scheme in the North Solomons Province. ERU Report No. 51.* Waigani, Papua New Guinea, University of Papua New Guinea. pp. 29-30.



## Questions and Responses: Language and Education in Minority Language Communities

**Q1:** *What is the educational situation for many children from minority language communities?*

When children begin school they must learn many new things. They must

- Learn about proper school behavior;
- Learn to read and write;
- Learn new information and concepts in math, science, social studies and other subjects; and
- Demonstrate that they understand and can use the new information and concepts.

Children who do not speak the official school language when they begin school face special challenges:

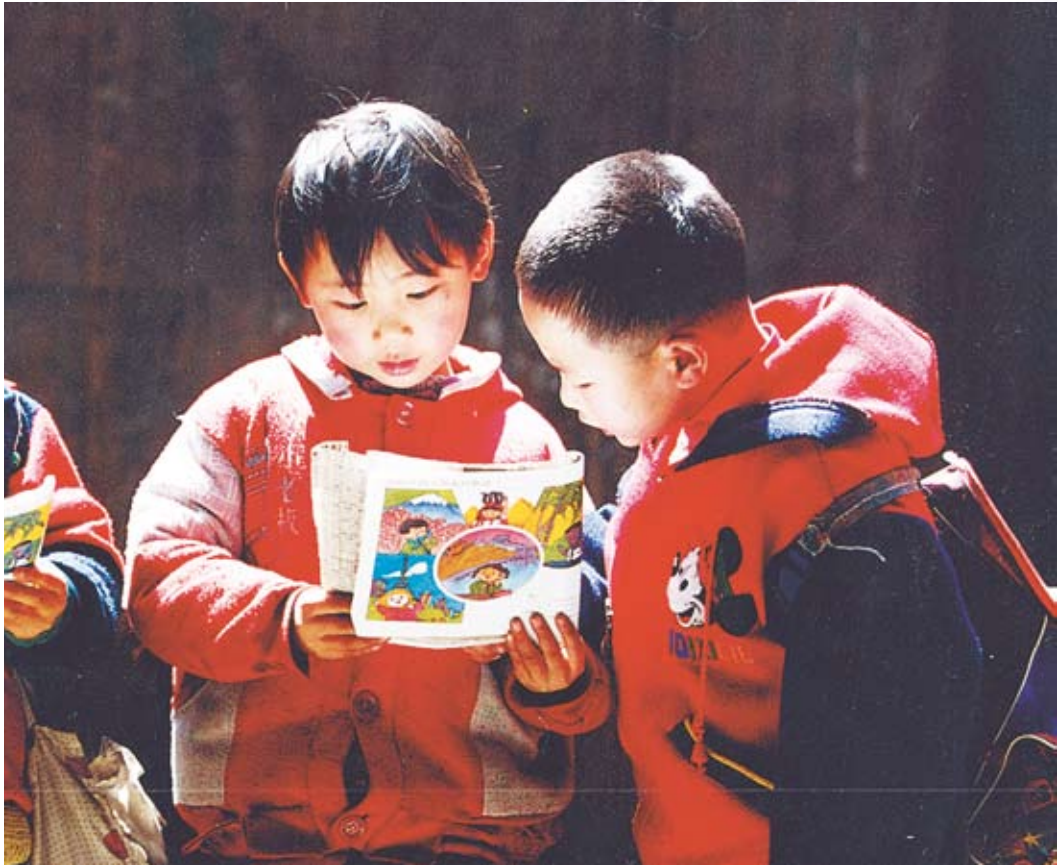
- They must learn the official school language. At the same time, they must try to understand the new things that the teacher is teaching them in the new language.
- They must try to understand the lessons in the textbooks, which are written in the official school language. If they do not yet understand the language well enough to grasp the meaning of the lessons, they are forced to memorize words, phrases and even whole sentences as the teacher reads. Memorization, however, is not the same as understanding, and so they fall farther and farther behind academically.
- They must be able to write in the new language. If they do not understand the language well, they are forced to copy letters, words and sentences from the chalkboard or from a book, but that does not help them learn to express their thoughts in written form.

