MOTHER TONGUE CREATES A POSITIVE AFFECTIVE ENVIRONMENT IN THE CLASSROOM

by:
Cristina R. De Dios
Master Teacher I, Wakas Elementary School

The Department of education (Dep Ed) issued Dep Ed Order #74 S.2009 which institutionalized the Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) convinced by overwhelming evidence which showed that the use of mother tongue in early education develops better and faster learners.

The Dep Ed’s goal is to develop lifelong learners who are proficient in the use of their first language, the national language and other languages. They further said that if a child fully understands what is being talked about, he/she can make sense of things and participate intelligently in discussions because a familiar language is used, thus, his/her thinking process is unencumbered.

Another reason that is cited for the native language or Mother tongue (L1) as used in the classroom relates to the fostering of a positive affective environment. Schweers (1999), encourage teachers to insert native language into lessons to influence the classroom dynamics, and suggests that starting with the L1 provides a sense of security and validates the learners lived experiences. This idea of validating learners’ experiences relates to Arkinson’s (1997) mention of the “actual corpus of language (their Mother tongue) which all learners bring into the classroom.” Instead of seeing students’ minds as a tabula rasa, English teachers can recognize students’ previous experience with language and learning and can build on them, and they can expand on learners’ linguistic knowledge by employing the L1 intelligently. An attitude of respect for a learners’ linguistic maturity can help create a better classroom environment. In such
cases, “use of mother-tongue is a signal to the children that their language and culture have values and this will have a beneficial effect on self-perceptions, attitudes, motivation and consequently, on achievement. Garret et al. (1999).

Indeed, the positive aspects of L1 use are not meant to detect from the benefits of maximizing practice opportunities with the target language in the classroom. On the other hand, Ellis (1994) notes that too much L1 use could “deprive the teachers of valuable input in the L2”. Mickey’s (1999) report on input and interaction stresses how conversation, negotiation, and interaction facilitate acquisition “because of the conversational and linguistic modifications that occur in such discourse.”

Director Paraluman Giron of Dep Ed Region IV-A and another strong advocate of MTB-MLE said mother tongue-based education should cover both the teaching of and the teaching through of the child’s first language. “It is not enough that we teach the mother tongue particularly in the early years but we use it in teaching other subjects which are equally rich ground for developing higher order thinking skills among our young learners. The question like “Bakit Nawawala Ang “Bakit” Pag ang Bata ay Nasa Paaralan Na?” can be answered by using the mother tongue in the classroom.” Giron expounded.

Educators believe that if a child cannot fully express himself, he is inhibited to ask more why’s and tend to just keep quiet or just agree with what the teacher says.

“Mother tongue can really help in the second language acquisition of a learner.”

Reference:
Department of Education (Dep Ed) iOrder #74 S.2009: