

A faint, light-colored world map is visible in the background of the slide, showing the continents in a light brown or tan hue against a light beige background.

# Assessing writing in L1-based multilingual education

***Regional webinar series #4 - Dec. 3, 2021***  
***Student assessment and multilingual  
education: Designing instruments,  
gathering data***

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# Organization of presentation

- Aims and practice of MLE
- Challenges in assessing MLE
- Generating useful info in L1 & L2:  
A simple writing assessment
- What we could show with data  
from Cambodia and Senegal

# L1-based bi- or multilingual education programs (MLE)

- Using learners' **strongest languages** for literacy and learning
- Teaching new languages explicitly
- Promoting **transfer of skills** between languages
- Teaching curricular content in two or more languages (depending on learners' proficiency levels and prior exposure)
- **Creating learners who speak, read and write multiple languages** (e.g. García 2009; Benson 2019)

# Progress in MLE implementation: Teachers can be at their best in the L1



## Challenges in MLE assessment internationally

**1. Assessing only in the dominant language**

**2. Assessing only receptive (decoding) skills**

- Difficult to show what learners know in L1 that can be transferred
- Difficult to show differences between MLE and non-MLE learning

# Issues with existing assessment (EGRA)

## **EGRA does not pay enough attention to the L1**

- Focus on phonemic awareness misses the meaning-making part of reading (for meaning, L1 is best)
- Focus on accuracy means multiple zero scores – no diagnostic value
- Provides no data on whether the learner is tested in L1, L2 or foreign language
- Fails to show real differences between MLE and non-MLE as experienced in classrooms
- Negative backwash: Teachers teach "reading fast" and policymakers see no difference between MLE/non-MLE

# Our contribution: Assessment of writing

- Prompt “One night, I dreamed...” to encourage self-expression (not copying)
- L1 first, then L2 (different dream)
- Advantages over EGRA:
  - If learners can **write**, they can read
  - Shows what learners **can** do
  - Focus on productive (not receptive) skills
- Reveals learner L1 and L2 literacy and:
  - Diagnoses spelling, grammar issues
  - Shows teachers what skills to re-teach
  - Encourages teachers to teach writing

# Writing assessments in Cambodia

Rationale: If students can write their own ideas, they can decode (read) and encode (write), and they can think for themselves.

In L1 Tampuan, Kreung, Bunong (& Khmer L2)