An education official in India has described this problem in a classroom that he visited:

*The children seemed totally disinterested in the teacher's monologue. They stared vacantly at the teacher and sometimes at the blackboard where some [letters] had been written. Clearly aware that the children could not understand what he was saying, the teacher proceeded to provide even more detailed explanation in a much louder voice.*

*Later, tired of speaking and realizing that the young children were completely lost, he asked them to start copying the [letters] from the blackboard. "My children are very good at copying from the blackboard. By the time they reach Grade 5, they can copy all the answers and memorize them. But only two of the Grade 5 students can actually speak [the school language]," said the teacher.<sup>2</sup>*

2 Jhingran, D. 2005. *Language Disadvantage. The Learning Challenge in Primary Education*. New Delhi, A. P. H. Publishing, p. 1.



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A teacher in Papua New Guinea has described the confusion, and even fear, felt by young learners when they do not understand the official school language:

*During my teaching times, I saw that a lot of children were kind of confused. They were just coming out of the village where their mother and father spoke to them in their home language. And then, here I was, standing like a giant over these small young children and talking to them in a strange language. I was frightening them, rather than encouraging them to learn something...<sup>3</sup>*

Of course, some children from minority language communities do eventually learn the official school language very well. Some do complete their education and integrate successfully with mainstream society. But what happens to their relationship with their community? The sad truth is that when the dominant language is the only language used in the classroom and when lessons focus only on the dominant society, minority children may forget their

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3 Malone, D. 2004. *The In-between People*. Dallas, Tex., SIL International. p. 17.

own language and lose their knowledge, love and respect for their own culture and home community.

To summarize, minority language learners who must attend schools that use a language they do not know face a host of educational, social and other problems. These include:

- High repetition and dropout rates because they cannot learn in a language they do not understand;
- Loss of confidence in themselves as learners because they do not achieve according to their teachers' or parents' expectations;
- Loss of their language, loss of their love for their heritage culture and loss of respect for their home community because the message they get in school is that only the dominant language, culture and society are important;
- Failure to acquire the knowledge and skills they need to get a good job; and
- Failure to acquire the knowledge and confidence to take an active part in the political development of their community and nation. As the Department of Education in PNG has noted:

*[T]he education which the vast majority of children who do not enter the formal employment sector receive alienates them from the way of life of the people and does little to equip them with the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to contribute positively to community or national development.<sup>4</sup>*

#### Q2: *How does a Mother Tongue-based MLE programme help children do better in school?*

Good education in any language is guided by two basic principles:

1. Learning involves meaning: We might be able to memorize, but we cannot really learn something that does not make sense to us.
2. Learning involves going from the known to the unknown: We learn best when we use what we already know to help us understand and use new ideas and information.

Small children experience meaningful learning long before they begin school. They learn about relationships as they interact with their parents and others in the community. They learn about nature and the environment from the world around them. They sort and classify things and compare weights and distances as they go about their everyday activities. They evaluate the things that people say and do according to their understanding of what is good and bad, useful and harmful, appropriate and inappropriate. This wealth of knowledge and experience forms the foundation for learning throughout life.

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4 Department of Education. 1991. *Education Sector Review*. Waigani, Papua New Guinea. p. 7.



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The same is true for language. Long before they begin school, children use their home language as a tool for communication and learning:

- They listen to their parents and elders;
- They ask questions about things they do not understand and listen to responses;
- They follow instructions;
- They talk about their ideas;
- They describe what they see and explain what they think;
- They count objects and do simple calculations; and
- They argue with their friends (and sometimes with their parents).

Through these interactions, children gain fluency and confidence in using their home language meaningfully for a variety of purposes. They bring this knowledge about their language with them when they begin school.

## Using what the learners already know...

Good schools and good teachers recognize that the children's home language, knowledge and experience are all valuable resources for learning. They use the children's language for teaching, especially in the early grades, so that the children can make sense of the lessons. They use locally familiar examples to introduce new concepts so that the children can use their knowledge and experience to help them understand the concepts. They provide early reading materials in the children's language, about people, places and activities that are familiar to them so the children find that reading is meaningful and exciting. They encourage children to write creatively in their own language about things they know and think about to help them gain confidence in their ability to communicate their thoughts and ideas in written form. All of these activities help the children to build a strong educational foundation that leads to successful life-long learning.

