

**Dr. Kirk Person**

- 1) Mr. Kirk Person of the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL), I have a question to you on how to reconcile the aspirations of most of my Filipino countrymen who would rather prefer having their children speak English as their first language, not the mother tongue, and the empirical evidences that Filipino children would learn more about science and math through Philippine languages, not English? In the current Philippine socio-economic context, learning foreign languages at early age should be, in fact, emphasized as a mechanism for poverty alleviation of my countrymen, that is why instead of forcing the MTB-MLE in the Philippine K-12 curriculum, it would be better to institutionalize teaching second foreign languages like Spanish or Mandarin as early as Grade 1, thank you.

Asker: [joseph20102011@gmail.com](mailto:joseph20102011@gmail.com)

KIRK: This is an issue in many places. What parents—and politicians—often don't understand is that having a strong foundation in the mother tongue improves children's learning of other languages—including English. Extensive research in the USA has shown that children who don't speak English at home (about 25% of total kids in USA!) do WORST when immersed in English-only schools, and much better when they have some mother tongue at school. So if English-only doesn't work in the USA, it certainly will not work in the Philippines!

Again, there is ZERO evidence that teaching lots of English to normal children in normal schools at an early age is an effective way to improve the English or the overall education for most kids (only a small minority—the rich and the naturally gifted—benefit); by contrast, mother tongue + other languages has been proven in many situations by multiple researchers to have positive impacts for all children—and to improve English.

- 2) Hello, this Teacher Michelle Balatbat, Master Teacher 2, and the former President of the Manila Elementary English Teachers Association here in the Philippines. I really admire how you highlighted that MTB-MLE as well as Sign Language here in our country has been promoted and included in our current curriculum. I have witnessed that due to this the Filipino students lack English speaking skills compared with our previous curriculum. I agree that MTB-MLE shall still be prioritized to ensure continuity of learning even to remote areas, but studies also show that the result of our examination in the use of the English language deteriorated. Our new President reiterated that the medium of instruction shall be in English so learners can be globally competitive when they graduate. Sadly the English language shall be taught from Kinder, currently it just starts

from the 2nd semester of Grade 1, and we could see that at the age of 8-10 students are still not speaking English well.

Asker: MICHELLE BALATBAT ([michelle.balatbat002@deped.gov.ph](mailto:michelle.balatbat002@deped.gov.ph))

KIRK: Yes, I have been following news from Philippines with great concern. Politicians and parents are worried about low PISA scores—BUT PISA is for 15-YEAR OLD STUDENTS. So the most recent PISA only tested children who did NOT have MBT-MLE —they were in the old Filipino + English curriculum. Also, the Philippines only allowed kids to take the PISA in English—even the PISA organization recommends that children have the choice to take the test in the language they speak best. Why the Philippines did not allow them to take the PISA in Filipino is a mystery! They probably would have had better scores! So MTB-MLE should not be blamed for low PISA!

The question is about the best way to teach them English. Filipino education has stressed English and Filipino for most of its modern history, and academic results were low. So in 2013 the mother tongue policy came into effect, based on pilot projects that found children learned English and Filipino better when their first few years are in MT

Often people who favor English-only claim that the “Critical Period Hypothesis” gives scientific support for their belief. But actually the CPH was developed for *severely abused children in the USA who never learned any language while young because of the cruelty of their parents in not speaking to them + other physical abuse*. After these children were rescued (usually at age 8 or older), it was hard for them to learn to speak. But somehow CRH has been applied by the English teaching industry to normal children learning English as a Second or Foreign Language at school! This misuse of the CPH.

3) What can you say about some institutions or teachers who implement the English Only policy?

KIRK: It is sad that they have complete faith in English, even though they have ZERO EVIDENCE that it works. Please excuse me for saying that this is a colonial mindset that devalues local languages—and also rejects international research confirmed by UNESCO, UNICEF, World Bank, USAID and others.

4) Can we also use MTBLE in teaching our students in the Secondary level?

KIRK: Yes! The longer the mother tongue has a role in school, the better the outcomes! Also, there has been a lot of research into “translanguaging”--how students use all languages they are familiar with to learn new concepts.

5) The second speaker spoke on student well-being and mother tongue education. How can we measure student well-being and mother tongue education?

