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LANGUAGE ATTITUDES AND IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION OF TRILINGUAL LEARNERS IN A RURAL SCHOOL IN THE PHILIPPINES

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Abstract
Since its implementation in 2012, the Philippines' mother tongue-based multilingual education (MTB-MLE) program has already generated issues that point to the seemingly inadequate preparation of the education bureau when it comes to teacher training and instructional materials production. However, one concern that is seldom mentioned in the literature is the learners' attitude toward the languages they learn in the process. This is crucial because this attitude could reveal their learning motivations and formation of linguistic and sociocultural identity. Informed by the notion of language attitudes and construction of identity, this study explores the perception of trilingual children on their mother tongue and second languages—Ilocano, Filipino, and English, vis-à-vis their identity construction. Results show that most of the learners hold a positive attitude toward the three languages. However, the identified negative attitudes of some learners as regards these languages may cause pedagogical concerns linking to language teaching and the discourse of culture, nationalism, and globalization.

Keywords: language attitude, identity construction, mother tongue-based multilingual education (MTB-MLE)

Introduction
The implementation of the Mother Tongue-based-Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) curriculum in the Philippines has effected a major change in its educational system. The mandate of the state is to require the delivery of basic education in the language understood by the learners. Specifically, from kindergarten up to the first three grades in elementary, instruction, teaching materials, and assessment shall be delivered in the mother tongue or the regional language of the learners. The learners' mother tongue is believed to facilitate the concept mastery and provide the foundation for the learning of additional languages. It is the goal of the program that all learners shall be literate in their native language by the end of Grade 1, in Filipino by the end of Grade 2, and in English by the end of Grade 3 (DepEd, 2016).

The literature on MTB-MLE in the Philippines is centered mostly on the efforts of linguists and policymakers to push for the implementation of the program and on the readiness of stakeholders in implementing it. The most celebrated research on MTB-MLE in the Philippines is probably that of the Lubuagan Kalinga

Multilingual Education Program by the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) (Dumatog & Dekker, 2003), which yielded positive results in the performance of the students who underwent the program. The students who represent the experimental group (taught in mother tongue), performed remarkably better in five domains than the control group. These domains include Reading, Math, Filipino, Makabayan (a learning area which put together several subjects that help promote students' personal and national identity), and English. It was noted that the success of the Lubuagan project is due to the strong sociocultural support of the community. In 2012, the Department of Education (DepEd) through DepEd Order no. 16 s. 2012 finally issued the guidelines on the implementation of the program starting the school year of 2012-2013.

The MTB-MLE program, however, after a few years of implementation, generated negative reactions from the stakeholders, which include the basic education teachers themselves, parents, and students. Most of the criticisms pertain not only to the framework but also the seemingly inadequate preparation of DepEd before its actual implementation. Some of them point to a lack of materials and zero to limited training for teachers, which resulted in non-maximization of the goals of the program (Lartec et al., 2014; Valerio, 2015; Espada et al., 2017; Rivera, 2017; Namanya, 2017). Gallego and Zubiri (2011), meanwhile, mapped out the development of the MTB-MLE in the country and analyzed the results of previous studies' on select communities' attitudes and perceptions toward the MTB-MLE program. In their meta-analysis, they noted that basic education teachers show a strong preference for English as a medium of instruction (MOI). These teachers also believe that students will be able to enhance their skills in English if they are exposed to it through its early use as the MOI. Citing Rafael and Rosario's (2011) study, Gallego and Zubiri (2011) mention that parents in Pangasinan, a province located in the northern Philippines, would rather have their children taught in Filipino and English than in the vernacular language. This is due to their belief that it is through Filipino and English that their children would most likely communicate widely. Besides, Javier and Vicerra (2010), as cited in Gallego and Zubiri (2011), posit that students manifest high regard toward English as it is considered to be the language for "socio-economic advancement". Thus, they prefer to get educated in English than in any Philippine language.

