

Assessing the Implementation of Mother Tongue – Based Instruction Among Primary Schools at Jolo II District, Division of Sulu: Teachers’ Perspectives

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ABSTRACT. Mother tongue–based instruction has been integrated into Philippine primary education to improve early literacy and comprehension among young learners. This study examined the implementation of Mother Tongue–Based Instruction (MTBI) in primary schools in Jolo II District, Division of Sulu, based on teachers’ perspectives. The research focused on three learning dimensions: linguistic development, academic learning, and learner confidence during classroom instruction conducted in the mother tongue. A quantitative descriptive–correlational design was applied. Data were collected from primary school teachers using a structured survey that assessed instructional practices and observed pupil responses. Descriptive statistics determined the level of MTBI implementation, while correlation analysis examined the relationships among the learning outcomes. Results show that MTBI is regularly practiced and contributes to clearer understanding of lessons. Teachers noted that the use of a familiar language encourages participation, strengthens communication of ideas, and builds learners’ confidence. Findings also revealed significant relationships among linguistic development, academic learning, and learner confidence, highlighting the value of sustaining MTBI and providing appropriate instructional support and contextualized learning materials.

KEYWORDS: *Mother Tongue–Based Instruction, Primary Education, Instructional Implementation, Teachers’ Perspectives, Language of Instruction*

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Mother Tongue is also included as a subject in the curriculum to help learners value and apply the language rooted in local culture within formal academic learning. The term Mother Tongue refers to the first language acquired during early childhood that continues to be understood and used by an individual later in life (Walizadah, 2025). Language remains an essential element in the learning process of young children, particularly during the early years of schooling when fundamental academic skills begin to develop. Classroom instruction delivered in a language

familiar to learners allows ideas and explanations to become more accessible, enabling pupils to connect new information with everyday experiences. This condition reflects the importance of language exposure within the home environment, where parental language practices influence how learners understand and apply language during schooling (Chavez, 2022). Early education settings in multilingual communities often reflect a wide range of linguistic backgrounds, making language choice in instruction an important consideration in teaching practice. Karima et al. (2022) emphasized that instruction conducted in learners' first language strengthens conceptual understanding because familiar language structures allow ideas to be processed more naturally. Silinskas et al. (2020) explained that children who begin formal schooling using their home language frequently demonstrate stronger literacy development and more stable academic growth. Nishanthi (2020) likewise highlighted that the use of learners' mother tongue in early education supports inclusive learning environments where participation and comprehension become more attainable for young learners.

The use of a familiar language in classroom instruction influences how learners communicate and participate in lesson activities. When teachers explain lessons using a language commonly spoken at home, interaction becomes clearer and more meaningful. Learners tend to express ideas more freely and participate more actively in discussions. Previous studies have shown that instruction delivered through learners' primary language strengthens engagement and supports early literacy development (Zai, 2023; William et al., 2025; Akintunde et al., 2022). The relationship between language of instruction and academic progress has been widely discussed in educational research. When lessons are delivered in a familiar language, learners focus on understanding concepts rather than interpreting unfamiliar vocabulary. Studies indicate that instruction in the first language strengthens comprehension and supports early academic development (Rodge et al., 2019; Caliboso et al., 2025; Phiri et al., 2024).

In the Philippines, language diversity remains a defining characteristic of the educational landscape. Numerous local languages continue to shape communication within communities, particularly in areas where cultural traditions remain closely connected to daily life (Ivushkina, 2024). Educational reforms introduced in recent years have encouraged the use of mother tongue-based instruction during the early years of schooling in order to support learners from linguistically diverse backgrounds. Dagalea et al. (2022) explained that the integration of mother tongue instruction within Philippine basic education strengthens comprehension among young learners because lessons become easier to understand when presented in a familiar language. Language policies in the Philippines attempt to recognize the country's linguistic diversity while supporting improved learning outcomes in early education. Bularon (2025) noted that mother tongue-based instruction in Philippine classrooms encourages learners to participate more actively because communication occurs in a language closely connected with everyday experiences.

