

Conference proceedings

The Inclusion, Mobility and Multilingual Education Conference

Exploring the roles of languages for
education and development

การดำเนินการประชุม

Mga paglilitis sa komperensya

ညီလာခံတရားစွဲဆိုမှု

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Frontmatter

This conference was the 13th edition of [the Language and Development Conference Series](#), commemorating the silver anniversary of the first conference, which also took place in Bangkok back in 1993. Since then, these conferences have taken place every bi-annually bringing together policy-makers, researchers, development personnel, teachers and linguists to share views and explore issues concerning language use in development contexts. The conferences address issues of global national, second and minority languages in relation to human, social, cultural and economic development. This conference was also the 6th edition of the [Asia-Pacific Multilingual Education Working Group Conference Series](#) (also known as the MLE conferences). These conferences, taking place every 2-3 years, also bring together language and development professionals who have a particular interest in promoting multilingual education. The specific focus is on mother tongue-based learning and broader language issues in sustainable development.

Bringing these two conferences together was a unique opportunity to demonstrate the shared missions of the implementing organisations, and while raising the profile of language issues and how they affect the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, especially within the context of global mobility.

The Steering Committee of the Inclusion, Mobility and Multilingual Education Conference 2019 would like to thank the following for their help in creating this publication:

Alison Barrett; Anne Wiseman; Benjaporn 'Book' Phomahad; Brynn Acker; Chris Sowton; Debanjan Chakrabarti; Fiona Robertson; Jessica Vincent; Kimmo Kosonen; Kyungah Kristy Bang; Lijin Zhu ; Louise Cowcher; Mike Solly; Philina Ng; Supanida Kahanurak; Tara Huberty; Job Barallas; Kirk Person; Jonathan Shaw and all those who made active contributions to the #IMMLE19 social media platforms.

Please feel free to share your thoughts and comments about these conference proceedings via the Twitter handle @IMMLE19 or #IMMLE19.

Foreword

Ministry of Education, Thailand

Thailand was invited to host the High-level Policy Forum on Multilingual Education and the Inclusion, Mobility, and Multilingual Education Conference between 24-26 September, 2019. It was a great honour for me to represent the Ministry of Education of Thailand in addressing the role of languages in education and development.

Education has always been our biggest focus as it helps shape our future society. The country has achieved great success in ensuring educational opportunities for all children. Schools can be found in the remotest areas and primary school enrolment rate has been close to 100 percent since 1981 (World Bank, 2015). All children including children from ethnic minority, stateless children or offspring of migrant workers are ensured their right to education in Thailand. However, ensuring quality education in this scenario is still a big challenge. The Ministry of Education is well aware that quality education can be enhanced if children could be taught in their mother tongue.

Thailand 4.0, the country's current development plan was launched in 2018. It addresses the significance of conserving local languages and incorporating such languages as tools for enhancing learning effectiveness. This plan is in line with SDG 4 - Ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning for all. Since this goal is of the utmost importance to achieve, we are continuously working towards it.

This conference has brought together people who are working in multilingual education to share and exchange their knowledge and experience. It is certainly inspiring to see everyone doing great work and contributing their support towards the promotion of lifelong learning.



I would like to thank the conference steering committee for making the conference happen and for helping to realize inclusive and equitable quality education for all.

Ms. Duriya Amatavivat
Deputy Permanent-Secretary Ministry of Education

Foreword

The Conference Steering Committee

The Inclusion, Mobility and Multilingual Education Conference brought together 2 signature conferences in the field of language, development and multilingual education; the 13th Language and Development Conference and the 6th Multilingual Education Conference, led by the British Council and UNESCO Bangkok on behalf of the Asia-Pacific Multilingual Education Working Group and the Language and Development Conference Trustees. Eleven organisations, all of whom believe passionately in the power of inclusive and equitable language education, came together to support this conference, including CARE Cambodia, Mahidol University, Pestalozzi Children's Foundation, Save the Children, SEAMEO, SIL International and UNICEF. Bringing these two conferences together has been a uniquely rewarding experience for us all – with collaboration comes innovation and friendships that will last a lifetime. To learn more about the work of all organisations involved, please read the details on our conference website.

The conference theme of Inclusion, Mobility and Multilingual Education was selected as these are overlapping and critical issues which affect us all – no matter which country we live or work in. Languages connect and empower, but also exclude and disenfranchise those who do not speak them. 40% of the world's children currently are required to study in a language they do not understand and so language policy and choice in schools can be one of the barriers to inclusive and equitable education. An increasingly mobile workforce and student population require multilingual skills to access education and employment opportunities in different countries or offered remotely in their own country through transnational education programmes or online learning. For the 68.5 million people forced from their homes,

including 25.4 million refugees, over half of whom are under 18, language is essential for access to basic services and education, employment and for social cohesion and inclusion. If we look back, our rich discussion last year was timely more than ever with unprecedented challenges that we are facing with the COVID-19 pandemic.

As part of the conference, we also organised the High-Level Policy Forum on Multilingual Education with government officials from sixteen countries in Asia and the Pacific to strengthen and improve the quality of mother tongue-based multilingual education (MTB MLE) programme and policies within the framework of SDG4. Country delegates endorsed the Bangkok Statement on Language and Inclusion, which is the first regional statement on multilingual education, is a major milestone for the region to strengthen inclusive quality education for ethnolinguistic minority children.

We hope that the conference, our website community and this conference report has provided fuel for conversations to continue, insights and knowledge to inform debates, support local advocacy efforts and improve the quality of your work. We would like to thank you everyone who participated and contributed to the conference. Without you, we would not have been able to organise such a meaningful event or celebrate the rich diversity of our multilingual world.

Conference Steering Committee

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Introduction

At a conference where there were so many amazing presentations, so many fascinating conversations, and so many professionals from so many different backgrounds, it is hard to summarise all of #IMMLE19 in a short editorial. However, one remark by Dr. Kenmogne from SIL International at the opening reception clearly articulated the flavour of #IMMLE19:

“ Let us aim for a new day in education which is marked by a new form of cultural and educational hospitality, in which inclusive classrooms acknowledge the first language of each child, maximise the potential for all to succeed, preserve their identity, and contribute to a global community that maintains the richness of its cultural diversity.

”

Those of you who attended the conference will, I am sure, agree that these ideas were at its very heart: acknowledging the value of multilingual education, recognising the importance of genuine educational inclusion, and ensuring that education systems celebrate rather than push back against cultural diversity. Sadly, in many parts of the world, both South and North, this is not the case. However, the enthusiasm, knowledge and ideas shared at #IMMLE19 mean that hopefully there will be some positive change in these directions, at both the policy and the classroom level.



This publication may be different to previous conference proceedings you may have seen. We are trying to stay true to the three driving principles of the conference. The publication is as inclusive as possible, using different media formats, making it accessible to the wide range of delegates who came to the conference. It is digital, meaning that it is more mobile and can be shared quickly and easily with interested individuals and groups. In representing many of the languages which are spoken across Asia and more widely, it is also multilingual.

We hope you enjoy this publication, and look forward to seeing you at a future conference.

Chris Sowton
December 2019

ABOUT THE DELEGATES

476
#IMMLE
Conference delegates

27.9%
from Thailand

11.76%
from Myanmar

5.25%
from Nepal
and from Philippines



4.6%
from the USA

4.4%
from India

58
countries
where they are from.

Others - Afghanistan, Australia, Austria, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, China, Czech Republic, Egypt, Fiji, Finland, France, Georgia, Ghana, Hungary, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, Kiribati, Lao PDR, Malawi, Malaysia, Mongolia, Mauritius, Micronesia, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Pakistan, Palau, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Singapore, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Switzerland, Syria, Tajikistan, Timor-Leste, Tokelau, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, Viet Nam, Zimbabwe

What do they do?

43% Programme managers
or coordinators, advisors

22% Senior managements,
country representatives

14% Researchers, lecturers, PhD candidates

7% Teachers, trainers

5% Interns, students and others – material
writers, secretaries, freelancers etc.

4% Institution or school leaders,
senior government officials

69.96%

13.03%

10.08%

6.93%

69.96% or 333 – Never attended either conference before

13.03% or 62 – Attended only Multilingual Education
Conference series

10.08% or 48 – Attended both conferences

6.93% or 33 – Attended only Language and Development
Conference series

What are the expectations for attending the conference?

45.45% – To gain more subject matter knowledge and
expertise for my job

22.73% – To access the latest research evidence about
languages for education and development

17.61% – To develop professional networking

8.52% – To maintain or build partnership opportunities

5.68% – Others – to share knowledge and experience to others.

KEYNOTE SESSION

François Grin

PhD, Professor, Faculty of Translation and Interpreting (FTI), University of Geneva, Switzerland

Summary

Although linguistic diversity is not a new phenomenon, what has changed is that it is taking new forms, primarily due to the twin advances of globalisation and technology. Old challenges are combining with new challenges, resulting in a world which is increasingly complex. Given this, we need to identify new ways to think about linguistic diversity and how it can be managed.

Key points

- Linguistic diversity is neither intrinsically good nor bad, but rather a fact of life: it's a reality which has both benefits and costs;
 - It's not sufficient to preach to the converted about the value of multilingualism – as a community we must convince those who disagree with us, and with it;
 - Shared linguistic diversity isn't easy. The main challenges are that there are two opposing, non-converging goals, namely mobility and inclusion. They are closely tied together through language, but pull in opposite directions;
 - Diversity only makes sense if it contains distinct elements;
 - Three important aspects of inclusion are: 1 It needs to be 'identifiable'; 2 It must be for everybody; 3 Social cohesion emerges from the balanced co-presence of mobility and inclusion;
 - Mobility can be virtual as well as actual;

"Best practices are illusory as solutions are case-specific. But successful practices provide guidelines."
– Lieve Leroy

"Inclusion is important for majorities and minorities. Inclusion is for everybody."
– Francisco Benavide



- Languages can cause an identitarian backlash, the results of which can sometimes be seen at the ballot box;

Download the slides for this presentation [here](#)

Question: When you have over 100 ethnic languages in a small and low-income country, what is the risk of MTB education raising more challenges than solutions? (Vaishali Pradhan)

Question: Following the Millennium Development Goals we moved to the Sustainable Development Goals ... We have lots of organisations mobilised to solve the problems of education, but huge problems remain. So what is the problem, where are we going wrong? (From the floor)

Question: How can we make sense of hybrid identities? Would a lingua franca be useful in such situations? How should children choose the language they identify with? (From the floor)

Find out more

- [Official page at the University of Geneva](#)
- [List of publications](#)
- [The MIME project homepage](#)

Mobility, Inclusion, and Integrated Language Policy Design

1. The talk is organised in six sections respectively devoted to the following points: a) essential aspects of the MIME project (Mobility and Inclusion in Multilingual Europe) – and what makes it unusual; b) a discussion of the meaning and importance of interdisciplinarity in the MIME project in particular, and in language policy research in general; c) the distinction between multi-disciplinarity, inter-disciplinarity and trans-disciplinarity, and how inter-disciplinarity may be operationalised using a suitable analytical framework; d) an overview of the project's main results; e) a critical reconsideration of the notion of "inclusion"; f) a discussion of broader implications for research in multilingualism and language policy.