Here is what educational researchers say about the value of building a strong foundation in the home language:

*The level of development of children's mother tongue is a strong predictor of their second language development... Children...with a solid foundation in their mother tongue develop stronger literacy abilities in the school language.<sup>5</sup>*



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5 Cummins, J. 2000. *Bilingual Children's Mother Tongue: Why Is It Important for Education?* <http://www.iteachilearn.com/cummins/mother.htm> (Accessed on 17 November 2006)

In other words, starting in the home language is not a waste of time. It does *not* take away from the children's ability to learn the new language. In fact, it is the children's most important resource for learning the new language.

### ... to learn what is new

As children gain fluency in using their home language in the classroom, they also begin learning the official school language – first listening and speaking, then reading and writing. This process builds on another educational principle: *We only learn to read and write one time*. The children have already learned to read and write in their home language. They have begun building fluency in hearing and speaking the official school language. This prepares them to learn to read and write the official language more easily and with greater confidence.

In a good MLE programme, the children continue to use both languages – hearing and speaking and reading and writing – for communication and for learning, ideally at least through primary school.

*When children continue to develop their abilities in two or more languages throughout their primary school years, they gain a deeper understanding of language and how to use it effectively. They have more practice in processing language, especially when they develop literacy in both, and they are able to compare and contrast the ways in which their two languages organize reality.<sup>6</sup>*

### Q3: What do parents and teachers think about using the home language in the classroom?

Mother Tongue-based MLE programmes have been established in many minority language communities around the world. Most teachers, principals and parents of children in those programmes have found that students who begin learning in their home language:

- Have more confidence in themselves as learners;
- Participate more actively in classroom discussions;
- Ask more questions;
- Demonstrate a deeper understanding of the subjects;
- Learn to read more easily and understand what they read;
- Learn to write more easily and express themselves better in written form; and
- Learn the school language – oral and written – more easily and with greater comprehension.

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6 Cummins, J. 2000. *Bilingual Children's Mother Tongue: Why Is It Important for Education?* <http://www.iteachilearn.com/cummins/mother.htm> (Accessed on 17 November 2006)



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A district education division supervisor has described the difference she observed when she visited classes:

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*Before, the children just sat in class, but they didn't say anything. They didn't even know how to answer the teacher's questions. Now they always have their hands up! They have so much to say. Now this is an active, excited group of children.<sup>7</sup>*

Parents are also happy because good MLE programmes strengthen children's love and respect for their heritage language and culture. As a parent from PNG has explained:

*Now my child is in [local language] school. He is not leaving his place. He is learning in school about his customs, his way of life. Now he can write anything he wants to in his home language. Not just the things he can see, but things he thinks about, too. And he writes about this place. He writes about helping his mother carry water, about digging sweet potatoes, about going to the garden. When he writes these things, they become important to him. He is not only reading and writing about things outside, but learning through reading and writing to be proud of our way of life. When he is big, he will not reject us. It is important to teach our children to read and write, but it is more important to teach them to be proud of themselves, and of us.<sup>8</sup>*

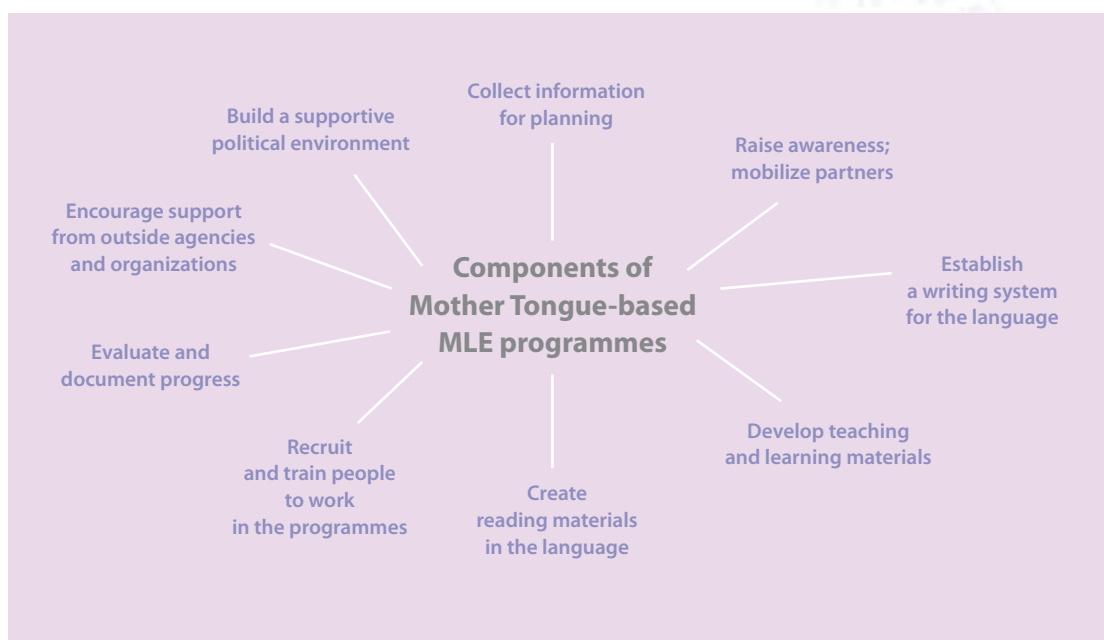
7 Personal communication from a teacher in the Regional Lingua Franca Programme in the Philippines to Susan Malone, SIL International, in 2001.