Although mother tongue instruction offers recognized educational benefits, its application in classrooms differs across school settings. In multilingual communities, teachers often work with learners who speak several local languages, creating complex instructional situations (Pant, 2025). Factors such as the availability of instructional resources, teachers' readiness to apply language policies, and the linguistic diversity within classrooms influence how these policies are implemented during daily teaching. Educational language policies become effective only when they are appropriately integrated into classroom practice. For this reason, teachers frequently adapt their instructional approaches to accommodate the language backgrounds of their students. Continuous assessment of classroom practices is therefore important to ensure that language-related educational initiatives effectively support student learning and development.

Teachers remain closely connected with classroom experiences and observe directly how language influences comprehension, interaction, and learning outcomes. Regular interaction with learners, educators are able to notice how language influences comprehension of lessons and participation in learning activities. Perspectives from teachers provide valuable insights into how language-based instruction operates in actual classroom settings. These observations help explain how teaching practices contribute to learners' language development, academic progress, and confidence during classroom interaction. Examining teachers' experiences therefore offers a clearer understanding of the conditions influencing the implementation of mother tongue-based instruction in primary education.

Objectives of the Study

The purpose of this research was to evaluate how mother tongue-based instruction is practiced in primary schools in Jolo II District, Division of Sulu from the viewpoint of teachers.

Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Determine the extent to which mother tongue-based instruction is carried out in primary schools in Jolo II District, Division of Sulu, as perceived by teachers, particularly in relation to learners' linguistic and educational development, academic achievement, and their level of comfort and confidence during classroom learning.
2. Analyze the relationship among learners' linguistic and educational development, academic achievement, and their sense of comfort and confidence within the context of implementing mother tongue-based instruction.

2. REVIEW RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Foundations of Language Learning

Language acquisition in the early years of schooling plays a critical role in shaping children's literacy and comprehension skills. When instruction is delivered through a language that learners already understand, concepts become easier to interpret and connect with real-life experiences. Research has shown that the use of a familiar language in education supports deeper understanding because learners are able to process information using previously developed linguistic knowledge (Zhang et al., 2025). Similarly, Mak et al. (2025) noted that children who receive instruction in the language commonly spoken at home tend to display stronger vocabulary growth and improved oral communication during the initial stages of formal education. Tomas (2025) also pointed out that the use of the mother tongue in early instruction promotes clearer interaction between teachers and pupils, allowing learners to engage more confidently in classroom discussions. Learning environments that recognize students' linguistic backgrounds can therefore encourage more meaningful participation in literacy activities. In addition, language use within the home environment and parental involvement contribute to children's motivation and support the development of their language abilities, further strengthening learning in school (Chavez et al., 2023).

Familiarity with the language used in instruction during the primary grades also contributes to the development of essential reading and writing abilities that influence later academic achievement (Riad et al., 2023). When learners clearly understand the language used by teachers, they are able to concentrate on the ideas presented in the lesson rather than struggling with unfamiliar vocabulary. Literacy instruction therefore becomes more effective when it is introduced through a language that learners already comprehend. Cubillos and Troncoso (2025) explained that education delivered in the first language enhances learners' awareness of language structures and supports their ability to interpret and analyze written information.

2.2 Academic Achievement in Early Education

Academic performance during the early grades often reflects how well learners understand the language used during instruction. Familiar language within classroom discussions allows pupils to concentrate on the meaning of the lesson rather than struggling with unfamiliar vocabulary. Tran and Miralpeix (2024) explained that learners exposed to first-language instruction during the early grades demonstrate stronger academic progress in comparison with pupils encountering unfamiliar languages during initial schooling. Utami et al. (2023) emphasized that comprehension of lesson content improves when learners receive instruction in a language already understood within the home environment. A language familiarity in classroom instruction encourages stronger retention of lesson concepts across academic subjects. Vacalares et al. (2024) highlighted that consistent exposure to mother tongue instruction contributes to improved academic achievement among primary school learners.

Academic progress also improves when learning materials reflect the language commonly used in the learner's community. Parental involvement and additional language-learning support outside school have also been shown to influence children's language development and academic outcomes (Chavez, 2024). Written texts and classroom explanations presented in a familiar language support deeper interpretation of lesson content. Wijayanti (2024) described that educational environments recognizing linguistic diversity create conditions that encourage stronger learning outcomes among young pupils. Selvathurai and Ismail (2024) emphasized that reading comprehension improves when learners encounter texts written in a language already familiar within daily communication. Instruction conducted through the mother tongue encourages active classroom engagement and clearer understanding of academic lessons.