2. The MIME project, financed by the European Commission (EC) following a call for proposals and competitive selection process, is unique because of its thematic scope. The issues it addresses range from the constitutional arrangements for linguistic diversity in multilingual states to the protection and promotion of minority languages, their implications in terms of language rights and linguistic justice, effectiveness in foreign/second language teaching, the linguistic integration of migrants, the use of technological advances for efficient and fair communication in multilingual organisations, and a wide range of special topics such as the treatment of multilingualism in consumer protection or the psychometric measurement of the correlation between multilingualism and creativity. In order to cover all this ground, our consortium included no less than 25 teams distributed over 16 countries.

3. Most of the time, research on the issues mentioned in this (non-exhaustive) list of topics takes place in separate, non-interconnected projects. The latter are variously anchored in applied linguistics, education, international relations, sociology, etc. One of the main challenges of the MIME project has been to design and implement a robust analytical framework allowing for an integrated treatment of

these issues across the traditional boundaries of academic disciplines. This analytical framework is described below in paragraphs 6 to 8.

4. Meeting this challenge required a reconsideration of the nature and function of "disciplinary diversity" in research on multilingualism in general; furthermore, the European Commission explicitly requested a highly interdisciplinary project. Consequently, the MIME project consortium included scholars from the following specialties (listed in alphabetical order): economics, educational sciences, finance, law, political philosophy, political science, psychology, sociolinguistics, sociology, translation studies and urban geography. Most importantly, none of these disciplines held a dominant position; researchers approached language policy from the perspective of their respective concepts and methods, and what brought the teams together was a shared interest in furthering our understanding multilingualism.

5. The combination of disciplines is frequently invoked by funding agencies and academic institutions. The problem is that usually, they don't seriously mean it (the EC's call for proposals on "The multilingual challenge for the European citizen" was a remarkable and welcome exception). In practice, such a combination can mean very different things, which may work more or less well depending on the context, the topic to be studied, and the material-institutional set-up.

Multi-disciplinarity means the juxtaposition of various disciplines, with only limited integration between the contributions that they respectively provide. Trans-disciplinarity means that disciplinary boundaries are being overcome, thus transcending the very concept of "discipline". Interdisciplinarity represents a third type of approach: it means that different disciplines maintain their identity, as well as their distinct paradigms. The latter are reflected in discipline-specific conceptual and methodological angles. However, these distinct approaches

collaborate in providing mutually complementary angles on a common object. This is the type of research strategy presented in the rest of this paper – in which the MIME project simply serves as a template illustrating how this general strategy can be applied.

6. In order to develop an integrative framework, it is important to start out not from our own pre-defined, ideological interpretations of the issues at hand, but to look at these issues as openly as possible, then to identify the reasons why they are problematic, and then to seek responses to the challenges they raise. In our case, this has meant asking ourselves why the "multilingual challenge" is a challenge – or a problem. And what progressively emerged was the fact that, in line with the core principles that animate the European Union as a political project, the EU is pursuing two goals that are both worthy, that both involve language(s) in complex ways, but do not necessarily converge. These goals are "mobility" – including the mobility of people across member states, for education, work, leisure, etc. – and "inclusion", i.e., making sure that European society in general, and specific locales within it (big European cities, suburbs, small towns, countryside) are places where all residents can feel good and live well. Let us note that in an increasingly globalised and interconnected world, the coexistence of these two goals.

7. One crucial principle of the type of approach discussed here is that linguistic diversity is not intrinsically "good" or "bad": the project carefully separates the ideological and analytical levels (more on this later). Linguistic diversity is seen as a fact of life, entailing advantages and drawbacks. Both advantages and drawbacks may be material or symbolic, and both the material and symbolic facets must be taken into account when comparing alternative ways of handling linguistic diversity – or, in other terms, when comparing alternative language policies (which includes language policies in the sphere of education). This general framework, though devel-

oped against the backdrop of multilingualism in Europe, also seems to have broad validity, in other contexts (this was confirmed by comparative analyses entrusted to one of the MIME project's 25 teams, which looked at the diversity management experience of India, China, the US and Canada).

8. According to this type of approach, then, linguistic diversity must first be seen as a reality carrying both advantages and drawbacks. Through the notions of mobility and inclusion introduced just above, these advantages and drawbacks are tightly interconnected: more mobility may detract from inclusion, and more inclusion may hamper mobility. The main thrust of the research, then, and one which can be applied quite generally, goes as follows and can be formulated as a twin set of questions: a) what are the policies that can help democratic societies best balance mobility and inclusion? b) can we identify policies with which we can increase mobility without compromising inclusion, and/or improve inclusion without curbing mobility? These two questions arise across all the thematic areas, whether in politics, society, economics, education, communication, etc.; this means not just the areas addressed in our project, but also, more generally, all situations of linguistic diversity management.

9. The type of investigation described here generates results addressing a wide range of different, yet specific questions related to specific fields of inquiry. This range stems, of course, from the breadth of the original call. However, it also reflects the fact that in order to illustrate theoretical findings with practical examples of "successful practice" many case studies have been carried out, and case studies, by definition, yield case-specific results. The concept of "successful practice" deserves some commentary: it is a logical consequence of our intention to avoid the hackneyed notion of "best practice". What is "best" in a given place at a give time is unlikely to be "best" in another place at the same time, or at the same place in another time, let alone in a context

that is different in terms of both place and time. Putting it differently, each case is unique, and we are living in a time of rapid change. Thus, it is mainly principles, approaches, concepts and methods (rather than particular practices) that are likely to have broad validity; case-specific results about successful practice, nonetheless, can provide inspiration and benchmarks.

10. Among relatively specific results, however, some have sufficient generalisability to justify policy recommendations. The latter concern, for example:

- a) the choice of principles from normative political theory (a.k.a. "political philosophy") that can best guide the formulation of a policy of recognition of autochthonous (i.e., non-immigrant) language rights;
- b) the measurement of the links between multilingualism and creativity, leading to a recommendation to deepen multilingualism in education in order to foster the development of more individualised, and hence more flexible, expressions of multilingualism;
- c) safeguards for genuine multilingualism in higher education through multilingual curriculum design, and attention to multilingualism in the surrounding administrative and organisational aspects of the life of universities;
- d) the development of language rules in the area of consumer protection, ensuring not just greater inclusion, but improved consumer safety, etc.

Selected results covering the various thematic areas of the project are provided in the very accessible MIME Vademecum, a collection of 72 questions on multilingualism, each handled in a compact two-page presentation. The Vademecum can be downloaded free of charge from the MIME website. (A separate scholarly volume, currently in preparation, will offer a more academic treatment with more emphasis on methodology.)

11. In large-scale integrative projects, however, meta-level results matter at least as much, if not more, than results pertaining to specific issues. The approach sketched out in this presentation, which we have had the opportunity to test and refine in the context of an interdisciplinary endeavour applied to one continent, provides a broad and systematic analytical framework for the selection, design and evaluation of language policies. As such, it is first and foremost a way of thinking about linguistic diversity, and a tool that can be appropriated, adapted and applied by users, both in future research and in practical language policy selection, design, implementation and evaluation.

12. Among the meta-level results, some resonate more directly with the theme of this conference. These have to do with the notion of inclusion. The analysis of the trade-off between mobility and inclusion leads to a reconsideration of the meaning of this term and of its implications for policy. Let us first observe that "inclusion", in many contexts, seems to be little more than a feel-good term with rather vague contents (other than being the opposite of its "bad" opposite, namely, "exclusion"). However, three elements stand out as necessary to give actual substance to the notion of inclusion.

13. First, there must be a social, political, cultural, linguistic, etc. environment for people to be included into: this means that different locales need to retain a strong sense of identity, which in turn implies cultivating their uniqueness and hence their difference from other places. It follows that language policy, when supporting multilingualism and linguistic diversity, should prioritise local linguistic specificity, which gives contributes to lending each locale its unique profile. The very notion of linguistic diversity makes no sense without the possibility to identify and cultivate the elements that make up this diversity, and ignoring this may feed a negative backlash, reflected in narrowly nationalistic, or even xenophobic outcomes at the ballot box.

14. Affirming the linguistic specificity of each locale (which may be tied to one, or to several languages) is among the key dimensions of people's sense of place. Feeling secure in their sense of place and in the priority accorded to the language(s) associated with it, people are in a much better position to encounter and welcome the linguistic and cultural "Other". A clear sense of place, along with the comfort of feeling secure in it, is a precondition for making space for an expanding range of cultural and linguistic expressions, as is likely to occur apace with globalisation. Relatedly, "inclusion", by definition, must be for everybody, that is, it is not only a guiding principle adopted for the benefit of autochthonous minorities or immigrant communities. Inclusion must also be perceived by majorities as part and parcel of a social, political and cultural project that is in their interest too.

15. Like "inclusion", the frequently invoked notion of "cohesion" remains vague. Cohesion, however, requires a sense of relatedness to others in which the question of scale has crucial importance. The European context, in this respect, is particularly interesting, owing to the explicit co-existence of different possible levels of belongingness and identification: keeping things simple, these are the local, the national and the supra-national levels. Mobility not just within national borders, but across the continent (in member states and in neighbouring states linked to the EU through various agreements) can be combined with inclusion, where inclusion should be understood, as in paragraphs 11 and 12 just above, as guaranteeing a sense of safety in the uniqueness of each locale. Social cohesion, then, emerges from the balanced co-presence of mobility and inclusion.