2016: 89 students

2017: 208 students

2018: 162 students

Gr 3 and above assessed in L1 and L2



# Pilot assessment (May 2016): Gr 2 results

## Results of grade 2 writing assessment (MLE only)

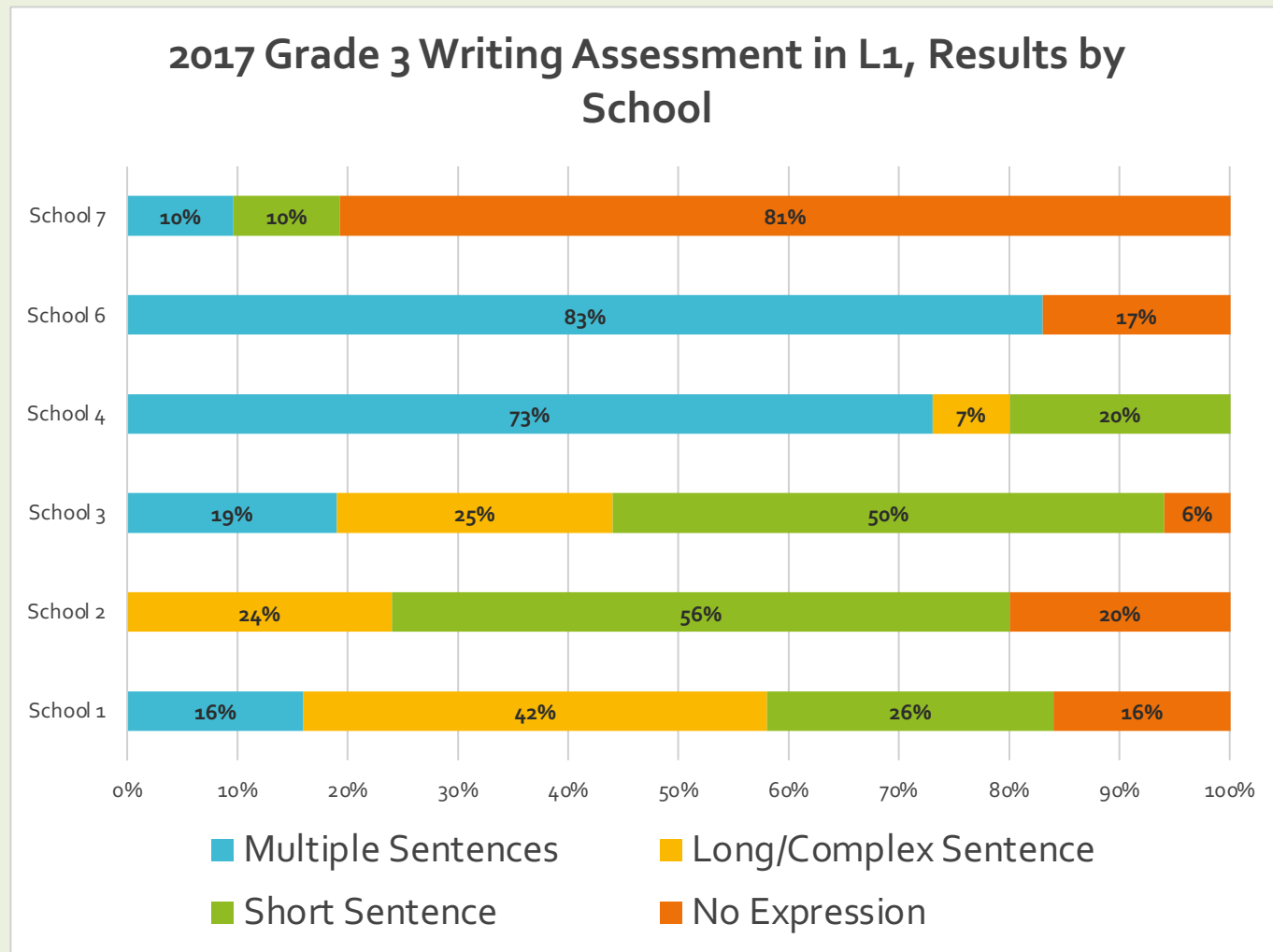
Class type	N	L1 results: N	Best examples of L1 expression “I saw...”
MLE	16	Multiple <u>sents</u> : 2 (13%) <b>Long sentence: 6 (38%)</b> Only copied intro: 4 Copied words: 1 Unintelligible: 3	“... <u>a</u> big elephant run at me. When I grow up I will scare elephants.” “... <u>something</u> that was stolen from a small house on a farm.” “...I rode a motorbike and I rode in a car.” “... <u>someone</u> cut me with a knife.”
MLE	38	<b>Long sentence: 11 (29%)</b> Short sentence: 3 (8%) <b>Prompt plus one word: 14 (37%)</b> Unintelligible: 10	“...a buffalo walking and looking at a frog.” “... <u>an</u> insect eating a leaf.” “... <u>a</u> bee sting me.” “... <u>money</u> —5000 riel!” “... <u>a</u> dog eat rice.” “... <u>a</u> frog sitting on a rock.”