8 Delpit, L. D. and Kemelfield, G. 1985. *An Evaluation of the Viles Tok Ples Skul Scheme in the North Solomons Province*. ERU Report No. 51. Waigani, Papua New Guinea, University of Papua New Guinea.

#### Q4: What can we do to establish a Mother Tongue-based MLE programme in our community?

Successful Mother Tongue-based MLE programmes require cooperation and support from many people. Most important is that the community members want the programme and are prepared to take ownership of it. Support from school principals, teachers and other education officials is also necessary if the programme is to grow and be maintained.

The following section offers suggestions for communities that want to start a strong MLE programme.<sup>9</sup> Some of the activities described below will continue through the life of the programme; others will last for a shorter period of time. In some places, a particular activity may already have taken place (for example, a language might already have a writing system). In other places, nothing has been done yet, and the community needs to start at the very beginning with its partners.



**Build a supportive political environment.** Policymakers and other authorities must be mobilized to establish political (and financial) support for Mother Tongue-based MLE programmes. Before they can do that, they need to understand the purposes and benefits of the programmes. Language communities and their support networks can take the first step in building a supportive political environment by starting their own small-scale programmes outside the formal education system, such as pre-primary and after-school

9 Malone, S. 2004. Planning community-based education programmes in minority language communities. Resource manual for mother tongue speakers of minority languages. Unpublished manual.





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classes. They can do this without waiting for formal policies to be in place. The success of these individual programmes can make a powerful statement about the value of MLE and help to encourage others to begin building the necessary political support.

Although members of a minority language community may not have access to high-level government officials or have a voice in developing policies they can develop cooperative relationships with other language groups, government agencies, NGOs and others. Working together, these groups have a much stronger voice than they would have on their own. Building relationships, therefore, should be an early and on-going priority for bringing about and sustaining changes “at the top”.

**Collect information for planning the programme.** Strong and sustained MLE programmes respond to the needs and goals identified by people in the community – especially learners and/or their parents. A priority for planners is to learn from parents and other people in the community about the current education situation, asking them to describe their educational goals for their children and to identify strengths and weaknesses in the current system. Wise planners also gather information about resources within the community that could be used in the MLE programme (e.g. suitable buildings, people with good language skills, relevant written materials in the language) and about factors that might hinder programme implementation and sustainability. The process of collecting information provides programme leaders with an excellent opportunity to raise awareness about the

programme (see next activity). Research, along with awareness-raising and mobilization, should continue as the programme expands to additional communities.

**Raise awareness; mobilize partners.** Many parents think that, in order to become fluent in the official school language, their children need to learn the new language as quickly as possible and use it as much as possible. They are afraid that any time spent using the children's home language in school means less time, and even less success in learning the second language. But educational research has shown that just the opposite is true. Building a strong educational foundation in the first language helps children learn the second language more easily.

Parents need to understand the benefits of using the children's first language in school so they will feel more confident about enrolling their children in the programme. Other community members need information and encouragement so they will take active roles in supporting the programme (e.g. maintaining classrooms, helping to teach classes, creating reading materials). Support from local and district education officials will also be necessary if the programme is to be successful and sustained. Awareness-raising and mobilization activities should provide parents and other potential partners within and outside the community with information about the programme and encourage them to be actively involved in planning, implementing, and maintaining the programme.