16. The above result has far-reaching implications for linguistic diversity management (a term used here in order to subsume more specific notions such as language policy, language planning, and language regimes; this terminology is currently undergoing in-depth re-examination in specialist research). However, this type of result helps us to clarify the meaning and import of linguistic diversity. Beyond the advantages and drawbacks of linguistic diversity, the crucial point (which the type of research described here puts back into the spotlight) is that diversity, by definition, is predicated on the existence of distinct,

identifiable elements. This has implications for how we work on and with linguistic diversity, whether as practitioners or as scholars, whether in language education or with constitutional law.

17. The undisputed fact that the elements that make up a diverse world aren't closed sets (or that their boundaries are typically porous) makes no difference to the fundamental notion that diversity makes no sense without distinct, identifiable elements. This applies to what we regard as biological species as well as to what we regard as languages; and this convergence holds even if we keep clear (as we should) of simplistic "biological analogies" (such as assuming that languages are akin to biological organisms, or that they "live" and "die" in the same way). Therefore, several faddish, but questionable pronouncements about language and multilingualism ought to be taken with a pinch of salt, despite their current vogue. Consider for example the notion that languages, because they supposedly blend into each other (and because "named languages" are constructs), don't really "exist", or the claim that the very concept of "mother tongue" should be discarded. Such musings may be intellectually entertaining, but they ultimately undermine the diversity that they claim to exalt, because diversity cannot exist without distinct and identifiable elements. Policies that (blithely ignoring actors' actual experience) deny the existence of the latter imperils the well-being of persons and communities, whether large or small, who are the carriers of this diversity. They are also detrimental for majorities, because the lively manifestation of linguistic diversity is the very condition of a stimulating, mutually welcoming encounter between languages and cultures.

PLENARY SESSION 1a: Language and Inclusion - Framing the Debate

Psyche Kennett

Education, Governance and Training
Independent Consultant

Summary

In understanding language and inclusion, we need to go beyond SDG4- equitable, quality education - to take into account SDG5 - gender equality, SDG10 - social, economic and political equality, and SDG 16 - peace, justice and strong institutions. In so doing, it is important to look at the intersectionality of ethnicity, geography, poverty. Without financial flows to local level, where local languages must be supported, change cannot happen.

Key points

- Results from around the world show how language education projects create inclusion by giving vulnerable children in urban and rural schools innovative language learning opportunities;
- Gender mainstreaming will not solve the intersectional problem of language and exclusion for women and girls. There is a need for more targeted gender inclusion through language curricula, content and language integrated (CLIL) materials, and school management reform for 'safe' gender equal schools;
- Capacity to develop teaching and learning language for social inclusion involves working with the country's public administration through SDG monitoring and evaluation systems;
- At the classroom level, by promoting inclusive, participatory, learner centred methodology, transparent and accountable language assessment, non-violent communication and positive discipline, and task types as sub skills of critical thinking, we are promoting language and social inclusion;



Find out more

- [English as a tool for conflict transformation \(Article\)](#)
- [Empowered girls complete community day secondary education in Malawi](#)



[Click here](#) to find short interview for key takeaway from Psyche Kennett

PLENARY SESSION 1b: MTB-MLE in the Philippines - Softening Linguistic Boundaries for Inclusive Education



Isabel Pefianco Martin

Professor, PhD., Department of English and Department of Education Ateneo de Manila University, Philippines

Summary

The Philippines' MTB-MLE policy has been a success in many ways. Students have been more motivated and more participative in the classroom, resulting in fewer dropouts and better attendance. Teachers have enjoyed better relationships with their students and been more at ease in the classroom, whilst the community as a whole have felt more pride in their mother tongue, and they have been more involved in the life of the school.

Key points

- In the Philippines, MTB-MLE has been institutionalised and enacted as law in mainstream formal education;
- The movers and shakers who introduced MTB-MLE in the Philippines were mostly women;
- One of the problems of the previous "Bilingual Education Policy" was that it was elitist - students in high-quality private schools in economic centres performed better;
- In implementing MTB-MLE, there have been occasions where there has been a mismatch between the mother tongue selected by authorities and that actually used by community;

Find out more

- [List of publications](#)
- [UNESCO's MTB-MLE Resource Kit](#)



[Click here](#) to find short interview for key takeaway from Isabel Pefianco Martin

PLENARY SESSION 2a: Multilingual Education in the Context of Sustainable Development Goals - The Case of Cambodia

HE Dr. Nath Bunroeun

Secretary of State,
Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport

Summary

Children from indigenous ethnic minority groups need to have access to inclusive and equitable quality education. In Cambodia's context, this means that we need to provide specialised education services that enable ethnic minority children to learn in their mother tongue as a bridge to learning the national language, and to, thereafter, engage in lifelong learning opportunities. The Ministry also views multilingual education as a way to promote cultural diversity. Multilingual education encourages the preservation of ethnic minority languages and cultures because the programme is built on the values of ethnic minority communities with respect to the primacy of their languages, cultures, traditions and customs.

Key points

- All children have the right to relevant, inclusive and equitable quality education in their mother tongue;
- The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport has taken leadership and ownership of the MLE programme, and has consulted Indigenous representatives over the years, including the process of developing the national action plans;
- Institutionalisation of teacher training to improve professional levels of multilingual education teachers and education staff;
- Sustainability of the MLE programme is anchored in the Multilingual Education National Action Plan of the Ministry;



- The Cambodian Government is committed to MLE, to promote educational opportunities to some of the most disadvantaged children, and to ensure that ethnic minorities feel pride in their indigenous identity and cultures. It is hoped that other countries will be inspired to provide inclusive education for their indigenous children;

Find out more

- [Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport in Cambodia](#)
- [Evaluation of the Multilingual Education National Action Plan in Cambodia \(UNICEF\)](#)



[Click here](#) to find the plenary session delivered by H.E.Nath Bunroeun

PLENARY SESSION 2b: The Restless Species and Its Languages



Hywel Coleman

Honorary Senior Research Fellow,
School of Education, University of Leeds

Summary

We are all aware that human mobility – voluntary and forced – occurs throughout the world today. In fact, humanity has always been on the move; we are a restless species. With better understanding of this fact we might have greater empathy for and be better equipped to accommodate those who – for reasons beyond their control – are on the move.

Key points

- DNA research shows that we have common ancestors who lived in Africa around 200,000 years ago and that humans have been constantly on the move;
- Governments facilitate some mobility (e.g. tourism), but they sometimes put obstacles in the way (e.g. refugees);

- What is surprising is not that people are on the move but that we are still surprised by it and still unprepared for it;
- What are the implications for language? It is estimated that over time there have been 150,000 languages, but only approximately 7,000 are still spoken. Many languages have disappeared;
- We must accept that languages have always been emerging, mutating and dying, and this will continue to happen;

Find out more

- [Dreams and Realities: Developing Countries and the English Language](#)
- [Multilingualism and Development](#)
- [Hywel Coleman @Researchgate](#)



[Click here](#) for Hywel's comments on why we should prepare for the global mobility.

PLENARY SESSION 3a: Refugees, Mobility and Learning

Misty Adoniou

Associate Professor Language, Literacy and TESOL
University of Canberra, Australia

Summary

Although Australia is a multicultural and multilingual country with over 200 languages spoken in homes, when it comes to education, it is mostly a monolingual country. This is a particular challenge for refugees as there is no systemic support for speaking own language outside the home.

Key points

- Mobility means something very different depending on your lived experiences;
- Mobility is no middle-class ambition when you're a refugee. It is forced, unwanted, unsettling and fearful. There is no autonomy in mobility when you're a refugee. Their journeys are complex, which must be acknowledged and ultimately utilised;
- Refugee journeys do not begin once they have left their country of origin. The unsettlement begins earlier - how long do you wait it out?
- The decision to leave is a complex one. You leave, hoping to go back to the country you came from, and you may 3, 4, 5 countries looking for a safe haven;
- <1% of refugees are resettled globally. Refugees can wait months, years or even decades. They rarely choose the country they find safe haven in, and they may not know their resettlement country until a few weeks before they move;
- Australian universities expect students to graduate with 'internationalist attributes', yet these same institutions fail to acknowledge and utilise the cultural and linguistic diversity in their student population.



Find out more

- [List of publications](#)



[Click here](#) to see Misty Adoniou's short interview

PLENARY SESSION 3b: Inclusion and Multilingual Education in Myanmar from the Karen's Perspective



Kholothu Manusayachat
Deputy Director Karen Teacher Working Group

Summary

In marginalised situations, education stakeholders need to take the initiative on having policy paper dialogue with the government, in concert with the international community, which should advocate strongly for MTB-MLE. A positive development in the specific case of Karen refugees in Myanmar would be the implementation of a bottom-up MTB-MLE programme.

Key points

- Education for Karen children in Myanmar is provided by unrecognised education systems;
- Karen teachers receive just \$280 per year. There are huge logistical and administrative challenges in running an education system in Karen areas;

- It is crucial that parents are engaged fully in the educational process;
- Authentically inclusive education cannot be achieved in Myanmar without the involvement of and formal recognition of ethnic education service providers;
- It is a missed opportunity not to capitalise on the existing strengths of the coordinated system of Karen schooling as part of development of government education services in Karen areas. This would also significantly contribute to peace-building.

Find out more

- [Karen Teacher Working Group](#)



[Click here](#) to see Kholothu Manusayachat's short interview

PLENARY SESSION 3c: Planning for Sustainable Inclusion & Resilient Systems - Multilingual Education in an Era of Displacement, Mobility and Turbulence

Kathleen Heugh

Associate Professor Applied Linguistics
University of South Australia

Summary

Learners are often expected to understand a language of instruction in a dominant language even at a young age - even though they do not have the complex knowledge needed. For minority background children, this can be a double jump. For refugee children, a triple jump.