In the previous studies, teachers' and students' attitudes toward the program would emerge. However, what is often neglected is how the MTB-MLE framework possibly affects the identity construction of the learners. It is clear, based on empirical studies, that as children develop a strong foundation in their mother tongue, they are more likely to get a better grasp of their second language, i.e. Filipino, and of their third language, i.e. English; and the success or failure of the program can be traced from its implementation. However, what is seldom mentioned in the discussion is the young learners' attitudes toward the languages they learn in the MTB-MLE program. This is crucial because it could reveal how they construct their cultural and linguistic identity and how this construction of identity could affect language learning (Lobatón, 2012; Dressler, 2014; Dumitrašković, 2014; Amirian & Bazrafshan, 2016; Fisher, Evans, Forbes, Gayton, & Liu, 2018). In the interactional and post-structural sense, identity inside the

classroom is dynamic and changing. Learners, then, can engage in activities and interactions where they can assert or hint their identity. At the outset, their language identities can be revealed easily by their language repertoire. Other identities they have such as cultural or ethnic identities can be revealed through their knowledge and opinions about and behaviors toward their culture. In the context of MTB-MLE, however, these could be revealed by the multilingual learners' attitudes or perceptions toward their target languages and the cultures these languages represent.

In this study, I explore how trilingual children, i.e. those who had already undergone the MTB-MLE program, perceive the three languages they have been exposed to since kindergarten vis-à-vis their identity construction. Thus, I address this major problem: What do trilingual children's language attitudes reveal about their identity construction? To help me answer this problem, I pose the following sub-problems: What is the attitude of the trilingual children toward the three languages they speak and/or learn? Do they manifest positive or negative attitudes toward these languages?

Theoretical Framework

I draw on Crystal's (1997) and Richards, Platt, and Platt's (1992) notions of language attitude. Crystal (1997) defines language attitudes as the "feelings people have about their own language or languages of others" (p. 215). Moreover, Richard et al. (1992) illustrate language attitude as, in addition to the general definition provided above, "expressions of positive or negative feelings towards a language," which "may reflect impressions of linguistic difficulty or simplicity, ease of difficulty of learning, degree of importance, elegance, social status" (p. 199). Further, in the context of this study, I invoke Ladegaard's (2000) concept of language attitude in which he posits that it is composed of three components: knowledge, emotion, and behavior. Language attitude, then, encompasses perceptions, beliefs or opinions, and judgments of the learners on their respective languages.

I also draw on DepEd's MTB-MLE framework, which has the ultimate goal of producing Filipinos who are "lifelong learners in their L1 (MT), L2 (Filipino, national language), and L3 (English, the global language)" (DepEd, 2016, p. 2). Through this framework, then, classroom activities are carried over in the learners' native language and other languages. The framework assumes that having a strong foundation in the MT will allow for effective cognitive, academic, and second language development. Moreover, I refer to the research participants as trilingual speakers given the circumstance that all of them speak Ilocano as their native language and they had been exposed to Filipino and English formally while in the MTB-MLE program. Since this study is not concerned with their proficiency in the three languages, conducting tests to determine their level of proficiency was deemed unnecessary. Thus, in this study, the participants' being trilingual is due to their general ability to use the three languages during and even after the program.

In viewing the concept of identity, this study is adopting an interactional and post-structural perspective. I invoke Coulmas' (2005) and Tabouret-Keller's (1997) notion of linguistic identity in analyzing the identity construction of the learners

based on their perception of the languages they speak while in the MTB-MLE program. Coulmas argues that "as we speak, we reveal who we are, where we grew up, our gender, our station in life, our age, and the group we want to belong to" (p. 173). This suggests, then, that through our use of language, our identity is manifested. While this notion points to how linguistic identity is constructed, it also hints how learners' use or choice of language could give away their other forms of identity such as ethnic identity, cultural identity, and national identity. Moreover, since identity is not fixed, linguistic identity is not only associated with one's mother tongue. As we speak now of multilingual societies, we also speak of multilingual linguistic identities. This means that multilingual speakers can signify or assume more than one linguistic identity depending on the number of languages they speak. As these speakers also change from one linguistic identity to another, this also implies their association with the speech community these languages signify. Tabouret-Keller (1997) best explains this when he says:

> We are identified, and identify ourselves, within the large space of the society of our time, within the different groups – institutional, professional, friends, etc. – we belong to, within the surroundings of our home, our office, our car, our out-of-door outfits, our in-door outfits, etc. (p. 316)

