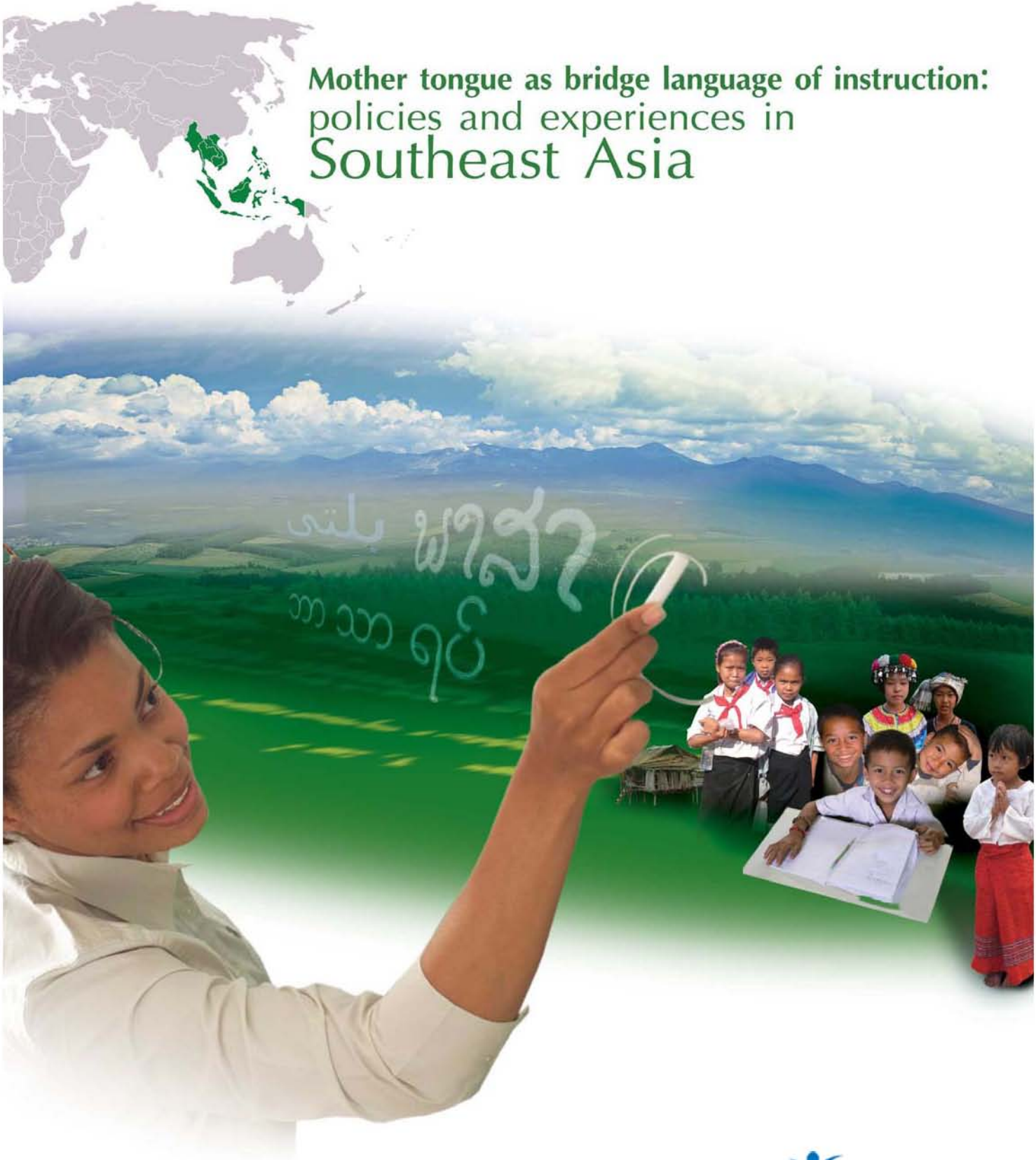


Mother tongue as bridge language of instruction:  
policies and experiences in  
Southeast Asia



Southeast Asian  
Ministers of Education  
Organization



THE  
WORLD  
BANK





Mother tongue as bridge language of instruction:  
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**Southeast Asia**