Key points

- Formal education systems have only been in place for 150 years, and we have made a mess of them. There are issues in terms of curriculum, pedagogy and support systems;
- If children cannot read and write by the end of Grade (Grade 6), we may as well let them go as we are wasting our money. They will learn no more, and the system is just bad childcare. If serious about changing things, changes have to occur earlier;
- Effective multilingual education is not about assimilating children into dominant languages/ cultures but about helping them to feel that they belong to multilingual communities;
- There are many different kinds of multilingualism;
- Inflexible approaches do not work for multilingual education.
- Capacity development in multilingual education is needed for education officials and teachers;
- Functional multilingualism means systematic use of translanguaging and transknowledging.



Find out more

- [Using multilingual approaches: moving from theory to practice](#)



[Click here](#) to see Kathleen Heugh's short interview

FINAL PLENARY



The final plenary brought together a wide range of educational actors from Asia to discuss key points emerging from the conference. The speakers were as follows: Khaing Phyu Htut (Myanmar); Dhir Jhingran (India); Isabel Pefianco Martin (the Philippines); Naw Dorcus Moo (Myanmar/ Thailand); and Muhammad Zaman Sagar (Pakistan)



Inclusion

An overview of this strand at #IMMLE19

A summary of the some of the key themes and ideas from presentations within the #inclusion strand at #IMMLE19.

One of the clear messages coming through about inclusion is that it can be understood in many different ways, and that there is no settled definition of the term. National identity and indigenous identity are two of the main ways in which identity can be understood. In linguistic terms, language should be understood not just in terms of spoken language, but also orthographic forms and in sign languages. Another strong, consistent message was that effective implementation of inclusive education policies strengthens minority communities while also supporting education in the national language. This form of education, in turn, leads to poverty reduction. Protecting minority languages can also prevent language death, which can be caused by many factors, including: specific policies; migration; relative cultural prestige; urbanisation; interethnic marriage; and lack of materials.

One valuable, cross-cutting approach to mainstreaming inclusive education was shared in a presentation on South Africa, where the following themes were identified: (a) opportunities for sustaining wellness;



(b) indigenous knowledge systems; (c) values and human rights; (d) inclusion, diversity and power; (e) self-belief, resilience and agency; (f) systemic thinking; (g) social cohesion; (h) reflective, critical and creative thinking; (i) inclusive practices. In short, inclusion needs to be situated within all aspects of the education system, including pedagogy, curriculum, materials, assessment, teacher education, teacher competence and language proficiency. In the contemporary world, inclusion must also be understood in terms of both voluntary and forced migration. In terms of the latter, there may be additional inclusion requirements, for example psychosocial, trauma-linked and different types of learning difficulties.



#Inclusion around the world

Some examples given in #inclusion presentations from around the world.

Nigeria:

It's necessary to promote language literacy (i.e. language of immediate communities, language of immediate environment, other minority languages) in order to achieve national reconciliation and cohesion.

Syria:

Barriers to higher education for Syrian refugees include: (a) lack of awareness; (b) lack of adequate academic preparation; (c) lack of available opportunities; (d) language barriers; (e) financial burdens; (f) legal aspects; (g) trauma; (h) acceptance of previous educational attainment.

Iraq:

Language learning is seen as a safe space which still challenges students mentally and cognitively. It can develop their resilience to deal with how they are feeling.

Kazakhstan:

The Soviet legacy has resulted in segregated minority language schools. The current trend is a decrease in these types of schools, with many moving to the state language of instruction. The poor state language skills of minority language school graduates has negatively affected their access to higher education and participation in public life.

India:

Of the 57 million children in the world who are out of school, 21 million of them are in India.

Bhutan:

Dzongkha is the national language but government policy aims to recognise and protect the country's linguistic diversity. Nineteen languages are recorded as being spoken among the population of 650,000 people.

Malawi:

Language policy is an ongoing, contested area of discussion. The decision to use local languages at the P1-P4 level was opposed by many as it was thought to lower educational standards. This negative perception of 'the local' is also evident in many other areas of national life.

Zimbabwe:

Schools need to give Zimbabwean Sign Language a similar status and role as that given to spoken mother tongues on the curriculum.

Pakistan:

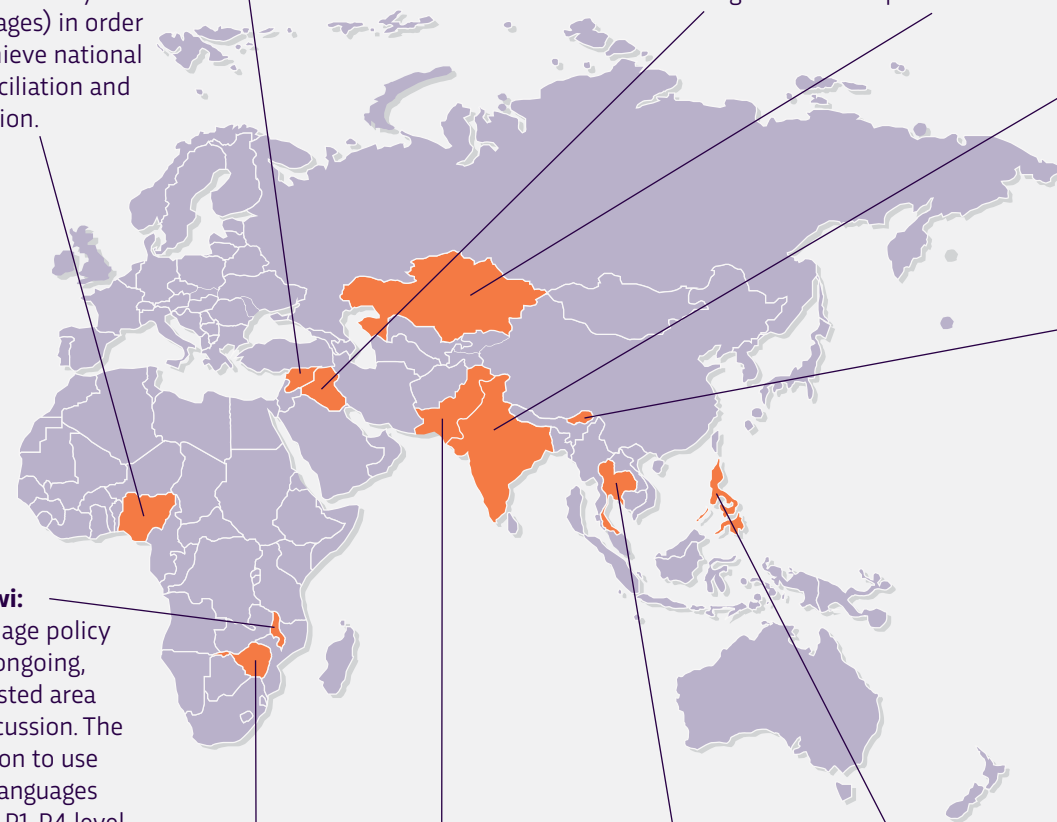
Language-in-Education policies should be shaped by a wide range of factors, including: (a) language activism; (b) constitutional change; (c) media awareness.

Thailand:

Challenges faced in Migrant Learning Centres include: (a) lack of funding; (b) legal registration of the centres; (c) legal work documentation for staff; (d) student documentation.

The Philippines:

The responsibility to teach and to learn should not stop when disaster strikes. It should continue to ease the displacement of learners and empower teachers to express their sense of social commitment, creating a sense of inclusion and inclusiveness during unstable times.



5 Quotations

from the literature

"To be bilingual and multilingual is not the aberration supposed by many (particularly, perhaps, by people in Europe and North America who speak a 'big' language); it is, rather a normal and unremarkable necessity for the majority in the world today."
- Edwards 1995

"It is obvious that writing systems and literacy among their speakers did not prevent their death. More evidence against the significance of literacy in the maintenance of languages can be found in history of European colonization since the 16th century."
- Mufwene, 2003

"The understanding of the world is much broader than the Western understanding of the world."
- Santos, 2012

"When the message, implicit or explicit, communicated to children in the school is 'Leave your language and culture at the schoolhouse door', children also leave a central part of who they are-their identities-at the schoolhouse door."
- Cummins, 2000

A language is in danger when its speakers cease to use it, use it in an increasingly reduced number of communicative domains, and cease to pass it on from one generation to the next. That is, there are no new speakers, adults or children."
- Drude, 2003

What is Inclusion?

During the final plenary session, we used www.mentimeter.com to get delegates to define the term 'inclusion'. This is what they said...

Inclusion is:

- "Deeply contextual but crucially important"
- "Responding to difference"
- "Love"
- "Essential to education"
- "For everyone to be part of"
- "What makes us human"
- "Imperative"
- "Not being excluded"
- "A process, not a product"
- "More talked about than done"
- "Essential for all education systems to think about"
- "Remembering the other"
- "Being part of a community with whom I can communicate"
- "Different but equal in status and opportunity"
- "Connecting in a language I feel comfortable with"
- "Counter to human nature, so achieving it is hard"
- "Addressing the needs of ALL peoples, cultures and contexts"
- "Plural, diverse and individual... there is no one concept of inclusion"
- "Every individual's responsibility"
- "For all and by all"
- "Feeling being accepted"
- "Including everybody without limitation"
- "Reaching out"
- "Leaving no-one behind"
- "Being part of something bigger than myself"
- "Treating others as equal"
- "At odds with mobility"
- "Equity in opportunity"
- "Listening to everyone's stories"
- "Difficult to define and perhaps morally ambiguous, depending on the situation"
- "Listening actively – willing to put aside assumptions"
- "Exclusive in some ways"
- "Acknowledgement, appreciation, accommodation"
- "A two-way complex process of giving and receiving"
- "Recognising and respecting the interconnectedness of all human beings"
- "Creating equal conditions for all"

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Mobility

An overview of this strand at #IMMLE19



A summary of the some of the key themes and ideas for presentations within the #mobility strand at #IMMLE19.

Being a refugee is not a crime. This was the powerful message shared in one of the presentations on the theme of mobility. Sadly, however, it seems that in many parts of the world, South and North alike, being a refugee is considered a crime – or is at least it is something which is criminalised. As a result, refugees' educational opportunities, and their opportunities for learning languages in particular, are severely constrained.

In terms of language learning, some of the main current challenges arise from the way in which language itself is perceived. It seems that in many mobile communities: (a) knowledge of language(s) is prioritised over usage; (b) L1 is seldom used in language acquisition, even when it could be of value; (c) the power of 'native speakerism' is strong; (d) there is no clear purpose for learning languages.