# Pilot assessment (May 2016): Gr 3 results

## Results of grade 3 writing assessment (MLE/non-MLE)

Class type	N	L1 results: N	Best ex L1 expression “I saw...”	L2 results: N	Best ex L2 expression “I saw ”
MLE	13	<p><b>Multiple sents: 8 (62%)</b></p> <p><b>Long sentence: 3 (23%)</b></p> <p>Short sentence: 1 (8%)</p> <p>Only copied intro: 1</p>	<p>“...a dog bite me and I had a big wound. I saw a big god [spirit]. I got sick with malaria. I saw people steal my chicken. I bit a dog. A snake bit me. I saw people plant cassava one day but it wasn't finished.”</p> <p>“...someone steal my pig and then my brother's dog came to bite that person. Then the person ran away and we took the pig back.”</p>	<p><b>Multiple sents: 6 (46%)</b></p> <p><b>Long sentence: 5 (38%)</b></p> <p>Short sentence: 2 (15%)</p> <p>Only copied intro: 0</p>	<p>“...a forest cow run at me and then I climbed a big tree and then I jumped down into the water and I swam away.”</p> <p>“...a fish in the water and then I caught it.”</p> <p>“...I was riding on the back of an elephant.”</p>
non-MLE	22	<p><b>Short sentence attempted: 13</b></p> <p>Only copied intro: 9</p>	<p><i>[Unsure if they can be translated; we attempted L1 but this class never learned L1 literacy]</i></p>	<p><b>Prompt plus a noun: 22 (100%)</b></p>	<p>“...my uncle Ishat.” [probably deceased]</p> <p>“...a monkey.”</p> <p>“...a bird.”</p>

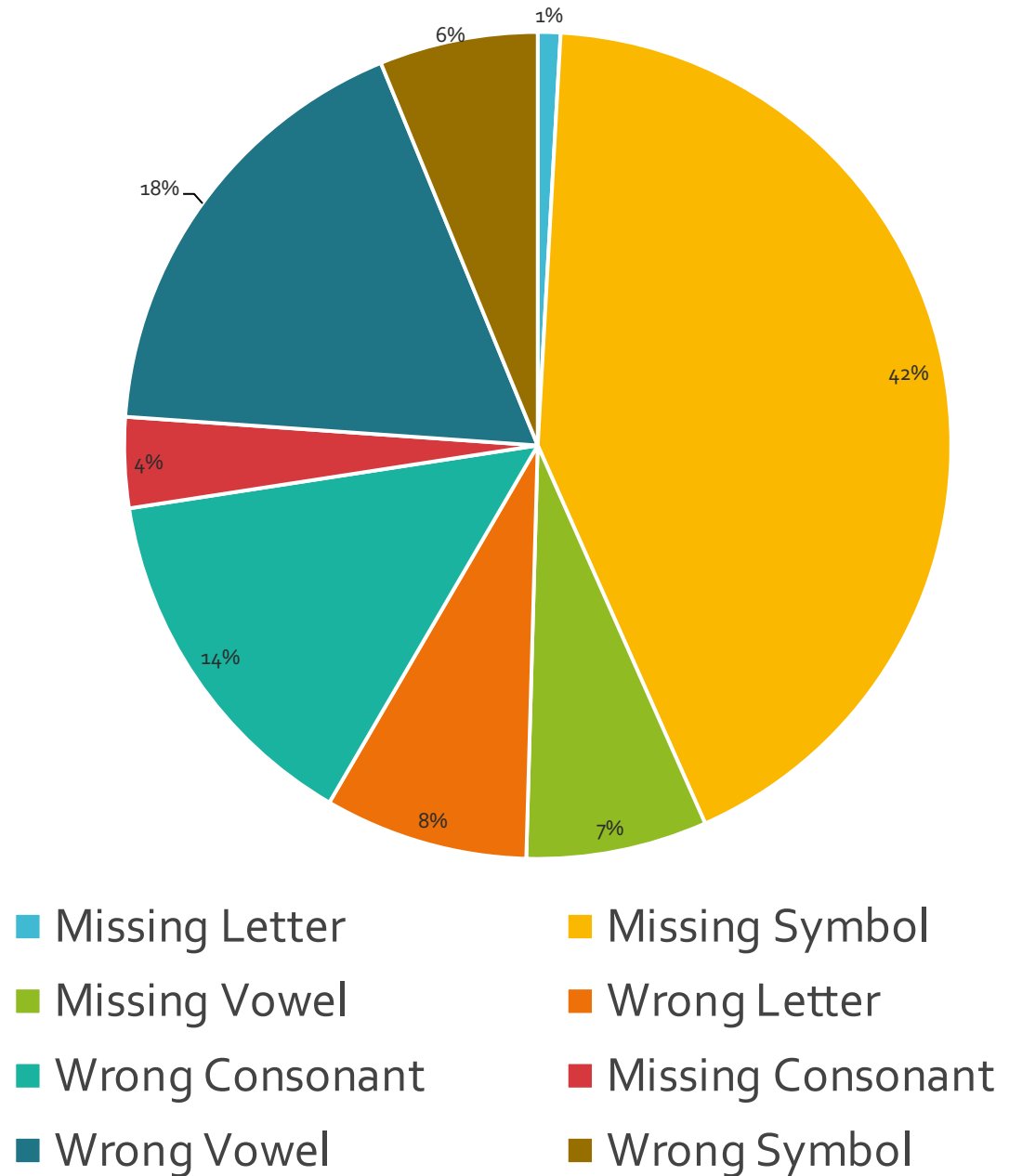
L1 writing  
assessment  
Gr 3  
Ratanakiri  
(May 2017)