The three major concepts, namely MTB-MLE, language attitudes, identity construction, set the theoretical foundation of this study. The framework presupposes the immediate environment or context where the trilingual learners are in, i.e. MTB-MLE classroom. The trilinguals are exposed to three languages while in the program, namely, Ilocano, Filipino, and English. Ilocano is a major language mostly spoken in the northern Philippines. Being the national language, Filipino is required to learn in school and so is English being an official language. Both Filipino and English are mandatory school subjects. As they are expected to learn concepts using their mother tongue alongside their learning of Filipino and English, they are expected to develop attitudes, positive or negative, toward each of these languages. In this paper, however, I only focused on attitudes relating to language. Along with the participants' manifestation of language attitudes, are their signification of linguistic identities, which also point to their other forms of identities such as ethnic identity, national identity, and global identity. This whole process comprised of the participants' identity construction in the MTB-MLE program.

Methods

Data collection was done through a survey that elicited perceptions and attitudes of the learners toward their languages: Ilocano, Filipino, and English. For this pilot study, I initially designed a 4-point Likert scale English questionnaire consisting of 35 items, which was validated by two language professors. In constructing the survey, I considered two survey questionnaires were used to elicit language attitudes and perceptions (Stracke, 2011; Esteron, 2019) and used them as a guide. Table 1 shows the calculated range.

Table 1. The calculated range

Items 1-32	Range	Items 33-35
Strongly Agree	1.00 – 1.75	I like it very much
Agree	1.76 – 2.50	I like it
Strongly Disagree	2.51 – 3.25	I dislike it
Disagree	3.26 – 4.00	I dislike it very much

A total of 50 respondents participated in the survey, all of whom go to a small barangay elementary school in an Ilocano-dominated town in Pangasinan province. The school implemented the MTB-MLE program in 2013 and specifically requires Ilocano as MOI from Kindergarten to Grade 3. Students under the program also take a separate Ilocano subject. Due to time constraints, I opted to observe a nonprobability sampling method. I utilized this concerning the profile of my target participants, that is, all of them must have already undergone the MTB-MLE program. In terms of age, therefore, and since the MTB-MLE program is up to Grade 3, the research participants are of the minimum age of 8. Thus all of the respondents must be within the age range of 8-12 years old. Since classes in basic education had already ended before the conduct of this study, I observed a snowball method in sampling my target participants. I sought the help of the first set of respondents to recruit more participants. Because I noticed during my initial run of the survey among my first two respondents that they would ask me to translate some words in Filipino, I prepared a Filipino translation of the survey for the other respondents' quick understanding and to facilitate the survey more smoothly and systematically. Occasionally, I also translated some terms in Ilocano, their mother tongue, for better comprehension. Lastly, since the participants are minors, consent from their parents was secured.

Findings and Discussion

This section is divided into three parts. Each part accounts for the learners' attitudes toward Ilocano, Filipino, and English, respectively. Following the presentation of the learners' language attitudes, I provide discussions on what these attitudes could manifest about their socio-cultural identity and what could have led and/or contributed to their identity construction.

Trilinguals' Language Attitudes toward Ilocano

The first 15 items in the survey questionnaire elicit respondents' attitudes toward Ilocano, which could outright reveal something about their identity construction (see **Table 2**). It is worth noting that the respondents seem to have very high regard toward Ilocano, thus a very positive attitude toward their mother tongue. With a mean score of 1.22, the respondents strongly agree that Ilocano is an important part of them. This could be since it is their first language. It also helps that Ilocano is the language of the community. As mentioned above, the school is situated in an Ilocano-speaking community, which means that, although other languages can be used in communication at any time, Ilocano is the primary medium of communication among the members of the community. With average

mean scores of 1.44, 1.54, and 1.54, respectively, the respondents strongly agree that Ilocano is useful, valuable, and necessary.