Teacher development within mobile settings was one of the main topics of focus. One overriding question was how teachers could be supported without being able to see or observe them in their actual classroom. One presentation answered this, discussing the case or providing support to teachers inside Syria, by saying that an IPS approach (= Innovation, Participation, Sustainability) approach was necessary. Others talked about technological solutions, which can be a component of addressing these challenges. The modules in one example [MOOC](#) highlighted some of the key areas to be looked at, namely: (a) learners as resources; (b) teaching with minimal resources; (c) ways of understanding progress; (d) ways of making the classroom a safe space; (e) core skills in your context; (f) core skills – ways of learning; (g) developing a trauma-sensitive organisation; (h) trauma and its effects in the classroom.



#Mobility around the world

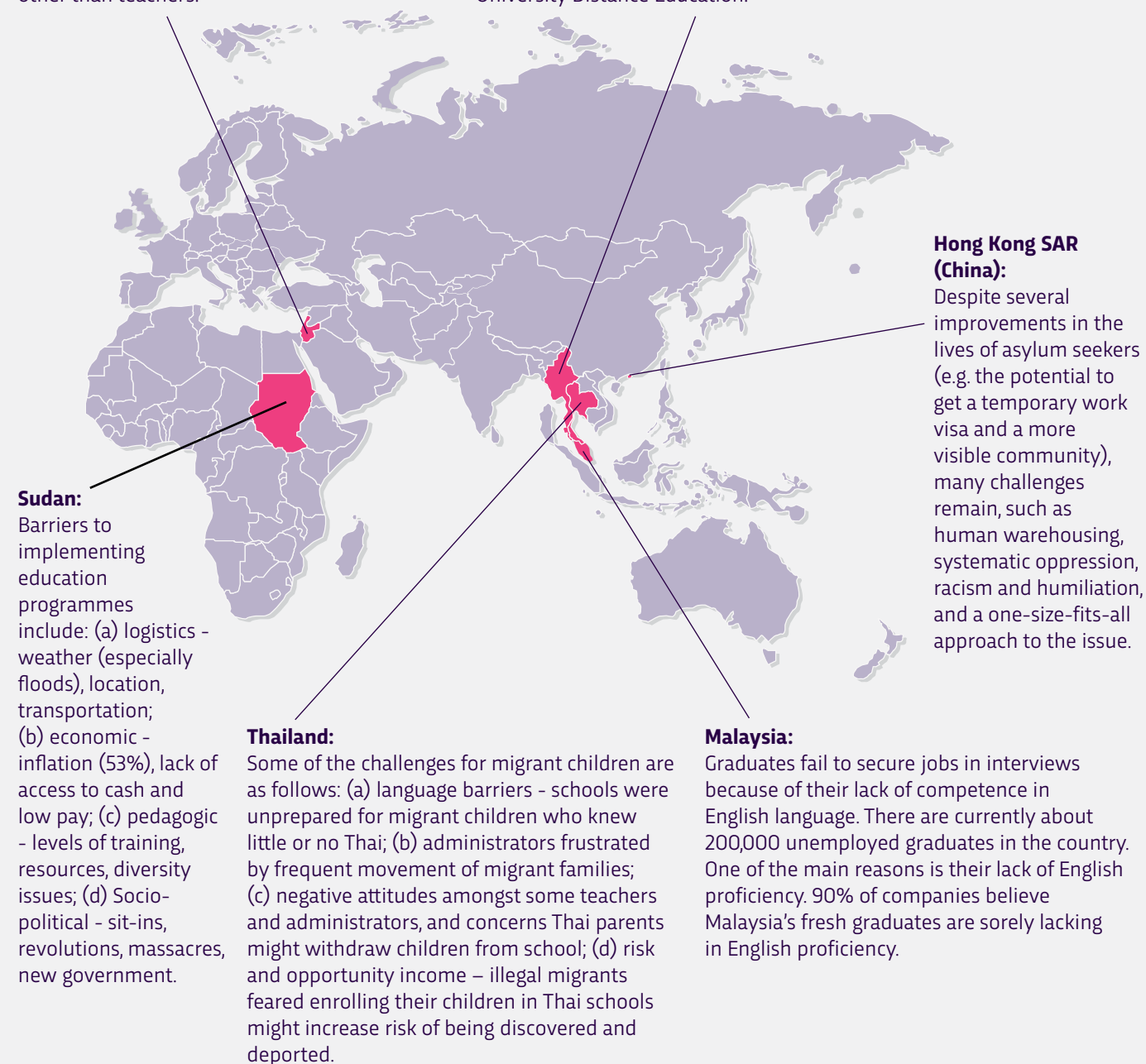
Some examples from #mobility presentations from around the world.

Jordan:

Ways in which support to language learning programmes is delivered is not always optimal. The main challenges include: (a) that digital solutions are often seen as a silver bullet in mobile settings; (b) language teachers have poor skills in target language or L01; (c) training is centralised and top-down, and often does not support teachers in their own specific locations; (d) training ignores stakeholders other than teachers.

Myanmar:

The education sector in Myanmar can be considered unique because of: (a) ethnic split, meaning that different ethnic groups want to have their own education systems (in refugee camps, in non-government areas); (b) skills upgrading on the border, which proves the sector was valuable and allowed for capacity development; (c) The Myanmar University System, which allows for flexible study through University Distance Education.



5 Quotations

from the literature



What is Mobility?

Mobility was the second key strand of #IMMLE19. During the final plenary session, we used www.mentimeter.com to get delegates to say what they understood by the term 'mobility'. These are some of the responses...

Mobility is...

"Moving within communities and between communities"

"Inevitable"

"Voluntary or involuntary"

"Nothing new"

"Including everybody without limitation"

"The 'new' normal"

"Borderless"

"Something which has always existed, but which is more perilous than at any point in history"

"A human and historic reality"

"Dao"

"Having the capacity for social, geographical and professional movement"

"Freedom"

"Multidirectional"

"The very essence of human nature"

"Being able to move with access to the resources I need"

"Due to crisis points around the world"

"A permanent state of the human race"

"Inevitable and much needed!"

"Amazing"

"A noun"

"The way barriers between communities are broken down"

"An endemic feature of the human condition"

"Only natural"

"The aspiration to live better"

"Something that stimulated different feelings and experiences for different people"

"Often tiring, sometimes rewarding"

"Leaving no one behind"

"What we all do – even by coming to this conference"

"Without structural inequalities"

"A reflection of human relationships and the human heart"

"Here to stay – so governments need to accept that and stop politicising it for their own gain"

"A fact of life but often at odds with the concept of the nation state"

"Shaking things up"

"The exception rather than the norm, but vital for those who are involved"

"A very complex concept"

"Just like breathing, a must"

"A challenge for educators and education systems for equitable provision"

"What makes us human"

"Going to increase exponentially in the next 30 years"

"A fact of life that makes inclusion more necessary and more difficult"

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Multilingual Education

An overview of this strand at #IMMLE19



A summary of the some of the key themes and ideas for presentations within the #MLE strand at #IMMLE19.

MLE – multilingual education – is the purposeful and systematic use of learners' strongest languages for literacy and learning, where curricular content may be taught in one or more languages depending on learners' proficiency levels and prior exposure to related knowledge. #IMMLE19 was privileged to have presentations from across the world on this crucial topic.



Through the presentations, the many advantages of multilingual education were discussed – for example the socioeconomic advantages (e.g. increasing chances of employability, greater productivity, more creativity) as well as the cognitive (e.g. greater language awareness, cognitive flexibility, higher academic achievement).

Many different ways of encouraging the implementation of MTB-MLE were identified, including: developing orthographies; promoting adult literacy; encouraging folk music and artistic expression; social media; and publications. One innovative, tech-based response is [SIL's Bloom library](#), through which individuals and communities can create their own texts in a resource-poor environment.



One common challenge identified was the cyclical failure of minority language speaking children. One of many examples was Prai speakers in Thailand/Laos. Many parents had negative school experiences, and teachers have negative views of Prai students. This leads to Prai students performing badly, which reinforces negative teacher stereotypes and parents' negative view of education, and so the cycle begins again. It is crucial to try and break these cycles with innovative programmes which are supported by both communities and at the policy level.

#Multilingual around the world

Some examples from #mle presentations from around the world.

Senegal:

A regional leader in MLE, using a "simultaneous" biliteracy approach (grades 1-4) with materials developed & piloted for grades 5-6. Qualified teachers, as well as directors and supervisors, are trained bilingually.

Nepal:

Current MLE challenges include 1. How can we convince parents who want to send their children to English as a medium of instruction (EMI) implemented schools? 2. How can MLE be employed in classrooms when there are students with three or more mother tongues? 3. What are effective approaches for managing the use of two or more languages in a bilingual/multilingual curriculum?

Viet Nam:

The Vietnamese Constitution stipulates that "Vietnamese is the national language", but Vietnamese law specifies that Vietnamese and Ethnic Minority languages should be taught in schools and educational institutions. 54 'nationalities' are endorsed by the government.

Cambodia:

The country's Multilingual Education National Action Plan – an initiative to promote ethnic minority children's inclusion in quality education – is unprecedented in Southeast Asia. It includes five languages, namely Brao, Kavet, Kreung, Tampuan and Bunong.