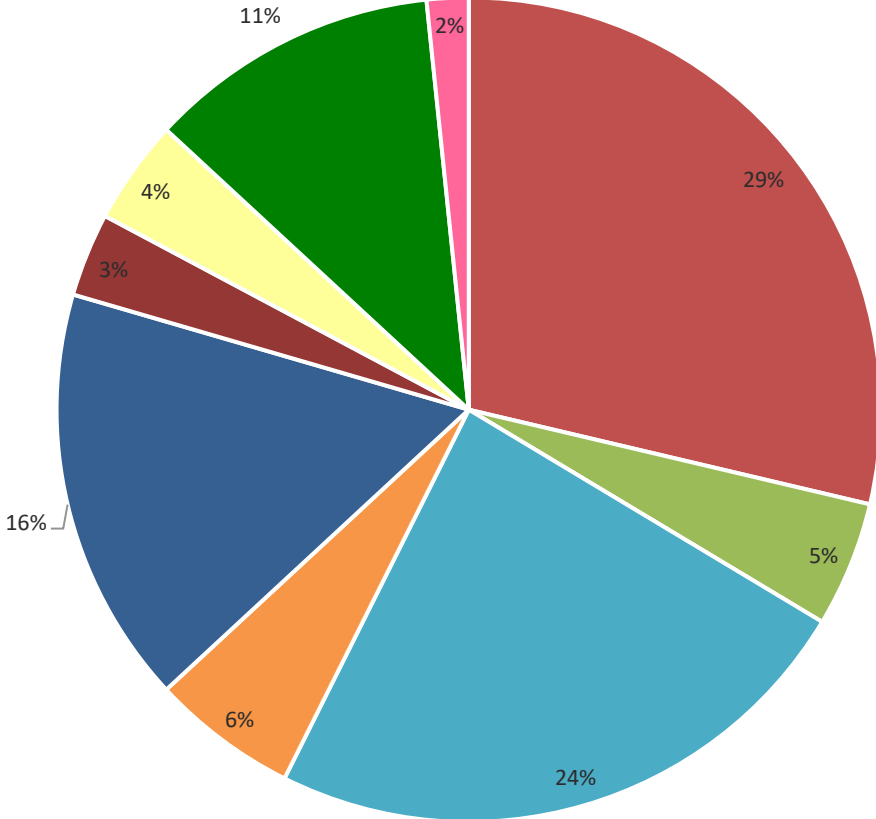
Note: School 5 had no Grade 3 L1 class on the day of our visit  
School 1: n=19; 2: n=25; 3: n=16; 4: n=15; 6: n=6; 7: n=31