2.3 Classroom Language Practices

Instructional practices in multilingual classrooms require teaching approaches that ensure clear communication of lesson content. Teachers frequently adjust language use during instruction in order to maintain understanding among pupils with diverse linguistic backgrounds (Volknant and Likandro, 2024). Accessible classroom language improves clarity of explanation during teaching activities. An effective communication during instruction encourages learner participation and strengthens comprehension of lesson concepts. Malmström et al. (2025) explained that teaching approaches reflecting the language background of learners contribute to improved interaction between teachers and pupils. Van den Broek et al. (2022) noted that language-sensitive instruction encourages deeper engagement with classroom tasks and learning activities. Educational settings acknowledging the home language of pupils encourage stronger interaction during collaborative learning activities. Inclusive classroom environments that

recognize learner diversity also promote stronger participation and engagement among students (Leon et al., 2024). Preparation of instructional materials also influences how learners interpret lesson content in multilingual classrooms. Learning resources that incorporate familiar linguistic expressions allow pupils to understand ideas with greater clarity. Lo and Xu (2021) described that language-sensitive teaching materials support clearer understanding of subject matter. Instructional practices reflecting the linguistic context of learners encourage stronger engagement during classroom learning.

2.4 Philippine Mother Tongue Education

The Philippine education system is characterized by a high degree of linguistic diversity, with many regional languages shaping communication within communities nationwide. To address this diversity in early schooling, recent reforms in basic education have implemented mother tongue–based instruction during the initial grades. According to Olabiyi and John (2025), teaching in the learner’s native language enhances comprehension among Filipino pupils in the early years of schooling. Wakat et al. (2023) further highlighted that Philippine language policies acknowledge the significance of classroom linguistic diversity and aim to integrate local languages into instructional practice. Incorporating learners’ home languages into teaching has been shown to increase student participation in early education. Icao (2026) observed that mother tongue instruction enables pupils to grasp lesson content more clearly and effectively.

Discussions about mother tongue education in the Philippines also consider practical factors that affect its implementation in classrooms. The availability of instructional materials tailored to local languages, as well as teacher readiness, often determines how language policies are applied in daily lessons. Filipino pupils demonstrate improved learning outcomes when instruction is delivered in a language familiar to their communities. Similarly, acknowledging local languages in classroom communication fosters greater engagement in learning activities (Magno et al., 2024). Manuel et al. (2025) noted that classroom language practices continue to adapt as teachers respond to the country’s linguistic diversity. Ongoing evaluation of instructional approaches in Philippine schools is essential for refining and strengthening language-based teaching strategies.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Design

This study employed a descriptive–correlational research design to investigate the implementation of mother tongue–based instruction in selected primary schools and to explore the interrelationships among its various aspects. As Deckert and Wilson (2023) explained, descriptive research offers an accurate depiction of current conditions and participants’ perceptions without manipulating the natural environment in which the phenomenon occurs. This design allowed the systematic collection of information regarding teachers’ observations and experiences with the use of mother tongue instruction during classroom activities. The correlational element of the study facilitated the analysis of associations among different dimensions of mother tongue–based instruction. Specifically, it enabled the examination of how learners’ linguistic and educational development, academic performance, and levels of comfort and confidence interact within the

instructional setting. Quantitative data obtained from teacher participants provided measurable indicators that supported the statistical evaluation of observed patterns and relationships in classroom practice.

3.2. Research Locale

This study was carried out in Jolo II District, which falls under the administrative jurisdiction of the Division of Sulu within the Philippine public education system. The district encompasses multiple elementary schools that provide primary education to children from nearby communities. These schools operate in contexts where local languages continue to be commonly used in daily interactions among students and their families. Eight public elementary schools within the district were selected as the research setting: Laud Lambayong Elementary School, Lambayong Elementary School, Port Area Elementary School, Dan–Dan Ututalum Elementary School, Bus–Bus Elementary School, Riverside Elementary School, Martirez Elementary School, and Sheikh Mustafa Elementary School. All of these institutions function under the guidance and supervision of the Division of Sulu. The linguistic and cultural environment of the district makes it a suitable context for studying classroom practices related to the implementation of mother tongue–based instruction.