KIRK: Very good point--there is anecdotal evidence that children in MTB-MLE programs do better at social-emotional skills. But this is challenging to measure objectively.

### **Dr Milan Thomas**

6) Hello Dr. Milan, Based on the diagram, can we apply contextualization for learners to understand the lesson well (i.e, present/relate the topic in the community) and, to improve learning?

Asker: Czar Justine Navalta ([justinedacanaynavalta@gmail.com](mailto:justinedacanaynavalta@gmail.com))

MILAN: Definitely! The diagram is illustrative and incomplete. Community-based support would be an essential enabling factor for learning recovery in some settings.

7) The first speaker emphasized the importance of measuring and monitoring student performance. This is consistent with the observation that we do not prioritize what we do not measure.

MILAN: There are many things that we can measure that get undue prioritization (GDP, some would argue). Learning is not one of them.

This question must be about how there are aspects of children’s development that are not picked up by standard testing. While improving cognitive skills, non-cognitive skills, social development, and well-being do not necessarily go hand-in-hand, they are all consistent with one goal discussed in the presentation: getting children back into school.

## **Dr Sreehari**

1) How important is the well being of the learners to the equitable education?

Asker: Almira Guevarra ([almira.guevarra@deped.gov.ph](mailto:almira.guevarra@deped.gov.ph))

SREEHARI: Evidence suggests that equity can go hand in hand with wellbeing. It is very important to prioritize the wellbeing of students (*especially children coming from marginalized communities*) along with academic learning.

Many research studies have highlighted the fact that promoting wellbeing in the classroom can improve educational outcomes, decrease problem behaviours, reduce drop outs etc.

Wellbeing also improves teachers' ability to interact with students, face challenges, and avoid burnout.

You can find more details from the following report

<https://www.brookings.edu/blog/education-plus-development/2020/08/14/the-happy-classroom-insights-from-our-study-of-schools-in-delhi-india/>

2) Are you in favor of curriculum review on the implementation of K-12 program?

Asker: Aurelio jr Almazan ([almazanjraurelio@gmail.com](mailto:almazanjraurelio@gmail.com))

SREEHARI: Yes, Curriculum review is very important to ensure the intended objectives, learning outcomes, activities and assessments are aligned. It is an essential component in the process of adopting and implementing any new curriculum in any educational setting. There are many Curriculums Evaluation Rubric available that can be utilized for curriculum review. Curriculum review helps us to understand the challenges of implementation, teaching learning process, pedagogy used etc. If you need further details, kindly write to me, I can help . My email ID is [Sreehari@dreamadream.org](mailto:Sreehari@dreamadream.org)

- 3) in our country Philippines teacher's are bombarded with loads of paperworks, less time to teach. how you can address this dilemma?

Asker: Connie Mafreg( [connie.mafreg@deped.gov.ph](mailto:connie.mafreg@deped.gov.ph))

SREEHARI: Co creation for curriculum or any new initiatives into the system promotes active participation. Co-creation fosters ownership and giving a space for teachers to share their feelings and challenges make them feel important and provides an opportunity for validation and mindset shift. Creating a space for teachers to express their feelings and challenges can address this dilemma

### **For any speaker**

- 1) The SDG goal 4.b and 4.c focuses on quality teachers in multidisciplinary fields. This however doesnt feature in many of the global discussions in terms of standardization, competency, proficiency. Any prespectives on this particulalry in veiw of today's topic agenda?

Asker: dochu dochu ([dochu@moe.gov.bt](mailto:dochu@moe.gov.bt))

KIRK: This is a very good point. The idea of “quality” can be challenging—does it mean that the teacher had high test scores and graduated from a good university? This can create an inequitable bias, whereby more well-to-do urban youth and more educational opportunities have an advantage over poor rural youth in getting teaching positions. I really like the Thai Equitable Education Fund’s “Homegrown Teacher” program, which identifies high-potential youth from rural areas, provides them with university scholarships and special support/advice during their studies—with the promise that they will have teaching jobs in their home area after graduation. Because they know the language and culture of their students, I suspect that the “homegrown teachers” will do quite well. Too, during COVID we saw that the teachers who came from urban areas were quick to abandon rural schools and return to the cities, while local teachers were more likely to stay in the villages and help the children engage with digital/distance learning.

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