Graph by Sarah French

Gr 3 error  
analysis for  
L1 Tampuen  
2017  
Ratanakiri

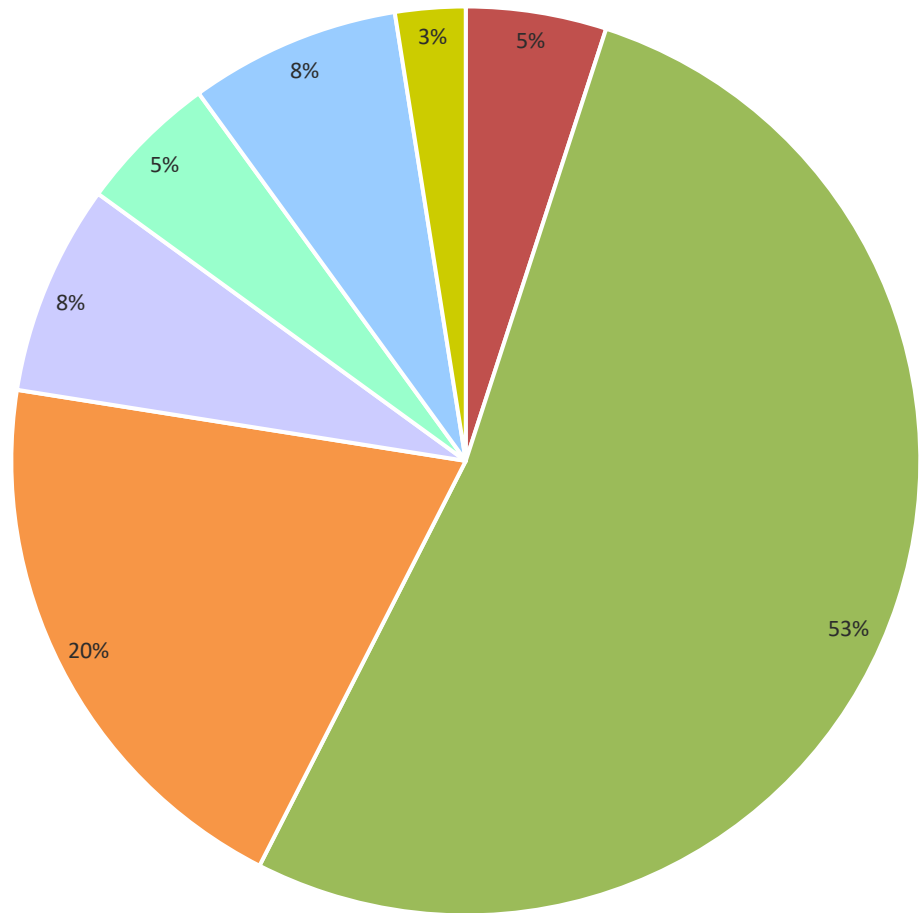


Gr 3 error  
analysis for  
L1 Kreung  
2017  
Ratanakiri



- Missing Symbol
- Wrong Consonant
- Wrong Vowel
- Extra Vowel
- Missing Vowel
- Missing Consonant
- Wrong Symbol
- Extra Symbol

Gr 3 error  
analysis for  
L1 Bunong  
2017  
Ratanakiri



- Missing Symbol
- Missing Consonant
- Missing Word
- Wrong Word Order
- Missing Vowel
- Wrong Word
- Extra Word