Edited by  
Kimmo Kosonen and Catherine Young



**Southeast Asian  
Ministers of Education  
Organization**



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# Contents

## Foreword

*Dato' Dr Ahamad bin Sison, Director, SEAMEO Secretariat*

## Chapter 1 Introduction 8

*Kimmo Kosonen and Catherine Young*

## Chapter 2 Language-in-education policies in Southeast Asia: an overview 22

*Kimmo Kosonen*

## Chapter 3 Various policies in Southeast Asian countries 44

### Introduction 44

### The evolution of language-in-education policies in Brunei Darussalam 49

*Gary Jones*

### Education policies for ethnic minorities in Cambodia 62

*Neou Sun*

### Regional and local languages as oral languages of instruction in Indonesia 69

*Maryanto*

### Policies, developments, and challenges in mother tongue education in Malaysian public schools 76

*Ramanathan Nagarathinam*

### Language-in-education policies and their implementation in Philippine public schools 84

*Yolanda S Quijano and Ofelia H Eustaquio*

### Language and language-in-education policies and their implementation in Singapore 93

*Elizabeth S Pang*

<b>Language policy and practice in public schools in Thailand</b> <i>Busaba Prapasapong</i>	<b>102</b>
<b>Language-in-education policies in Vietnam</b> <i>Bui Thi Ngoc Diep and Bui Van Thanh</i>	<b>109</b>
<b>Chapter 4 Good practices in mother tongue-first multilingual education</b> <i>Catherine Young</i>	<b>120</b>
<b>Chapter 5 Case studies from different countries</b>	<b>136</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>136</b>
<b>Mandarin as mother tongue in Brunei Darussalam: a case study</b> <i>Debbie GE Ho</i>	<b>139</b>
<b>The mother tongue as a bridge language of instruction in Cambodia</b> <i>Un Siren</i>	<b>148</b>
<b>A case study on the use of Kadazandusun in Malaysia</b> <i>Sandra Logjijn</i>	<b>153</b>
<b>The mother tongue as a bridge language of instruction in two schools in La Paz, Agusan del Sur, the Philippines: a case study</b> <i>Yolanda S Quijano and Ofelia Eustaquio</i>	<b>159</b>
<b>Bilingual literacy for the Pwo-Karen community in Omkoi District, Chiangmai Province: a case study from Thailand</b> <i>Wisanee Siltragool, Suchin Petcharugsa &amp; Anong Chouenon</i>	<b>171</b>

<b>A mother tongue-based preschool programme for ethnic minority children in Gia Lai, Vietnam</b> <i>Hoang Thi Thu Huong</i>	<b>180</b>
<b>Chapter 6 The way forward in Southeast Asia: general recommendations</b> <i>Kimmo Kosonen &amp; Catherine Young</i>	<b>190</b>
<b>References</b>	<b>196</b>
<b>Contributors</b>	<b>207</b>



## Foreword

Hundreds of languages are spoken in Southeast Asian nations. This complex linguistic situation in the region poses one of the biggest challenges to education. It is essential to consider, moreover, the strong stimulus of technological advancement and the impact of modernization on these countries' educational structures and systems, and more importantly, on their long-held traditions, cultures, and national identities.

In any situation, it is not easy to formulate effective educational policies and initiatives that will enable all children and adults, regardless of their gender, ethnicity, or social standing, to gain a high-quality education.

Educational policies and initiatives have broad consequences for the social, political, and economic aspects of governance as they are expressed in terms of funding, staffing, production of instructional materials, and allocation of resources.

This publication, "Mother Tongue as Bridge Language of Instruction: Policies and Experiences in Southeast Asia," presents a compendium of language policies, case studies, and general recommendations for mother tongue-based education in Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO) member countries. It provides insights that may further strengthen each country's policies concerning language of instruction as a way to achieve education for all.

This book is a result of a consultative workshop organized by the SEAMEO Secretariat and the World Bank for SEAMEO Member Countries in February 2008. The workshop aimed to increase understanding of the issues and strategies related to basic education for ethnolinguistic minority communities in Southeast Asia. Above all, this book takes the position that the learners' mother tongue is a bridge to further education, and that multilingualism is a tool for building bridges between people.

The loss of a language means the loss of a community and its unique cultural heritage. But if we can use it to teach, to write, to read, and to compute, that language will never disappear.

The SEAMEO Secretariat hopes that this publication will inspire SEAMEO member countries to meet the educational needs of learners who are hindered by barriers of language, thus contributing to the attainment of our goal, which is Education for All.

**Dato' Dr Ahamad bin Sipon**  
Director, SEAMEO Secretariat

5

# Teko-teki

1. Teko-teki adalah sejenis bejana yang dibuat dari tanah liat yang dibakar. Biasanya digunakan untuk menyimpan air.

2. Teko-teki memiliki bentuk yang unik, biasanya memiliki leher yang panjang dan mulut yang kecil. Hal ini bertujuan untuk mengurangi penguapan air.