This finding is quite expected given that Ilocano figures in the respondents' immediate environment, family, and community. Since the school is situated in an Ilocano-speaking community, they see the value of the language, mainly through its communicative function. Interestingly, however, this positive attitude toward Ilocano could not have been only pragmatic but also symbolic. Their attitude is positive rather than negative because they perceive Ilocano language as an easy language to learn as it is a language that is familiar to them. Richard et al. (1992) note that speakers tend to develop a positive or negative attitude toward a language relative to their impression of the difficulty or simplicity of the language. Moreover, since these learners speak Ilocano as their mother tongue, it would be easy for them to identify the language. In this way, not only their Ilocano language identity but also their Ilocano ethnic identity is constructed. In this paper, I do not wish to establish a strict delineation between ethnic identity and cultural identity. I lean more toward Block's (2007) notion of ethnic identity where he posits that ethnic identity is determined by one's regard toward their cultural heritage and one factor that points to ethnic identity is language inheritance. Since speakers are born in the community or in a family that speaks Ilocano, it is natural for them to smoothly identify the language. Thus, it is clear at this point that language makes identity (ethnic/cultural) construction possible. It is not only that we express our identity through language but also our mere choice of language reveals our identity. Our attitude toward a language would, in turn, signal our identity construction. Further, Bautista and Gonzalez (1986) note from the early studies on language and ethnicity in the Philippine context that the mother tongue is primarily the determining factor in ethnic identity construction among Filipinos. We can somehow say the same thing with the trilingual learners in the study. As posited by identity studies scholars, as one speaks a language, they express who they are and how they want to be identified (Coulmas, 2005; Tabouret-Keller, 1997).

Table 2. Trilinguals' language attitudes toward Ilocano

On Ilocano	MEAN	
1. Knowing Ilocano is an important part of who I am.	1.22	Strongly Agree
2. I think that Ilocano is useful.	1.44	Strongly Agree
3. I think that speaking Ilocano is a valuable skill.	1.54	Strongly Agree
4. I think that speaking Ilocano is a necessary skill.	1.54	Strongly Agree
5. I always looked forward to attending my Ilocano class.	1.52	Strongly Agree
6. I think that learning Ilocano made school more enjoyable.	1.58	Strongly Agree
7. I think that speaking Ilocano has helped me make friends.	1.68	Strongly Agree

On Ilocano	MEAN	
8. I think that speaking Ilocano at times is embarrassing.	2.00	Agree
9. I think that learning Ilocano has been helpful in learning Filipino.	1.82	Agree
10. I think that learning Ilocano has been helpful in learning English.	1.78	Agree
11. I think that learning/speaking Ilocano has been a barrier to learning Filipino.	1.84	Agree
12. I think that learning/speaking Ilocano has been a barrier to learning English.	1.74	Strongly Agree
13. I think that learning Ilocano has made school more challenging.	1.74	Strongly Agree

As regards the respondents' attitude toward Ilocano as a subject, they appear to have a positive attitude. With a mean score of 1.52, most of them strongly agree that they were excited about attending their Ilocano class. This result is worth mentioning because this is suggestive of the kind of classroom environment that the mother tongue class provides for the students. This may also suggest a high level of motivation among the students not only in the formal learning of Ilocano but in learning in general. This finding is further supported by the result of items 6 and 7 where the respondents strongly agree that learning Ilocano made their stay in school more enjoyable and speaking the language has helped them make friends. This supports what several studies have already noted the importance of having a positive attitude and high motivation in learning. In a language classroom, for instance, speakers are projected to acquire and use the target language if they hold a positive attitude toward the language (Krashen, 1981; Ellis, 1994, 1997; Saville-Troike, 2006; Karahan, 2007; Zhang & Slaughter-Defoe, 2009; Garrett, 2010). Having a positive attitude toward the Ilocano classroom environment, therefore, could be an indication of the imminent success of learning. This is showed in their response to item 13 where they strongly agree that Ilocano has made school for them more challenging. On the one hand, "challenging" could mean difficult and can be perceived as a negative attitude. On the other hand, it may not necessarily suggest a negative perception as it can only be an objective description of the task of learning the language. After all, learners can still find school enjoyable amidst the laborious tasks there are to accomplish. I concede at this point that additional data collection such as interview or FGD could further enlighten what learners mean by "challenging". Further, it is interesting that most of them agree that speaking Ilocano is at times embarrassing. This is a negative attitude toward Ilocano. Although most of them manifest a strong association with Ilocano through their perception that it is an important part of who they are as a person, they sometimes feel embarrassed speaking it. Here, we could see how the learners manifest a seemingly unstable ethnic identity construction vis-à-vis their language attitude. The multilingual context plays a major role in the identity formation of the learners. Clearly, we see here that their identity, i.e. ethnic identity, is not stable. On the one hand, they are proud of their language inheritance, which is revealed through their