Pakistan:

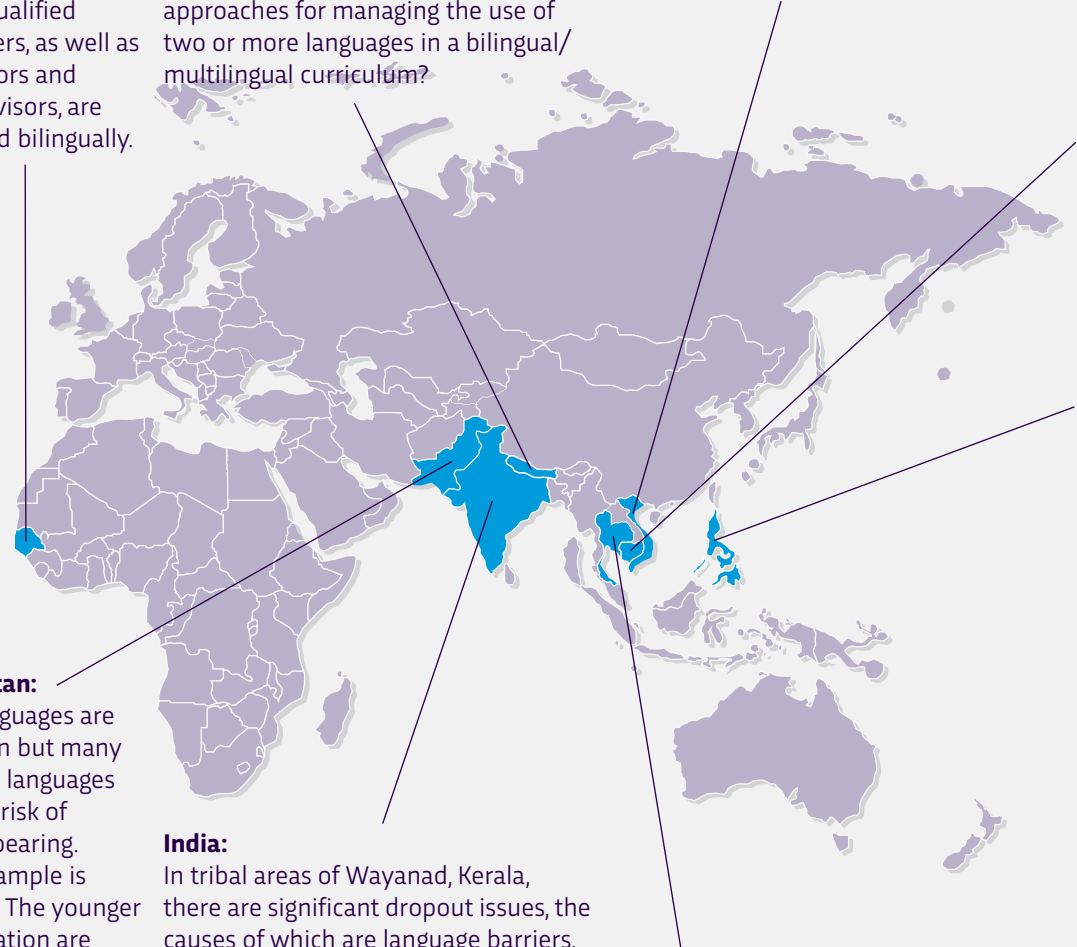
70 languages are spoken but many ethnic languages are at risk of disappearing. An example is Gawri. The younger generation are moving away from this and shifting to Urdu, Pashto and other more dominant languages. English is considered a superior language and the language of the country's elite.

India:

In tribal areas of Wayanad, Kerala, there are significant dropout issues, the causes of which are language barriers, content barriers and socioeconomic conditions. The language of instruction remains the dominant language, Malayalam, and children who speak minority languages are stigmatised by their peers and ended up alienated. There can also be a dissonance when the curriculum does not reflect and even contradicts the culture and lifestyle of tribes, resulting in stress and tension amongst tribal students.

Thailand / Myanmar:

The Karen Education Department uses Sgaw Karen as the medium of instruction, with Burmese and English taught as subjects. The purpose of their curriculum framework is to reflect the history, tradition and culture of all Karen people, and develop the nation's students to their full potential. Some challenges involved in implementing MTB-MLE are developing and using teaching methods for smooth transition between languages, the lack of bilingual teachers with sufficient language proficiency in Burmese and English, and the insufficient number of textbooks and teaching aids.



5 Quotations

from the literature



What is Multilingual Education?

Multilingual Education was the third key focal area of #IMMLE19. During the final plenary session, we used www.mentimeter.com to get delegates to say what conditions they thought were necessary in order to achieve multi-lingual education. These are some of the responses...

MLE can be achieved if:

- "As a community we continue to provide research-led advocacy to key educational stakeholders"
- "All are in!"
- "All stakeholders agree to put children first"
- "Teachers are prepared and provided for"
- "All languages and cultures are accepted and respected"
- "We all work together to show that this is an evidenced approach to ensure EFA"
- "We are able to destroy structural inequalities"
- "Given the time and the chance to succeed"
- "Strong policies are implemented well"
- "There is respect for all languages without privileging one over the others"
- "English moves to the appropriate place in the curriculum – as an L2"
- "Inclusiveness is reinforced at policy level"
- "There is political will"
- "Governments take it seriously"
- "We all look to help one another succeed ahead of ourselves"
- "There is support from all parties"
- "We listen"
- "Everyone values all languages"
- "Policies are transformed into action"
- "People at the top open their minds and change their perceptions about variety and change"
- "There's a change in beliefs and attitudes"
- "Businesses and governments embrace linguistic diversity in the economy"
- "Majority language communities and leaders recognize the benefits of MLE for both minority and dominant language communities"
- "English is not required"
- "A miracle happens"
- "Everyone is involved, from micro to macro level"
- "If we balance both inclusion and mobility"
- "We get a grip on nationalism"
- "Partnership is effectively established"
- "We are open to differences and clear our conscience from prejudice and discrimination"
- "People recognise and value diversity rather than trying to standardise"
- "There is a shared understanding of the benefits, a non-dogmatic approach, political will and sustainable support"
- "We take a much more nuanced and complex view about the role of languages in development"
- "Students can translanguage in class"

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#IMMLE19 in Pictures



High-level Policy Forum



One very important event which took place simultaneously with #IMMLE19 was the High-Level Policy Forum (HLPF) on multilingual education. The forum, organised the Asia-Pacific Multilingual Education Working Group, was attended by high-level officials from 16 countries in Asia and the Pacific, as well as observers from key MLE stakeholders.



The overall aim of the discussions was to identify strategies and mechanisms which could strengthen and improve the quality of MTB-MLE programmes and policies within the framework of SDG4. In so doing, three ministerial roundtables discussed four main issues. Key information emerging from these discussions is given below.

Enhancing the quality of MLE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Delegates shared their current status on MLE and discussed why and how first language-based MLE can be/should be implemented; They also shared challenges around teacher development and management, as well as curriculum and learning material development for multilingual education; "If a teacher doesn't speak the children's language(s), no matter how good the curriculum is, it won't work." 	Fostering investment for quality MLE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Based on the Philippine's K-12 experiences, delegates discussed how to build a supportive policy environment and how to plan and budget quality MLE programmes; It was stated that evidence-based policy planning with strong partnerships is needed; "It's matter of prioritisation" to empower MLE programmes.
Measuring the progress towards the SDGs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussed about how SDG indicator 4.5.2 (equity) and 4.1.1 (learning outcomes) could be effectively measured; Not all children are having meaningful learning experiences and language of instruction matters for learning. Huge data gap in terms of language of instruction. "Data speaks" 	Strengthening partnerships <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In order to successfully implement and sustain MTB-MLE, governments need to work in partnership with other key stakeholders (NGOs, academia, teachers, community members, parents); Regional partnerships (e.g. AP MLE WG) allows research and practice to connect to policy.

Bangkok Statement on Language and Inclusion

Section 1: Preamble

1. We, the ministers and designated ministerial representatives of sixteen countries in Asia and the Pacific; representatives of United Nations agencies, development partners and civil society organizations; and members of research and teaching communities, gathered in Bangkok, Thailand, from 24 to 26 September 2019, to explore the role of languages for education and development.

2. We acknowledge that the importance of language(s)-in-education policies, and multilingual education in particular, has been discussed in previous high-level meetings on education, as reflected in but not limited to the Jomtien World Declaration on Education for All (1990), the Suzhou Conclusions (2014), the Asia-Pacific Statement on Education Beyond 2015 (2014), the Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action (2015), and the United Nation General Assembly's challenge to "Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all" (SDG 4).

3. Further, we recognize the clear progress made in the development of multilingual education policies and practices throughout the region, including research validating this approach in Asia-Pacific and elsewhere, as reported in previous Asia-Pacific multilingual education conferences (2003, 2008, 2010, 2013, 2016), and in policy forums convened co-currently with those conferences, beginning in 2008 and including this present gathering.

Section 2: Towards Evidence-based Policies

4. Asia-Pacific is linguistically diverse. Our region is home to 3,615 languages (more than half of the world's 7,105 languages). People from all languages and cultures are valued citizens of our respective nations, in order to "promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development" (SDG 16).

5. Multilingualism is a reality, as well as an asset that should be fostered to benefit all. Throughout Asia-Pacific, citizens are exposed to a variety of languages—local, regional, national, international. Proficiency in more than one language is prerequisite to decent work for the individual, and economic growth for the nation (SDG 8).

6. Language and learning are linked. Research demonstrates that the learning of children, youth and adults can be severely limited when they lack understanding of the language used by teachers, textbooks, and digital learning resources (SDGs 4.4, 4.6). This language gap contributes to higher dropout rates among vulnerable populations. School language policies can thus act as barriers preventing access to inclusive and equitable quality education (SDG 4), thus exacerbating social inequality (SDG 10).

7. Policies related to language(s) of instruction impact learners at several key junctures, including early childhood education and school readiness (SDG 4.2), the transition to primary education (SDG 4.1), and carry-through into secondary, tertiary, vocational, and lifelong education of various forms (SDG 4.4). Language policies at each level play an important role in creating a positive learning environment, while fostering enduring peace (SDG 16), gender equality (SDG 4.5), and sustainable development (SDG 4.7).

8. The main language of pre-primary and primary classrooms should be the one the children understand best. In cases where children no longer actively speak the “heritage language” of older generations, the “heritage language” can be taught as a subject, with the language understood best by the children used as the main language of instruction. Parents should encourage children to maintain their home language and culture, even as they study other languages and cultures.

9. Multilingual education does not distract from the study in and of national and international languages, but rather makes the learning of all languages more efficient. This is supported by longitudinal research conducted in several Asia-Pacific countries and elsewhere, which has found better learning outcomes in all subjects, including the national language and international languages such as English, among children in strong multilingual education programs which included the systematic introduction of additional languages at developmentally appropriate times.

10. Language(s)-in-education policies and practices are most effective when based on evidence. Twenty-first century realities demand that our citizens master more knowledge and develop new skills more quickly than any previous generation. Therefore, decisions on which language to introduce when, and how each language should be taught, should be based on scientific evidence and a clear understanding of local sociolinguistic realities. This is of particular importance to learners from disadvantaged language communities, including ethno-linguistic minority and migrant populations, as well as to better-resourced learners who may be prematurely compelled into learning academic content communicated exclusively in an international language they have not yet mastered.