3.3. Participants of the Study

The participants consisted of one hundred (100) elementary school teachers assigned to the eight public elementary schools within Jolo II District. These teachers were directly involved in classroom instruction at the primary level and possessed firsthand experience in implementing language-related teaching practices. Information gathered from these respondents provided valuable insights regarding classroom implementation and teacher perspectives concerning the instructional approach examined in the study.

The total number of participants was distributed across the eight schools to ensure representation from different institutions within the district. Four schools contributed thirteen (13) teacher respondents each, while the remaining four schools provided twelve (12) respondents each. All participants were actively teaching in the district during the academic year 2025–2026. Distribution of Respondents According to School is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Distribution Of Respondents According To School

Jolo Ii District Elementary Schools	Number Of Teacher Respondents
1. Laud Lambayong Elementary School	13
2. Lambayong Elementary School	13
3. Port Area Elementary School	13
4. Dan – Dan Ututalum Elementary School	13
5. Bus – Bus Elementary School	12
6. Riverside Elementary School	12

7. Martirez Elementary School	12
8. Sheikh Mustafa Elementary School	12
Total	100

3.4. Sampling Procedure

A purposive sampling technique guided the selection of participants. This sampling method allowed the inclusion of individuals who possess direct knowledge and experience regarding classroom instruction at the primary level. Teachers currently assigned to the selected schools were considered appropriate respondents because daily teaching activities place them in a position to observe how language use influences classroom learning conditions. The total number of participants reflected the available population of teachers in the participating schools. Each institution contributed between twelve and thirteen teachers, allowing balanced representation across the district. This distribution ensured that perspectives from different school environments were included in the data gathered for the study.

3.5. Research Instrument

The study utilized a structured questionnaire checklist as the primary tool for data collection. The instrument was divided into two main sections to gather the necessary information for analysis. The first section captured demographic details of the teacher respondents, including items on age, gender, civil status, educational attainment, and years of experience in the teaching profession. The second section was designed to assess teachers' perceptions of the implementation of mother tongue-based instruction, with items grouped under three key dimensions: linguistic and educational development, academic performance, and comfort and confidence in classroom learning situations.

Quantitative statistical methods were employed to analyze the data obtained from the respondents. Descriptive statistics summarized participants' demographic characteristics, including age, gender, civil status, educational attainment, and length of teaching experience. Measures of central tendency and dispersion, specifically the mean and standard deviation, were used to evaluate the extent of mother tongue-based instruction as perceived across the three dimensions. Inferential statistics were also applied to examine differences and relationships among the variables. The independent-samples t-test was utilized to assess differences in responses based on gender, while the One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) tested for variations in responses according to age, civil status, educational attainment, and teaching experience. To explore the relationships among the three dimensions of instructional implementation, the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient (Pearson r) was calculated.

Table 2. Scale Used for Interpreting Responses

Point	Scale Value	Interpretation
5	4.50 – 5.00	Always

4	3.50 – 4.49	Often
3	2.50 – 3.49	Sometimes
2	1.50 – 2.49	Rarely
1	1.00 – 1.49	Never

3.6 Data Gathering Procedure

Several steps were followed to obtain the necessary information for the study. A formal request to conduct the research was first prepared and submitted to the Office of the Dean of Graduate Studies for approval. After receiving authorization, permission to gather data was requested from the administrators of the participating elementary schools within Jolo II District. Following approval, survey questionnaires were personally distributed to the teacher respondents in the selected schools. Clear instructions were provided to ensure proper understanding of the questionnaire items. Participants were given sufficient time to complete the instrument. After the questionnaires were answered, the forms were collected, organized, and prepared for encoding and statistical analysis.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

Ethical principles guided all stages of the research process to protect the welfare and rights of the participants. Participation occurred on a voluntary basis, and respondents received clear information regarding the purpose of the study before answering the questionnaire. Consent indicated willingness to participate. Confidentiality of the information collected from the respondents remained strictly protected. Personal identifiers were excluded from the dataset to maintain anonymity. All responses were used solely for academic analysis and documentation. Ethical clearance for the conduct of the study was obtained from the appropriate ethics authority of Sulu State College, ensuring that the research complied with institutional standards governing academic studies.