positive regard toward Ilocano. On the other hand, they may figure in situations where they shy away from speaking their native language, which is a hint of a negative attitude toward it. This relates to one of the findings in the study done by Rafael and Rosario (2011). They note that parents of MTB-MLE children have a negative attitude toward Pangasinan, the mother tongue of the learners, to be the MOI. Although this negative attitude comes from the parents, this could be picked up through them by their own children. That is why Gallego and Zubiri (2011) recommend that all stakeholders must be involved in the planning of the MTB-MLE program. Likewise, this embarrassment that learners feel when speaking Ilocano could be due to the impression that speaking a vernacular language is not desirable compared to speaking Filipino and English. I will touch more on this as I discuss the learners' attitude toward Filipino and English, but at this point, it is imperative to note that negative language attitudes like this could equally have an impact on the success of the language learning process (Ellis, 1994, 1997).

With mean scores of 1.82 and 1.78, most of the participants agree when asked about their opinion on whether Ilocano has helped them in their learning of Filipino and English, respectively. Although it is premature to assume at this point that this could be due to the correct implementation of the MTB-MLE program, this is a significant finding because this could possibly hint that the objective of the program to provide a good foundation for learning other languages by letting children have a mastery of their native language first is achieved, at least in the perspective of the learners. Unfortunately, when asked whether Ilocano has been a barrier to learning Filipino and English, most of them agree and strongly disagree with mean scores of 1.84 and 1.74, respectively. If we are to connect these findings to their opinion on whether Ilocano has helped in their learning of Filipino and English, one will see an obvious contradiction.

Trilinguals' Language Attitudes toward Filipino

In terms of the respondents' attitude toward Filipino, it is worth stating that, with a weighted mean score of 1.44 (see **Table 3**), they strongly agree that Filipino is an important part of who they are. Most of them strongly agree that speaking in Filipino is a useful, valuable, and necessary skill. This could be due to the status of Filipino as a national language and to its function as a lingua franca. Thus, it is also not surprising that most of the respondents would be looking forward to attending their Filipino class and that learning Filipino made school more enjoyable for them. They even strongly agree that Filipino has helped them make friends. Concerning their positive attitude toward Ilocano, this finding is also not at all surprising. As mentioned above, Filipino is the national language and one of the two official languages of the country. That they consider speaking it useful, valuable, and a necessary skill speaks volumes about their national identity construction. However complicated national identity is a concept, it is a fact that the discourse of national identity is part of the agenda of the MTB-MLE program. As mentioned elsewhere, the program aims to develop children as lifelong learners in their L1 (MT), L2 (Filipino) and L3 (English). Thus, this mandate also assumes children to foster their national identity and it is through their learning and use of the national language that they can achieve this. Since "language acts are acts of identity" (Tabouret-

Keller, 1997, p. 315), learners are seen to construct their national identity within and after having completed the MTB-MLE program. What is surprising to note, however, is their response to item 21. With a weighted mean score of 1.92, most of the respondents agree that speaking Filipino at times is embarrassing. I speculate that this could be because outside the Filipino classroom, the medium of communication is Ilocano and speaking in Filipino may be awkward for the learners. Using it is as a medium of communication is uncommon and unnatural for the respondents since their mother tongue is Ilocano. Nevertheless, this finding merits further probing using a different data collection method to elicit more information about the attitude it reveals.

Table 3. Trilinguals' language attitudes toward Filipino

On Filipino	MEAN	
14. Knowing Filipino is an important part of who I am.	1.44	Strongly Agree
15. I think that Filipino is useful.	1.64	Strongly Agree
16. I think that speaking Filipino is a valuable skill.	1.50	Strongly Agree
17. I think that speaking Filipino is a necessary skill.	1.64	Strongly Agree
18. I always looked forward to attending my Filipino class.	1.56	Strongly Agree
19. I think that learning Filipino made school more enjoyable.	1.56	Strongly Agree
20. I think that speaking Filipino has helped me make friends.	1.72	Strongly Agree
21. I think that speaking Filipino at times is embarrassing.	1.92	Agree
22. I think that learning/speaking Filipino has been a barrier to learning English.	1.64	Strongly Agree
23. I think that learning Filipino has made school more challenging.	1.46	Strongly Agree