**Establish a writing system for the language.** If the local language has not yet been put into written form, the community will need to select the symbols or letters for their writing



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system. A linguist who is familiar with the language can help mother tongue speakers make decisions about which symbols or letters to use. Once the community has created a tentative writing system, they need to test their choices and make revisions, as necessary.

The idea of developing a writing system for a previously unwritten language may sound like a difficult task, but in past decades many language communities have done it with great success. Once the writing system has been developed, the community can begin creating written literature and preparing materials for the MLE programme.

**Develop teaching and learning materials.** Teaching and learning materials for an MLE programme should: 1) provide learners with the knowledge, skills and confidence to achieve their educational goals; and 2) continue building on their love and respect for their heritage language and culture.

In strong MLE programmes, local and district education officials, including teachers and principals, work together to develop educationally sound teaching and learning materials. They know the expectations for learners in each grade of primary school and can identify the basic competencies that the children must achieve by the time they enter the mainstream system. The role of the community is to ensure that the teaching and learning materials build on the language, knowledge and experience the children already have when they begin the programme. Community members also help to ensure that the programme maintains a strong heritage language and culture component.

**Create reading materials in the community language.** Children in the MLE programme will need a variety of reading materials in their own language and later in the new language. Early reading materials should be in the children's home language, written by mother tongue speakers about familiar people, places and activities. When the children start reading in the new language, they will need reading materials – from short and simple to longer and more complex – in that language, as well.

Experience in language communities throughout Asia and the Pacific have shown that fluent mother tongue speakers can produce an enormous variety of reading materials in their languages. Here are some examples of the kinds of materials they can develop:

Original stories	Instructions & directions	Announcements
Songs & poetry	Religious & moral teachings	Calendars
Biographies & histories	Dramas & skits	Planning books
Folktales & legends	Alphabet books	Letters
Jokes, riddles & wise sayings	Simple dictionaries	Signs
Travel & geographic information	Activity books	News sheets & newsletters
	Games	Health & other information



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Experience in many language communities has also shown that brightly colored, expensive reading materials are not required, especially for new readers. In most cases, neatly produced booklets with black-and-white line drawings are acceptable if resources are limited, especially when the stories are interesting to the readers and appropriate to their reading ability. The most important points to remember in producing reading materials for new readers are that: 1) the content should be interesting to them, 2) the language should be clear and understandable, and 3) the illustrations should help them to understand the text.

***Recruit and train people to work in the programme.*** The table on the following page lists the staff needed for an MLE programme, along with suggestions for their responsibilities and qualifications.

Whether the teachers and other staff are volunteers or are paid a salary, they will require the encouragement and support of the entire community, including parents. An important early activity is to establish a committee of local leaders who will help with selecting staff and will see that members receive the support they need to do their work well.

Staff	Main responsibilities	General qualifications
Teachers (May need two, one for local language and one for official language)	Teach classes (local and official languages) Assess learners' progress Maintain records of attendance, progress Interact with parents, other community members	Speak, read and write both languages competently Understand and appreciate the local culture Have clear and legible handwriting Be selected and approved by the community
Writers, artists, editors	Writers: Write, adapt, and translate reading materials in the L1 and L2 Artists: Illustrate the materials Editors (and writers): Check the materials for clarity, language, punctuation and spelling Evaluation team: Check the materials locally and revise them as necessary	Speak, read and write the L1 competently Understand and appreciate the local culture Be recognized in the community as good storyteller and/or artist Be literate in the L2 and able to adapt materials from the L2 into the L1 or vice-versa Draw pictures that reflect the local culture and society (artists) Understand L1 grammar and punctuation rules (editors) Be selected and approved by the community
Supervisor / trainer	Visit classes regularly; identify teachers' strengths and weaknesses; help teachers when they have problems Assess learners' progress Make sure accurate records are kept Seek community input in programme management and assessment of progress Conduct pre-service and in-service training for teachers Ensure that adequate classroom supplies are on hand	Speak, read and write the L1 and L2 competently Be knowledgeable about the history and culture of the language group Be able to interact with government officers, school officials and NGO leaders Be able to communicate abstract ideas and model good teaching techniques (trainer) Have experience in teaching the L1 (trainer, supervisor) Be selected and approved by the community
Advisory committee	Serve as advisors to programme leaders Help organize recruitment efforts Liaise between staff and community; communicate the goals, objectives and activities of the programme to the community Encourage the community to help maintain the classrooms and classroom materials If possible, raise funds to support the programme Ensure accountability in the use of funding and other resources	Understand the purpose and goals of the programme Be committed to the programme and willing to work together for its success Be selected and approved by the community