4. RESULTS

Table 3. Demographic profiles of the teacher-respondents in terms of age

Age	Number of Respondents	Percent	Cumulative percent
25 years old and below	8	8%	8%
26 to 35 years old	19	19%	27%
36 years old and above	73	73%	100%
Total	100	100%	

Table 3 presents the age distribution of the teacher respondents in the selected primary schools of Jolo II District. Out of the total 100 respondents, the majority belong to the age group

of 36 years old and above, accounting for 73% of the participants. Meanwhile, 19% fall within the 26–35 years old category, while only 8% are 25 years old and below. The data indicate that most teachers involved in the implementation of mother tongue–based instruction are relatively mature and experienced in the teaching profession. This suggests that the perspectives gathered in this study largely reflect the views of educators who have spent considerable time in the school system. Their professional exposure may contribute to a more stable understanding of instructional approaches used in the early grades. The presence of younger teachers, although smaller in proportion, also shows that different generational perspectives are represented in the dataset.

Table 4. Demographic profiles of the teacher-respondents in terms of gender

Gender	Number of Respondents	Percent	Cumulative percent
Male	6	6%	6%
Female	94	94%	100%
Total	100	100%	

Table 4 shows the gender composition of the respondents. The results reveal that 94% of the teachers are female, while 6% are male. This distribution indicates a strong female representation in the teaching workforce of the participating primary schools. A pattern reflects the common trend in elementary education where female educators form the majority of the teaching staff. The predominance of female teachers suggests that most classroom experiences and instructional practices reported in this study are largely shaped by their professional perspectives. Nonetheless, the inclusion of male respondents contributes to a broader representation of views regarding the implementation of mother tongue–based instruction.

Table 5. Level of implementation of mother tongue-based instruction among the primary pupils at Jolo II District Division of Sulu as perceived by teachers in terms of enhanced linguistic and educational development

No	Statements	Mean	S.D.	Description
1	Students gain a stronger grasp of concepts when instruction is delivered in their mother tongue.	3.96	.86363	Often
2	Mother Tongue–Based Multilingual Education enables students to link new knowledge with what they already know.	4.06	.82658	Often
3	Learning activities capture students’ interest more effectively when their mother tongue is utilized.	4.13	.83672	Often
4	Mother Tongue–Based Multilingual Education fosters the development of students’ critical thinking abilities.	3.99	.79766	Often
5	Students show improvement in their ability to communicate in their mother tongue.	3.90	.83485	Often
6	Mother Tongue–Based Multilingual Education supports students in expressing themselves with creativity.	4.09	.80522	Often

7	Students exhibit higher confidence in contributing to classroom discussions when lessons are conducted in their mother tongue.	4.17	.77921	Often
8	Mother Tongue–Based Multilingual Education strengthens students’ literacy skills in their first language.	4.02	.84063	Often
9	Students develop a deeper appreciation for their cultural background through Mother Tongue–Based Multilingual Education.	4.05	.80873	Often
10	Mother Tongue–Based Multilingual Education helps prepare students for a smooth transition to learning in an additional language.	3.97	.83430	Often
Weighted Mean		4.034	.62413	Often

Legend: (5) 4.50 – 5.00=Always; (4) 3.50 – 4.49=Often; (3) 2.50 – 3.49=Sometimes; (2) 1.50 – 2.49=Rarely; (1) 1.00 – 1.49=Never

Table 5 reveals the teachers’ perceptions regarding the extent to which mother tongue–based instruction contributes to students’ linguistic and educational development. The overall weighted mean of 4.034 indicates that the implementation of this approach is often observed in classroom practice. Among the statements, the highest mean score (4.17) corresponds to the item stating that students become more confident in participating in class discussions when the mother tongue is used. This suggests that using the learners’ familiar language encourages more active classroom interaction. The statement indicating that students are more engaged in learning activities when the mother tongue is used also received a relatively high mean of 4.13, highlighting the role of language familiarity in promoting participation and understanding. Results suggest that the integration of the mother tongue as a medium of instruction supports learners’ comprehension, communication skills, and classroom involvement. Teachers consistently observed that students demonstrate stronger engagement and improved expression when lessons are delivered in a language that is familiar to them.