Moreover, most of the respondents strongly agree that learning/speaking Filipino has been a barrier to learning English with a weighted mean score of 1.64. If the objective of the MTB-MLE program is to provide a good transition from learning Filipino to learning English, this finding could be symptomatic to a potential defect in the implementation which could affect the attitude of the children toward the language they are supposed to learn. As also found in the attitude of the respondents toward Ilocano, the respondents strongly agree, with a weighted mean score of 1.46, that learning Filipino has made school more challenging. While this could be a sign that they have a negative attitude toward Filipino, I contend that this attitude may be due to various factors such as how the learning of Filipino is done and the teacher handling the class. Also, I maintain that the word "challenging" could also mean positively; that is, the respondents still find school enjoyable despite having a challenging experience learning Filipino as evidenced by the fact

that they looked forward to attending their Filipino class. However, this can be validated by conducting additional inquiries from the respondents, possibly, through an interview or FGD.

Trilinguals' Language Attitudes toward English

Compared to the respondents' regard for Ilocano and Filipino, most of them only agree that English is an important part of who they are with a mean score of 1.90 (see **Table 4**). This can be explained by the fact that English is not a local language. Although English is an official MOI, it is not a common medium of communication in the school, at home, and in the community given the demographics of the research participants and the location of the school. Likewise, slightly lower scores were noted when their opinion was asked whether English is a useful, valuable, and necessary skill compared to their opinions toward Ilocano and Filipino. Nevertheless, with mean scores of 1.80, 1.88, and 1.92, respectively, the respondents agree that English is indeed useful, valuable, and necessary. This positive attitude toward English may be attributed to what Ricento (2000) calls "stable diglossia" and this, according to Mahboob and Cruz (2013) is very apparent in the Philippine context. English, being one of the official languages of the country, is elevated to high status as the language of education, commerce, law, and politics. This reality has since relegated Filipino and other languages to a lesser role and function in society. In turn, this has shaped people's perception of English and other languages. For instance, if you are not proficient in English, you are stereotypically deemed unintellectual, not modern, or poor. What this stable diglossia has produced is this kind of mentality because as Mahboob and Cruz (2013) put it, "English is now more than ever, packaged as the language of opportunity" (p. 7) or simply, the language of globalization. The Philippine government is holding on to this discourse when they promoted the MTB-MLE program as a way to produce Filipinos who are competitive in English as a global language. This mindset could have influenced the learners' positive regard for English. This language attitude, then, allows for the construction of a supposed "global identity" among the learners. As noted above, this attitude by the learners echoes the findings of Javier and Vicerra (2010) and Rafael and Rosario (2011) regarding English as perceived to be the language that will alleviate the low socioeconomic status of Filipinos. On the one hand, the belief that learning English promises to prepare the children to be globally competitive is true. However, this mentality has since created, as a consequence, a negative attitude toward other languages in the Philippines. A common impression people have is that local languages are of less importance than English and this could be due to what Gonzalez (1998) calls "auxiliary" function that is accorded to the local languages by those that legitimize the diglossic situation of the country. Nevertheless, what this positive language attitude by the learners reveals is their attempt at constructing a global identity alongside their ethnic and national identity.

Table 4. Trilinguals' language attitudes toward English

On English	MEAN	
24. Knowing English is an important part of who I am.	1.90	Agree
25. I think that English is useful.	1.80	Agree
26. I think that speaking English is a valuable skill.	1.88	Agree
27. I think that speaking English is a necessary skill.	1.92	Agree
28. I always looked forward to attending my English class.	1.88	Agree
29. I think that learning English made school more enjoyable.	2.14	Agree
30. I think that speaking English has helped me make friends.	2.18	Agree
31. I think that speaking English at times is embarrassing.	2.04	Agree
32. I think that learning English has made school more challenging.	2.06	Agree

Moreover, the respondents also agree that learning English made school more enjoyable for them and has helped them make friends. However, the mean scores are yet again lower than the mean scores for their opinion about Ilocano and Filipino. Also, the mean score for their opinion about whether they looked forward to attending their English class, is lower compared to when they were asked about their opinion about their Ilocano and Filipino classes. While these findings may suggest still a positive attitude toward English, the respondents seem to have a lower level of a positive attitude toward English than toward the other local languages. This may be explained by the fact that English is a language they do not easily identify with given that it is not their home language and it is not the language of the community. This could be supported by the finding that most of them feel embarrassed about speaking English. Interestingly, the respondents only agree that English has made school more challenging for them with a mean score of 2.06 as compared to the respondents' opinion about Ilocano and Filipino, both of which garnered 1.74 (strongly agree) and 1.46 (strongly agree), respectively. Lastly, it is good to note that despite the findings that the respondents feel embarrassed to speak Ilocano, Filipino, and English at times, findings show that they still have high regard toward the three languages.