**Evaluate and document progress.** If the MLE programme is established within the formal education system, education officials will be responsible for assessing students' academic progress. However, evaluations of MLE programmes should also assess the community members' satisfaction with the programme in meeting their own cultural and educational goals. When members of the local community participate in documenting and evaluating their own programme, reports will more likely reflect the value of the programme to the community, itself.

**Support from outside agencies and organizations.** Successful MLE programmes require cooperation and support, including financial support, from both within and outside the language community. Only mother tongue speakers of the language can produce the reading materials, teach the classes and judge the programme's success in meeting community goals. Outsiders can help in other specific aspects of the programme such as developing the writing system, developing the curriculum, training teachers, evaluating the programme and finding on-going funding sources. Developing linkages with as many outside agencies as possible will be another important task for programme leaders.



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**Q5: Can it be done? Can communities, with help from supportive partners, establish and sustain their own MLE programmes?**

The experience of one language group in PNG may help to answer that question:

*In the mid-1980s, the 30,000 Kaugel people were concerned because their children, most of whom spoke only their own Kaugel language, were doing poorly in the governmental English-only education system.*

*To prepare their children more adequately for formal education, local leaders, with early support from an NGO operating in their area, decided to establish a First Language First education programme in which children would learn to read and write in their own language before they entered primary school. They formed the Kaugel Non-Formal Education Association (KNFEA), composed of community members, government workers, and religious leaders, to guide and support the programme.*

*Programme leaders recruited mother tongue speakers as writers, artists and editors. Within two years, they had written, illustrated, edited and produced (on a hand-operated duplicator) over a hundred graded reading booklets for pre-primary classes. When these booklets had been tested and revised, programme leaders learned how to write proposals for funding to produce larger quantities of the reading materials.*

*Local people who had at least six years of primary education were recruited as teachers for the pre-primary classes. An experienced teacher, who was the programme coordinator, trained others as trainers for literature production and teacher training workshops. With help from the supporting NGO, programme leaders initiated an income-generating project to provide funding that was used to provide a small stipend for each teacher. Relationships were developed with local government agencies, other NGOs, businesses and the Provincial Non-Formal Education Division. These partners supported the programme by providing financial and/or other resources, including classroom space and school supplies.*

*More than twenty years after it was started, the children's education programme continues to be maintained under the sponsorship of the KNFEA. In the late 1990s, the programme was incorporated into the Government's education system and children who complete the Kaugel language classes continue their education in the English school system.<sup>10</sup>*

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10 The Kaugel First Language First education programme is located in the Western Highlands Province of Papua New Guinea.

Most parents want their children to get a good education, but they also hope that their children will maintain their love and respect for their heritage language and culture, and for their home community. Parents want their children to become confident and self-motivated learners as well as productive members of their communities. By working together, and with the support of partners outside the community, they can make a good beginning towards achieving those goals.



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## Glossary of Terms – Language