Table 6. Level of implementation of mother tongue-based instruction among the primary pupils at Jolo II District Division of Sulu as perceived by teachers in terms of improved academic performance

No	Statements	Mean	S.D.	Description
1	Students show greater understanding of academic content when lessons are delivered in their mother tongue.	3.80	.95346	Often
2	Mother tongue–based multilingual education contributes to higher achievement across subjects.	3.56	.93550	Often
3	Students develop stronger problem-solving abilities as a result of mother tongue–based multilingual instruction.	3.61	.97333	Often
4	Instruction in the mother tongue positively influences learners’ mathematics performance.	3.61	.88643	Often
5	Learners exhibit enhanced performance in science when taught in their native language.	3.49	.91558	Sometimes
6	Mother tongue–based multilingual education improves students’ ability to comprehend written texts.	3.70	.87039	Often
7	Students demonstrate stronger writing proficiency in their first language.	3.57	.90179	Often

8	Overall academic performance of learners benefits from mother tongue-based multilingual education.	3.45	.91425	Sometimes
9	Students are more enthusiastic and motivated to learn when instruction uses their mother tongue.	3.58	.90095	Often
10	Students retain knowledge more effectively when lessons are presented in their native language.	3.65	.91425	Often
Weighted Mean		3.602	.72836	Often

Legend: (5) 4.50 – 5.00=Always; (4) 3.50 – 4.49=Often; (3) 2.50 – 3.49=Sometimes; (2) 1.50 – 2.49=Rarely; (1) 1.00 – 1.49=Never

Table 6 presents the teachers’ assessment of how mother tongue-based instruction relates to students’ academic outcomes. The weighted mean of 3.602, interpreted as often, suggests that teachers generally perceive this instructional approach as beneficial for students’ learning performance. The statement receiving the highest mean (3.80) indicates that students demonstrate better comprehension of subject matter when instruction is delivered in their mother tongue. This finding implies that language familiarity can support clearer understanding of lesson content. In addition, the item referring to enhanced reading comprehension skills obtained a mean score of 3.70, reinforcing the idea that language accessibility contributes to stronger literacy development. Although most indicators fall under the “often” category, a few statements such as improvement in science performance (3.49) and overall academic standing (3.45) fall within the “sometimes” range. These results suggest that while the use of the mother tongue generally supports academic progress, the extent of improvement may vary depending on subject area and learning conditions.

Table 7. Correlation between Enhanced Linguistic and Educational Development and Improved Academic Performance

Variables	Pearson r	Sig.	N	Description
Enhanced Linguistic and Educational Development				
Improved Academic Performance	.616**	.000	100	High Correlation
Increased Comfort and Confidence	.648**	.000	100	High Correlation
Increased Comfort and Confidence	.731**	.000	100	Very High Correlation

Legend: ** Correlation Coefficient is significant at alpha .01 level
Correlation Coefficient Scales Adopted from Hopkins, Will (2002): 0.0-0.1=Nearly Zero; 0.1-0.30=Low; 0.3-0.50=Moderate; 0.5-0.7-0=High; 0.7-0.9= Very High; 0.9-1=Nearly Perfect

Table 8 presents the relationship between enhanced linguistic and educational development and improved academic performance. The analysis shows a Pearson correlation coefficient of $r = .616$, which indicates a high positive relationship between the two variables. The significance value of .000 confirms that the relationship is statistically significant. It suggests that improvements in learners’ linguistic abilities through the use of the mother tongue are closely associated with stronger academic outcomes. When pupils are able to understand lessons using a

familiar language, they may grasp concepts more effectively, which in turn supports better academic achievement. The findings imply that language development and academic learning operate in a complementary manner within the instructional environment.

5. DISCUSSION

The findings reveal that mother tongue–based instruction is regularly implemented in primary schools within the Jolo II District, particularly in fostering enhanced linguistic and educational growth. Teachers observed that students display clearer understanding, higher engagement in learning activities, and more effective communication when lessons are delivered in a familiar language. Familiarity with the instructional language appears to enhance pupils' ability to interpret concepts and articulate ideas during classroom interactions. William et al. (2025) stated that students' conceptual understanding strengthens when instruction is conducted in their first language, as the use of familiar language enables ideas to be processed more clearly. Sun and O'Brien (2024) highlighted that teaching in the home language promotes growth in vocabulary and oral communication skills during the early stages of schooling. Walizadah (2025) pointed out that classroom interactions become more meaningful when teachers communicate using language already familiar to students. Esposito et al. (2024) further indicated that understanding of both written and spoken instructional content improves with language familiarity, allowing learners to focus on lesson meaning instead of deciphering unfamiliar structures.