Table 5. General Language Attitude of the Trilinguals

General attitude toward:	**MEAN**	
33. Ilocano	1.10	I like it very much
34. Filipino	1.08	I like it very much
35. English	1.64	I like it very much

Despite their slight differences, the mean scores relating to the respondents' general attitude toward the three languages appear to be high (see **Table 5**). All respondents demonstrate a positive attitude toward the three languages they learned. I claim that this is a relevant finding because this means that the respondents did not take any issue with using or learning any of the three languages they were required to use and learn. If this is any indication of the motivation of the respondents toward learning, it is clear that they seem to have developed a positive motivation for learning while in the MTB-MLE program.

While the analysis of data generally points to positive results, it is also worth mentioning that some respondents express what seems to be a manifestation of negative attitude toward Ilocano, Filipino, and English. In Ilocano's case, 2 respondents strongly disagree that knowing Ilocano is an important part of who they are, one strongly disagrees that it is useful, three strongly disagree that it is a valuable skill, and two strongly disagree that it is a necessary skill. Three of them also strongly disagree that they always looked forward to attending their Ilocano class. With Filipino, I noted that at least 2 respondents strongly disagree that knowing Filipino is an important part of who they are, three strongly disagree that it is useful, at least two disagree that it is a valuable skill, and four strongly disagree that they looked forward to attending their Filipino class. With English, it is remarkable that at least 10 respondents disagree that English is an important part of who they are, at least nine disagree that it is useful, at least nine disagree that it is a valuable skill, and at least nine disagree that it is a necessary skill. At least 8 of them disagree that they looked forward to attending their English class. These negative attitudes could be as interesting as the positive attitudes noted previously about the respondents. These negative attitudes may also provide valid insights as to how the MTB-MLE framework can be improved. However, since the study was limited to doing the survey, reasons as to why these participants manifest negative language attitudes remain unknown at this point. Conducting further measures such as interviews and focus group discussions to inquire about the motivations behind these negative reactions is thus recommended.

Conclusion

This study showed trilingual children's language attitudes in the context of MTB-MLE classroom and what these language attitudes reveal about their identity construction. Overall, the respondents show a positive attitude toward Ilocano, Filipino, and English. More than in English, however, the respondents seem to have stronger regard toward Ilocano and Filipino because these two languages are local languages. Ilocano is their mother tongue and Filipino is the national language. English, in contrast, may still be perceived as a 'foreign' language which does not function as a medium of communication in the community. Nevertheless, the regard that the respondents have toward the three languages point to their trilingual or multilingual identity. As multilingual speakers, they signify three linguistic identities: Ilocano, Filipino, and English. This suggests dynamic and contextual linguistic identities. In turn, the respondents also project their socio-cultural identities. The fact that they like Ilocano, Filipino, and English could mean that they identify with the speech community or to the corresponding bearing these languages

point to. They identify with the Ilocano-speaking community where they are a part of, with the Filipino-speaking community because Filipino is considered the national language and it is their way of responding to the nationalist effort of the country, and with English, because it is an official language of the country and most likely because English is perceived to be the global language. In this study, this is seen as the learners' construction of their ethnic identity, national identity, and global identity, respectively.

Lastly, it is important to note that this study could have generated more conclusive results had it not been because of some limitations it encountered. Among these is the issue of data collection. A more systematic sampling of data can be done to make sure that the target population is well represented and to establish a higher level of acceptability. Also, data triangulation can be observed to check the consistency of the responses of the respondents. Future studies on multilingual children's language attitudes against the backdrop of mother tongue-based multilingual education may triangulate survey data with interviews or focus group discussions among children as young as 8 years old. For instance, the negative language attitudes of some respondents noted above, could have been triangulated with data that can be elicited through interviews or FGDs. These methodologies should help in verifying responses and thus, should help enrich the data. Overall, despite the limitations, this study was able to contribute interesting and valid insights on the literature on the relation between language attitudes and identity construction relating to the MTB-MLE framework in the Philippine context

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