<b>Dominant language</b>	Language spoken by the dominant social group, or language that is seen as the main language of a country <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ <i>May have official or national language status even if it is not spoken by a numerical majority of the national population</i></li></ul>
<b>Heritage language</b>	Language of a person's ancestors or ethnolinguistic group
<b>Home language</b>	Language spoken in the home (see also <b>L1, mother tongue</b> ) <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ <i>Some people have more than one home language</i></li></ul>
<b>L1</b>	First language, native language (see also <b>mother tongue, home language, local language</b> ) <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ <i>Refers to language or languages learned from birth</i></li></ul>
<b>L2</b>	Second language, non-native language, language of wider communication, or foreign language <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ <i>Often refers to contexts where the language is spoken in the wider society outside the home; in bilingual education, refers to second (official, foreign) language introduced after the L1</i></li><li>▶ <i>For ethnolinguistic minorities, the L2 is usually an official and/or national language</i></li></ul>
<b>Language of instruction</b>	Language used for teaching and learning the school curriculum, also called medium of instruction
<b>Lingua franca</b>	Widely spoken language used for communication between ethnolinguistic groups  <i>Example: Tok Pisin in PNG</i>
<b>Local language</b>	Language spoken in the immediate community <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ <i>May refer to languages that are not yet fully developed in written form</i></li></ul>
<b>Majority language</b>	Language spoken by the majority of people in a region/country
<b>Minority language</b>	Language spoken by a social and/or ethnic minority group <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ <i>Sometimes used to refer to the language of a numerically large group that is not dominant</i></li></ul>

**Mother tongue (MT)** First language, native language (see also L1, home language, local language)

- ▶ *Language that a person: (a) has learnt first; (b) identifies with or is identified as a native speaker of by others; (c) knows best; or (d) uses most*

**Official language** Language adopted by a country for public administrative and institutional use, often including schools

*Example: India has Hindi and English as official languages of the country and a number of different official state languages*

**Unwritten language** Language that is spoken but not yet used for reading/writing



## Glossary of Terms – General

<b>Advisory committee</b>	Group of leaders committed to supporting an MLE programme <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ <i>Usually composed of mother tongue speakers and members of partner agencies</i></li></ul>
<b>Alienation</b>	Being disconnected from one's own language and culture <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ <i>Minority language speakers in dominant language education may later reject their own language and culture</i></li></ul>
<b>Awareness raising</b>	Providing information that can help people achieve the goals and needs that they have identified for themselves
<b>Bilingual</b>	<i>Individual:</i> Ability to speak/understand (and sometimes read/write) at least two languages <i>Society:</i> Presence of at least two language groups
<b>Competencies</b>	Knowledge, abilities or skills in language or other subjects of the school curriculum
<b>Curriculum</b>	Teaching plan, content and instructional materials for an education programme
<b>Dominant group</b>	Most powerful social group of the country due to population (numerical majority), economics (wealth) and/or politics (power)
<b>First Language First MLE</b>	Schooling beginning with the L1 for reading, writing and learning, while teaching the L2 (see <b>multilingual education</b> )
<b>Fluency</b>	High competence in speaking, reading and/or writing a language
<b>Implementation</b>	The process of mobilizing people and resources to carry out a new programme
<b>Interculturalism</b>	Promotion of mutual understanding and tolerance between ethnolinguistic and/or social groups
<b>Language development</b>	In education: Teaching someone to speak, read and write a language well  <i>In minority language communities:</i> Promoting oral and written use of a language, for example by expanding its vocabulary, agreeing on a written form, and creating books and school materials

<b>Language minority</b>	Group of people who share a language and often have less power in society due to population (numerically fewer), economics (less wealth) and/or politics
<b>Literacy</b>	Ability to read, write, calculate and otherwise use a language to do whatever is needed in life
<b>Mainstream</b>	Language and culture of the dominant group <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ <i>Often refers to schools designed for members of the dominant group that do not meet the needs of linguistic minorities</i></li> </ul>
<b>Migrant</b>	Person or group that has moved from one region to another
<b>Mobilization</b>	The process of organizing a community (and its supporters) to work together to plan and implement a programme
<b>Multilingual</b>	<i>Individual:</i> Ability to speak/understand (and sometimes read/write) more than two languages  <i>Society:</i> Presence of more than two language groups
<b>Multilingual education (MLE)</b>	Use of more than two languages for literacy and instruction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ <i>Ideally this begins with developing the L1 and adding other languages gradually</i></li> </ul>
<b>Non-Governmental Organization (NGO)</b>	Agency that is not part of any national government, often working for community development
<b>Orthography</b>	Standardized system for writing a language, including a script and rules for spelling and punctuation (see also <b>writing system</b> )
<b>Partners</b>	Individuals, organizations and agencies that collaborate with communities to implement a new programme
<b>Sustainability</b>	Setting up a programme so that it will continue for a long time
<b>Writing system</b>	Graphic representation of a spoken language in letters or symbols (see also <b>orthography</b> )