Section 3: Action Plan for Language(s)-in-Education Policies and Practices

11. We hereby declare our commitment to the realization of “inclusive and equitable quality education” (SDG 4) in relation to the language needs of all learners, while respecting and enhancing current policies in each country, by:

- I. **Highlighting language(s)-of-instruction issues**, including relevant research, policies and practices, in the national education discourse.
- II. **Fostering investment for quality multilingual education** by strengthening financial systems to focus on effective practices, prioritizing the systematic expansion of successful multilingual education pilot programs.

III. **Enhancing the quality of multilingual education** by developing clear policies, strategies and guidelines, including monitoring systems and action plans, particularly for pre-primary and primary, with the option for continued first language maintenance support through secondary, and tertiary studies, as well as adult education, even as other languages (national, international) are introduced.

IV. **Diversifying the teacher workforce and building teacher capacity** through clear policies, strategies and guidelines, including action plans for the recruitment and deployment of teachers who are native speakers of local languages, acknowledging that the identification of such individuals may need to begin while they are in secondary school, and that additional mentorship and support will be necessary through the teacher preparation process.

V. **Gathering data disaggregated by home or first language**, correlated to the school attendance and learning outcomes of primary-aged children (SDG thematic indicator 4.5.2).

VI. **Strengthening partnerships with relevant stakeholders and partners**, including parents, local communities, non-state actors, academics, the Asia Pacific Multilingual Education Working Group, and international development organizations, to develop pedagogically sound multilingual education programs, supported by well-trained teachers and quality learning materials in all relevant languages.

VII. **Preparing national progress reports** for future Asia-Pacific Multilingual Education Working Group conferences, to be held every three years throughout the 2030 agenda. Additionally, we will encourage our respective governments to track developments in language(s)-in-education issues, including progress on thematic indicator 4.5.2, in future Voluntary National Reports and regional ministerial-level meetings.

Early Career Researchers at #IMMLE19



At this year’s – Inclusion, Mobility and Multilingual Education Conference, the British Council offered an innovative programme of support for early career researchers (ECRs). It was recognised that those early in their research careers sometimes struggle

to get the most out of academic conferences due to limited international experience, networks and opportunities to publish. The ECR Programme, which I had the privilege to facilitate, sought to address this by providing full funding to attend #IMMLE19, as well as offering mentoring and support to 18 ECRs from the ASEAN region.

Given this, the programme had two main aims: 1. To help ECRs and educationalists in the ASEAN region benefit fully from #IMMLE19 in terms of presenting, networking and follow-up opportunities; 2. To help this same group learn about the process of writing

for publication in English language journals in the field of education, and to get feedback on work-in-progress. Pre-conference support was provided in a number of ways, including:

- A webinar on how to prepare for conferences, focusing on topics such as networking and presentation skills and content;
- One-to-one feedback on presentation content;
- In-conference support via workshops on writing for academic publication and one-to-one feedback on presentation skills;
- Post-conference support via reviewing draft articles and giving advice about where to publish.

Our feedback clearly shows that the participants appreciated being made to feel part of a supportive group where they could share experiences and gain advice on academic life in a safe environment. They also valued the opportunity to learn (or refresh their knowledge) about publishing their research, and gain motivation to share their work internationally.

This programme remains unique at academic conferences, and we were delighted to pioneer it at #IMMLE19. It is hoped that other organisations might put similar initiatives in place at their conferences.
– Dr. Helen Hanna

From the participants

“The MLE conference was very beneficial for me. The support that we received through workshops and mentorship was really helpful, and will allow us to progress better with our current research on MTB-MLE in our respective countries. I heard various insights from different INGOs and that gave me a better perspective to see how MTB-MLE contributes in shaping the future of many of our marginalised people. I can’t wait to finish my research on how knowledge management can be applied in MTB-MLE in the Philippines, which I will hopefully share at the next conference.” – Joan Hope Elgincolin





"I work at the National Center for English Language in Myanmar, which is attached to Yangon University, and am also in the first year of my PhD at the same university. Because of the large number of students here who face difficulties communicating with each other, one of my main areas of interest is intercultural communication. One key thing I learned at this conference was that these challenges are not just at tertiary level, but begin in primary school, and that language policy can play a significant role in promoting or hindering intercultural communication."
- Pwint Yee Win

Ten lessons I learned from #IMMLE19:

1. Celebrate diversity;
2. Multilingual education is everywhere because people move in both the physical and virtual worlds;
3. Successful and best practices are not always applicable everywhere;
4. One's life is just a second on the clock of humanity;
5. We are here for the children of the world;
6. Let's shift from a deficit to asset approach;
7. Look for the initiatives on the ground, as sometimes we are not connected to the ground;
8. Change mindsets - Let go, and let others lead;
9. Your career is a mix of ups and downs, not just an upward trajectory;
10. If not now, when? If not you, who?

- Charmane Espejo



This has been an insightful and inspiring experience. As a Vietnamese ECR grantee, I have secured both moral and material support to be part of the enriching exchanges with representatives from the academic, non-profit and state sectors. I left Bangkok full of motivation to be more engaged in research, particularly in my examination of plain language policy and its impact on social inclusion in Asia. I am thankful for the multidisciplinary dialogues at the event.

- Trang Vu



I am really inspired by the fact that I was the only librarian at the Conference. It strengthened my belief that librarians play a big role in inclusion and mobility especially with our in linguistic diversity dubbed "Words on the Wall" which aimed to promote the four major languages in Pangasinan, Philippines.

The Conference also strengthened my belief that librarians have a crucial role to play in language education, especially in preserving a culture. MTB-MLE is beyond teaching a language, it preserves the heritage of its people. Libraries can be repositories of recordings that can revive a language.

My work, which was presented at the Conference, was about the impact of the Words on the Wall programme (a linguistic diversity campaign) conducted at our library. It featured translations of phrases or words that have been translated into the four major languages in our Province (Pangasinan) in the Philippines, i.e., English, Tagalog, Pangasinan and Ilocano.

- Louise Ian D.Aquino

Highlights

from [@immle19 Twitter](#)

201 Tweets (Jun – Sep 19)

- Top tweet: 4,442 impressions earned from RETC/TH relevant content
- Top mention: 183 engagements earned. British Council colleagues and Indian social media demographics
- Top follower: Equitable Education co-founder
- Top media tweet: bite-sized video from keynote speakers



Other highlights

- Helga** @HelgaDubai · Sep 26
English is a tantalizing fruit but we need to consider how tall the tree is. Great food for thought from Khaing Phu [#IMMLE19](#)
- Dr Wine Tesseur** @WineTesseur · Sep 24
'How do we bring in knowledge of communities in our work?' question asked during the opening keynote at [#IMMLE19](#). Bottom-up, for sure, but I also think of e.g. [@alison_phipps](#)'s suggestions on how we can cite from indigenous knowledges in our publications. Have a look!
- Caspar Mays** @CasparMaysL4R · Sep 26
Powerful messages from [#IMMLE19](#) final plenary: please don't see refugees as victims but as partners who can co-create solutions... RRE: respect, recognise and empower...
- Alison Barrett** @albarrett09 · Sep 26
Really important point. Just because educated elites have been successful at learning in, or using, the dominant language(s) it doesn't mean everyone can or should or needs to or wants to! Context matters. [#IMMLE19](#)
- Catherine Young** @LEAD_Cat_Y · Sep 25
Dr Nath Bunroen from Cambodia is presenting about the ways in which MTBMLE is improving education quality - five languages being used and more in process. Yeah, Cambodia!! [#IMMLE19](#)
- British Council** @thBritish · Sep 24
"Linguistic diversity is extremely important. It's a soul of the earth. It's something that define people and community." [@GrinFrancois](#) [#IMMLE19](#)
- Dr Nighet Riaz** @nnriaz · Sep 25
Networking and some brilliant conversations around the global political challenges and solutions around languages, identity and belonging in the context of rising populism [#IMMLE19](#) [#languagematters](#)
- BritishCouncil Nepal** @npBritish · Sep 25
"Primary grade teachers should support the multilingualism in education & encourage students to bring their local languages into the classroom," says Dr. Toya Nath Khanal.
- Radha Pun** @_RadhaPun · Sep 26
"Multilingualism is a reality of today's world" - Karin Hulshof, [@UNICEF](#). Aptly said! [@immle19](#) [#IMMLE19](#)
- Francisco Benavides** @garoben · Sep 24
Inclusion is important for majorities and minorities. Inclusion is for everybody [@UNICEF_EAPRO](#) [#immle19](#)
- Jules Bern** @Jules_Bern · Sep 26
"A child cannot learn in a language he or she does not understand" (Karin Hulsoff's closing remarks [#IMMLE19](#) [#multilingualism](#) [#LanguageMatters](#)
- PS** @parul_sethi · Sep 26
Monolinguals are linguistically impoverished. We should celebrate are multilingual cultures.
- Francisco Benavides** @garoben · Sep 24
Language is key for children development. Multilingual education prepare superheroes! [#immle19](#) [#sdg4](#) [@UNICEF_EAPRO](#)

Questions Questions... Continue the conversation

Below are some questions that were posed during the conference, in presentations, through social media, and in discussions. If you have thoughts on these questions – or answers to them – you can continue the discussion online using the hashtag [#IMMLE19](#).

1. What is the solution when we have a class with students who have 4-5 different mother tongues other than Nepali in a Nepali medium school?
2. English is a tantalising fruit, but are we sure our trees are strong and healthy?
3. How does the dominant use of English by INGOs and international donors in development affect communities? In Malawi, for example, all the development discourse is in English, with materials just translated into Chichewa. It is neither localised nor contextualised.
4. Nearly one in 10 of Thailand's people are from ethnic minorities affected by a lack of resources and opportunities in their mother tongues. What can be done to make sure that we will leave no-one behind?
5. Do you agree that if we want to reach the unreached, we need to understand what 'hard to reach' means in terms of poverty; disability; ethnic minorities; conflict / natural disasters; gender and HIV/AIDS?
6. What are the differences between different types of multilingual education?
7. What language considerations should writers make when creating refugee education materials?
8. Can languages which are more 'local' become more 'international'?
9. What language(s) do parents want their children to learn and for what purposes?
10. How can education policies for teacher education support the work of the larger population of pro-social capitalists in promoting access to justice, and in civic participation?
11. What aspects of MTB-MLE are most challenging in your experience?
12. How does the use of their mother tongue affect children's performance in school and their sense of identity?
13. How can language rights promote social mobility and social cohesion?
14. In terms of alternative education systems managed by ethnic organisations, what actions can be taken by the national government and Ministry of Education to improve their status and recognition?
15. How can we ensure that education leaves nobody behind?