Regarding academic performance, results suggest that mother tongue instruction supports both comprehension and learning outcomes. Teachers consistently noted that students exhibit stronger grasp of subject matter, particularly in reading and general lesson understanding. Nonetheless, improvements in certain subjects were moderate, implying that academic results may differ depending on the subject and instructional context. Hamuddin et al. (2025) explained that students' comprehension increases when the language used in teaching aligns with their home environment. Autor (2025) emphasized that regular exposure to mother tongue instruction enhances overall academic achievement among primary learners. Reading comprehension is further strengthened when instructional materials and explanations are presented in a language commonly spoken in students' daily lives.

Another significant observation relates to students' comfort and confidence during learning activities conducted in their mother tongue. Teachers reported that students feel more at ease expressing their ideas, asking questions, and participating in classroom discussions under these conditions. This pattern indicates that language familiarity fosters a supportive classroom environment where learners interact without hesitation. Dhureshavar and Amchimalar (2025) noted that learning in a familiar language reduces anxiety, enabling students to concentrate on lesson comprehension. Recognizing learners' linguistic identities bolsters confidence in academic communication, while opportunities to practice language use further enhance engagement (Chavez et al., 2024). Li (2025) emphasized that incorporating the students' home language in educational settings encourages more active participation in collaborative learning. Jauregui (2020) added that acknowledging linguistic backgrounds in the classroom strengthens students' motivation and willingness to contribute to academic discussions. Students are more likely to communicate ideas freely when instruction is delivered in a language closely connected to their daily experiences.

The correlational analysis indicates significant links among linguistic development, academic achievement, and learner confidence within the context of mother tongue–based instruction. Results show that stronger language development aligns with improved academic performance and higher levels of comfort during classroom participation. These findings suggest that familiarity with the instructional language can simultaneously impact comprehension, engagement, and confidence. Family language practices also play a role, as parental use of language shapes learners’ motivation and involvement in academic tasks (Comeros et al., 2024). Clear instructional language enhances explanation, thereby supporting comprehension of lesson content. Agustina et al. (2024) stated that effective communication between teachers and learners improves classroom engagement and deepens understanding of academic tasks. Omidire et al. (2025) further emphasized that language-sensitive teaching approaches promote greater participation and comprehension in learning activities. Educational materials presented in accessible language enable learners to interpret content more effectively, supporting both active involvement and understanding during instruction.

6. CONCLUSION

The use of mother tongue–based instruction in primary schools within Jolo II District shows steady and meaningful integration into classroom practices that support early learning. Teaching through a language familiar to students enables clearer comprehension of lesson content, allows learners to articulate ideas confidently, and encourages more comfortable engagement during classroom activities. Continuous exposure to the language commonly used at home appears to reinforce linguistic development, while academic understanding progresses steadily across lessons and tasks. Observations from teachers further reveal that students participate more actively and express themselves more effectively when instruction is delivered in the mother tongue, indicating that familiarity with the language enhances both understanding and classroom involvement. The study also identifies a close connection among linguistic growth, academic performance, and learner confidence, suggesting that these dimensions interact within early education settings where teaching aligns with students’ native language. However, caution is warranted when interpreting these findings, as the data were collected solely from teachers in a single district, without including perspectives from students, parents, or school administrators, which may limit the ability to generalize results more broadly. Future practice could benefit from ongoing teacher training in mother tongue instructional methods, continual development of context-specific learning materials, and systematic monitoring at the school level to ensure consistent application. Further research might extend the study to other districts and incorporate diverse educational stakeholders to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how mother tongue–based instruction contributes to early learning outcomes across varied educational environments.

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The author confirms that this research is the result of independent academic work and personal analysis. All ideas, interpretations, and written discussions in this study were developed

by the author. Artificial intelligence tools were used only in a limited way for minor grammar checking and language improvement. They were not used to create the research content, generate ideas, perform the analysis, interpret the results, or write the main parts of the paper. The author takes full responsibility for the accuracy, originality, and integrity of this study, including its analysis, discussion, and conclusions.

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