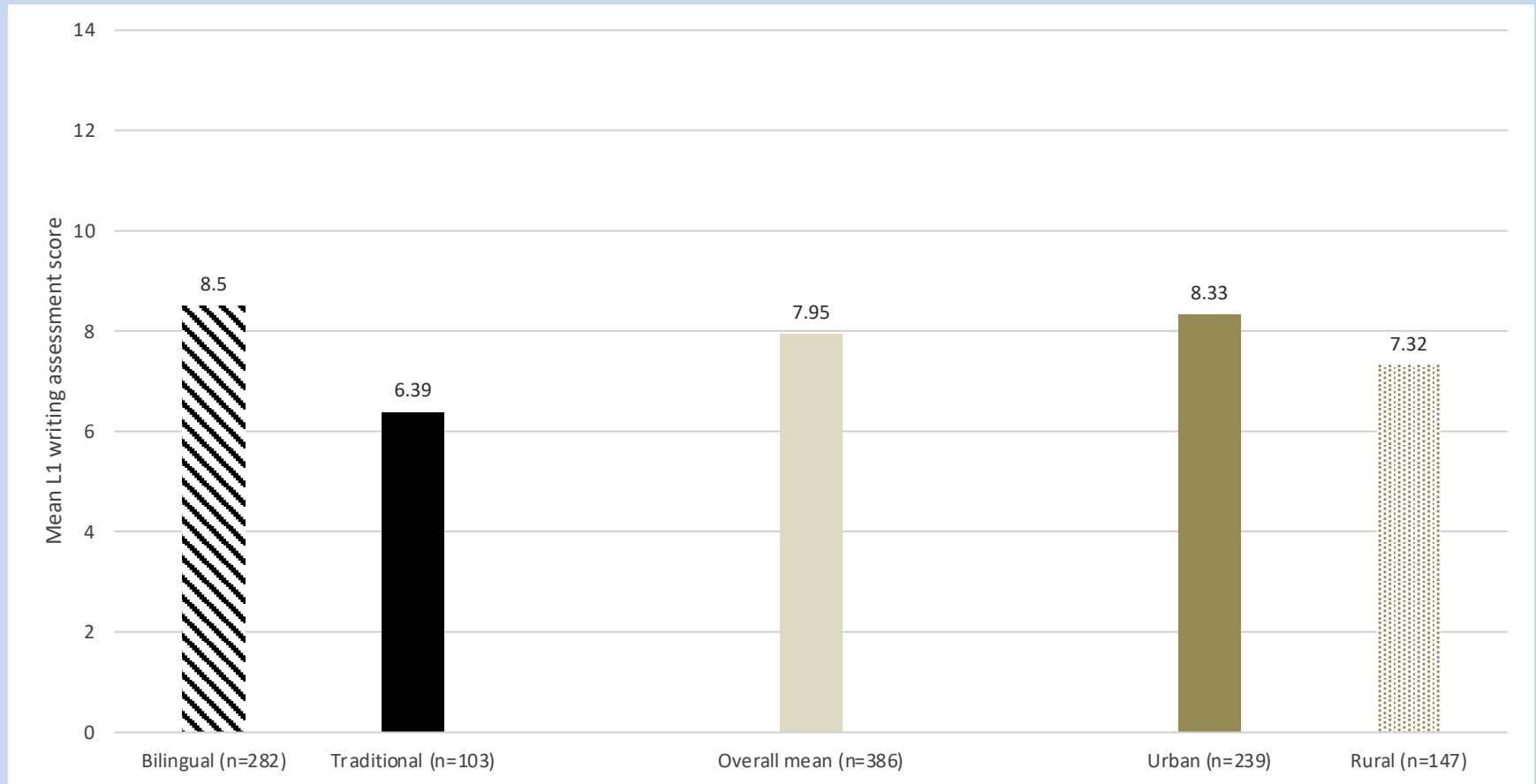


Written assessment guided by Prof Mbacké Diagne

Photo by Carol Benson, Ecole Insa Bobo Ba, Nioro, Nov 28, 2018

# Results from Senegal (386 gr 5 learners )

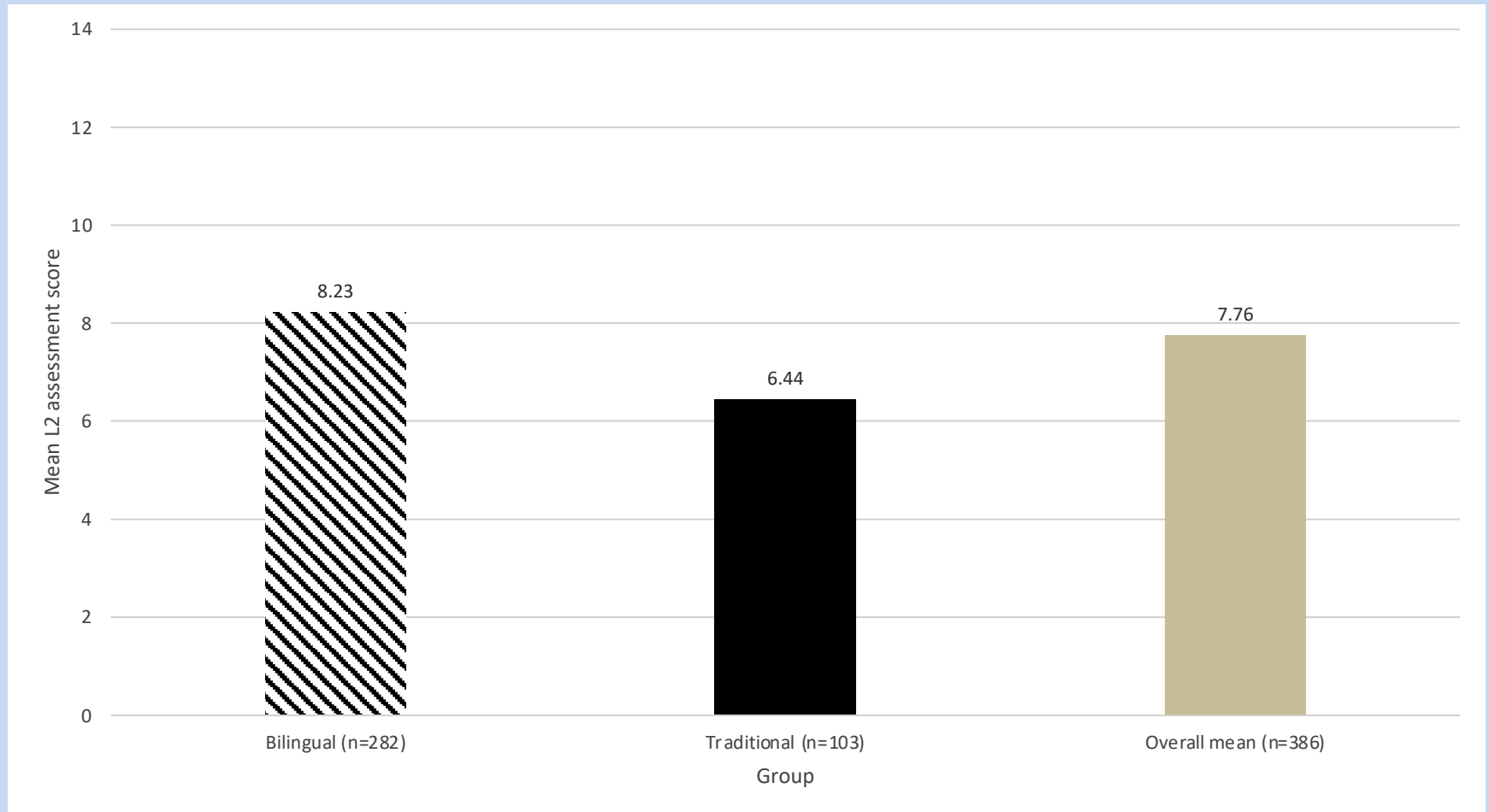
1. How do L1 scores differ between MLE/non-MLE students with the same backgrounds?





# Results from Senegal (386 gr 5 learners )

2. How do L2 (French) scores differ between MLE/non-MLE students with the same backgrounds?



# Findings from writing assessment so far

- 1. Diagnosis of literacy development stages:** Strong L1 means strong L2; stronger L1 literacy is needed for effective transfer (showing that early exit is not best).
- 2. Comparison of MLE vs. non-MLE:** Demonstrates some literacy-related advantages of MLE.
- 3. Comparison of class results:** Reveals which teachers are using successful methods (and which need help).
- 4. Comparison of literacy results by language**
- 5. Positive backwash on teaching literacy:** Teachers will exercise writing in both languages; they will pay more attention to self-expression.

## References

- Benson, C. (2016) Addressing language of instruction issues in education: Recommendations for documenting progress. Background paper commissioned by UNESCO for the Global Education Monitoring Report 2016/2017.  
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- Benson et al. (2019) Final evaluation of ARED's support to bilingual education in Senegal. External evaluation report for Dubai Cares. MN: MWAI.
- Benson, C. & Wong, K. (2017) Effectiveness of policy development and implementation of L1-based multilingual education in Cambodia. *Int'l Journal of Bilingual Ed and Bilingualism* 22:2.
- García, O. (2009) *Bilingual education in the 21st century. A global perspective*. West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell.



*“Beginning with our own language is what we must do.”*

Taken by Erina Iwasaki, Ecole Ibrahima Fall, Kaolack, Senegal, Nov 26, 2018