About this conference

The following comments are taken from conference delegates' feedback, describing their overall feelings and attitudes towards #IMMLE19.

"Highly interesting and very relevant to my own research."

"It helped me to draw parallels with my own country."

"It was so encouraging to see real evidence and fruit. I think it should have been a plenary session."

"There were so many sessions running at the same time...I wanted to attend several."

"The session was interesting because it was presented by young researchers exploring their metier and material, with a comparative paper from someone who has been using local culture in the class for some 30 years."

"The amazing fact of the involvement that would have been unthinkable a few conferences back!"

"I sat down avidly in this session."

"I learnt their valuable experiences and how they overcame challenges."

"Very interesting analyses of language issues there."

"Each panelist presented relevant, well documented information, highlighting three very successful programs."

"It's great to hear updates from the representatives of ministry of education and the future plans."

"This session helped me understand the connection and inter-dependency of dominant and non-dominant languages and the role these languages play in molding the policy."

"I especially enjoyed those who shared from their experience being involved in multilingual education."

"Translanguaging: this topic was new and I enjoyed listening to this.."

"I learned completely new information."

"The speakers advised that theatre or art could be one of the key matters that could transfer hearts and minds of people no matter which languages they speak."

"It allowed me to understand where the usual failure is in multilingual policies across countries and organizations like mine."

"I liked that she wasn't afraid to admit some locations aren't ready for MTBMLE, but we can lead teachers towards acceptance of mother tongue use."

"A wonderful testimony about the importance and effectiveness of devotion of those who are serving the marginalized."

About the next conference

This is what delegates said they would like to discuss in future conferences...

"The importance of language inclusion for sustainable peace and nation building."

"Case studies of schools successfully using MTB-MLE"

"The role of unqualified teachers/teacher's assistants in MLE, and their professional development."

"Multilingual policies, how to improve government policies on multilingual education."

"Developing inclusive education in terms of sign language."

"Language economics"

"How translanguaging and plurilingualism can lead to economic development, especially in marginalized communities"

"MLE in pre-school education"

"English curricula at the pre-school and primary level in Asia"

"IMMLE issues in local contexts, and in contexts of conflict"

"Languages and their effect on arts and culture"

"The role of indigenous languages in inclusive development"

"Local curriculum developments, and why governments are not supporting them"

"Multilingual teaching methods, especially translanguaging"

"MLE and environmental sustainability"

"Autonomous learning"

"Technology and MLE"

"Community knowledge and culturally responsive classrooms"

"English language instruction in indigenous areas"

"Teaching literacy in linguistically heterogeneous classrooms"

"Education for people on the move"

"Monitoring and evaluation in MLE projects"

"Citizen-led change and citizen agency"

"The link between literacy and development"

"Rural multilingualism, education and development"

"Judiciary and language"

"Language planning"

"Official language policies in multilingual contexts"

"MTB-MLE in the context of knowledge management"

"Intercultural education"

"Participatory approaches in respecting, recognising and empowering refugees"

Further Resources

Throughout #IMMLE19, a wide range of important documents, frameworks, agreements and articles were mentioned, some of which may have been unfamiliar to delegates. Some of these key resources are presented below, along with links to where they can be accessed.

[The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#) provides a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future. At its core are 17 goals, which are an urgent call for action by all countries in a global partnership. They recognise that ending poverty and other deprivations must go hand-in-hand with strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality, and spur economic growth – all while tackling climate change and working to preserve our oceans and forests.



[The Global Compact on Refugees](#) is a framework for more predictable and equitable responsibility-sharing, recognising that a sustainable solution to refugee situations cannot be achieved without international cooperation.



The British Council's [Language for Resilience approach](#) identifies five ways language builds resilience, whether that's giving a voice to young people and adults, building social cohesion in host communities or providing individuals with the skills they need to access work, services, education and information.



The [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child](#), or UNCRC, is the basis of all of UNICEF's work. It is the most complete statement of children's rights ever produced and is the most widely-ratified international human rights treaty in history.



[Using Multilingual Approaches – moving from theory to practice](#) is a book which introduces important evidence relating to language learning in multilingual contexts and develop the practice of using multilingual approaches in the classroom. It has been designed to support teachers who teach English as a subject and for teachers who use EMI in classrooms with students in linguistically diverse and often resource-poor communities.



The [INEE Framework](#) expresses a commitment that all individuals – children, youth and adults – have a right to education. The standards articulate the minimum level of educational quality and access in emergencies through to recovery. They can be used as a capacity-building and training tool for humanitarian agencies, governments and affected populations to enhance the effectiveness and quality of their educational assistance. They help to enhance accountability and predictability among humanitarian actors and improve coordination among partners, including education authorities.



The [2019 Global Education Monitoring Report](#) focuses on the theme of migration and displacement. It presents evidence on the implications of different types of migration and displacement for education systems but also the impact that reforming education curricula and approaches to pedagogy and teacher preparation can have on addressing the challenges and opportunities posed by migration and displacement. It gives voice to experiences in host and home communities.



[Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education: The Key to unlocking SDG 4 - Quality Education for All](#) This brochure, designed as a bright and bold resource to be used with policy makers and other key stakeholders, explores the reasons why mother tongue-based multilingual education (MTB-MLE) is the key to quality lifelong learning opportunities for all. Linking the key elements of MTB-MLE with SDG4's targets, it outlines the benefits for both individual learners and society as a whole.



This [MTB MLE Resource Kit](#) is for people who recognise that "inclusive and quality education" is possible only when children are able to understand the language used in school. The Kit was developed for three specific stakeholder groups: policy makers, programme implementers and community members. The five booklets in the Kit provide a "big picture" of successful MTB MLE programmes and suggestions for the roles each group can take as they plan, implement and maintain their programmes.



This conference was the 6th edition of the [Asia-Pacific Multilingual Education Working Group's](#) Language and Education Conference. You can explore the entire database of previous presentations and articles from this conference series [here](#).



Finally, it was also the 13th [Language and Development Conference series](#). You can explore the database of previous articles from this conference series [here](#).

Afterwords

Throughout #IMMLE19, the emphasis was on the practical application of the knowledge and ideas gained. These are some of the actions which the conference delegates said that they were going to take, and changes which they were going to make, when they returned to their place of work...

- Share resources and materials with lots of new colleagues I met at the conference and hopefully continue to learn from their experiences.
- Practice multilingualism in our classrooms.
- Support youth groups in Sudan with some vocational training.
- Develop teaching and learning materials for local languages, conduct awareness raising to community and implement a pilot program in order to show evidence for advocacy purposes and policy change for MLE.
- Be as inclusive as possible.
- Broaden understanding about the importance of the role of language and of more localized versions.
- Keep doing what I am doing, but I think this experience will change some of the ways I interact with higher-level government and NGO organizations, as I think now that they need to hear more of the practical needs and issues in the field.
- Analyse more deeply the different methods by which MLE could be developed in a given country and understand that the approach is probably different in each country. I'll have to do more research on methods.
- Extend my research network to some of the countries that were presented during the conference. I have also developed an interest in non-European migration phenomena and the relevance of language economics.

- Learn more about translanguaging.
- Make more effort to persuade the provincial government to implement mother-tongue education in remote areas. I feel more confident having attended an international conference on this topic.
- Network with organisations working for special education and funding organisations.
- Talk to people who work in MLE and those who have children to be introduced to English as L1. I used to have the wrong idea about this but now I will help them understand the importance of putting children in a MTB classroom environment helps them feel more confident to learn at primary school level where they should be introduced to L2 gradually.
- Implant MLE by incorporating an Early Grade Reading program (EGRP) at school and in the community.
- Use the knowledge gained about best practice and lessons learnt in MLE and mobility, and consider them upcoming project design.
- Value multilingualism, both in terms of societal attitude and everyday classroom practices.
- Share the importance and effectiveness of the MTB-MLE approach to learning with local communities in Myanmar.
- Share how the participation or engagement of local/community leaders is vital to encourage others to learn their own mother tongue.
- Be much more rigorous in our existing MLE work in light of the experiences of other countries.
- Learn my mother tongue language!

- Research the actual practice of teachers in the schools our learners go to, and find out at what grade level they are implementing English as a medium of instruction. This is to see if they are implementing MTB education in the first three grade levels, and to campaign for more inclusive language teaching in these schools, and maybe to take it to the regional level, if not the national.
- Promote the idea of MTB-MLE in the country through through forums and other activities, and invite related speakers or resource persons to share ideas to counter the national mainstream monolingual mindset.
- Apply socio-cultural theory with the new literacy of MLE. Change classrooms. Induce new knowledge from unwritten languages. Give more focus to environmental education in MLE.
- Conduct more research on mitigating the challenges of using mother-tongue language in the classroom such as poor comprehension of the learners at present; share what I have learned with our local government units and with the Department of Education here in our locality.
- Develop more teaching and learning materials for local language programmes to make education available and reach more people.
- Promote cyber diversity by promoting the presence and use of local languages in cyber space.
- Create conceptual frameworks for bringing it all together!

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	2. Download the slides for this presentation here.	https://www.asiapacificmle.net/conference/2019/programme
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	3. UNESCO's MTB-MLE Resource Kit	https://bangkok.unesco.org/content/mtb-mle-resource-kit-including-excluded-promoting-multilingual-education
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**Asia-Pacific Multilingual Education Working Group
UNESCO Bangkok**

Mom Luang Pin Makakul Centenary Building
920 Sukhumvit Road, Prakanong, Klongtoey,
Bangkok 10110 Thailand

British Council

10 Spring Garden, London SW1A 2BN United Kingdom

Language and Development Conference Trustees

c/o IALF Bali, Jl. Raya Sesetan No. 190, Denpasar
Bali 80223 Indonesia

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