3. Teko-teki juga memiliki kemampuan untuk menyimpan air dalam waktu yang lama tanpa mengalami perubahan rasa.



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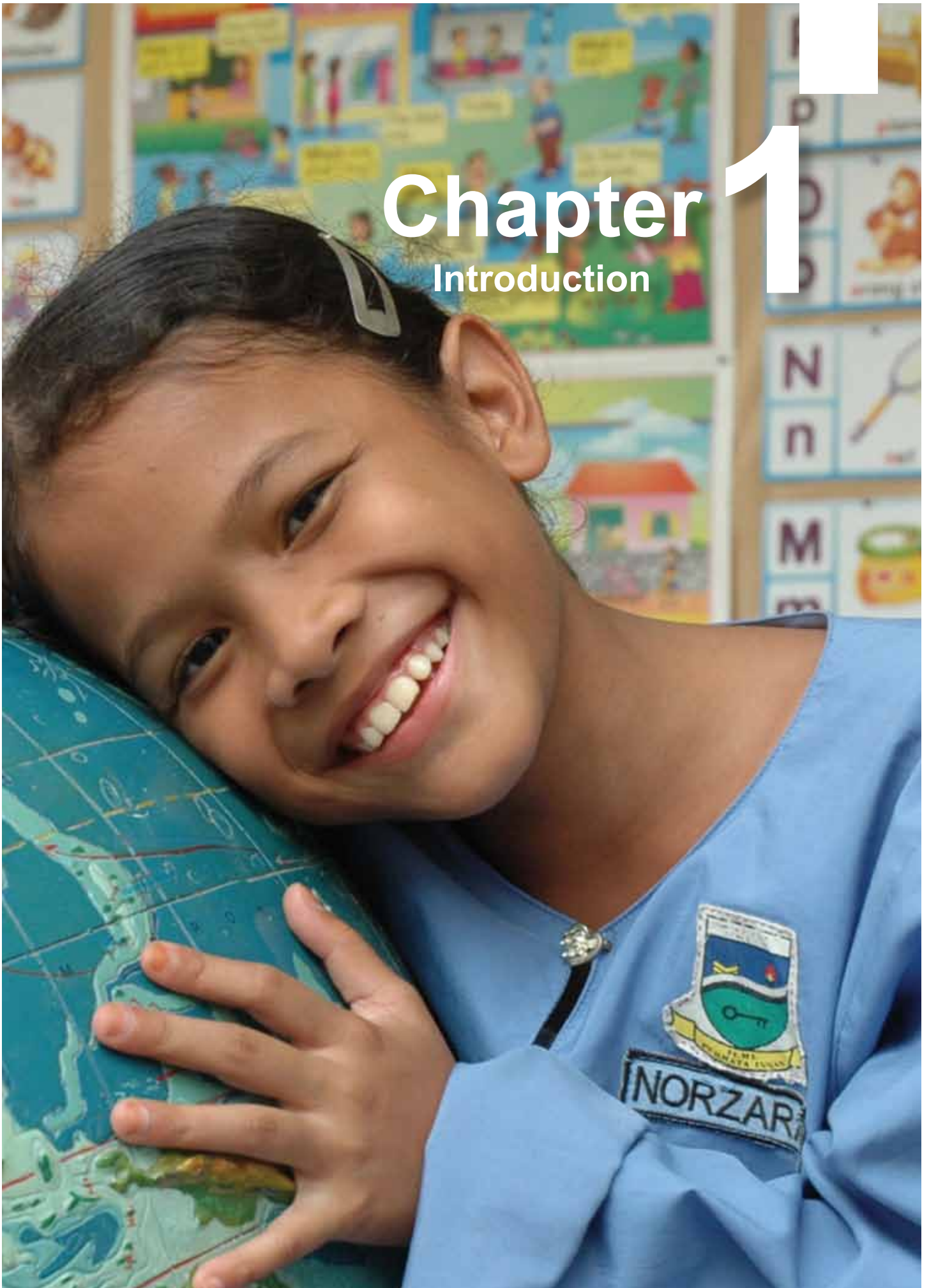




# Chapter

# 1

## Introduction



# Chapter 1

## Introduction

*Kimmo Kosonen and Catherine Young*

### **SEAMEO Project – “Mother Tongue as Bridge Language of Instruction in Southeast Asian Countries: Policies, Strategies, and Advocacy”**

The recent Mid-Decade Assessment has shown that reaching vulnerable learners and improving quality of education and learning outcomes are among the greatest remaining challenges on the way towards ‘Education for All’ (EFA). Part of this challenge is to ensure that the voices of marginalized communities are heard in the dialogue around the provision of relevant, good-quality education for the children living in such communities.

As in other regions, many children in Southeast Asia are taught in languages that are not spoken in their immediate community. Research and data, where available, show that these children are over-represented among the out-of-school population. There is an urgent need, therefore, to ensure that language-of-instruction issues receive adequate attention.

Linguistic diversity is a characteristic of all Southeast Asian countries. Speakers of minority languages are far more likely to be excluded from the educational process than those belonging to the dominant groups. Many countries have one or more official languages, and frequently only such languages are used as the languages of education. In all Southeast Asian nations, the national or official language is often not the language spoken at home by a significant proportion of the population. In many countries, only one language is used in public education. Over the past decade or so this issue has started to receive increased attention and, as a result, many Southeast Asian nations have begun to experiment with the use of some ethnolinguistic minority languages in education.

Different Southeast Asian countries have embraced different language-in-education policies and practices for classroom instruction. In some, such as Vietnam, explicit language policies have been in place for decades and need reviewing in the light of emerging social issues and their relevance to global and regional trends. In others, such as the newly independent Timor Leste, adopting a relevant language policy is critical to the country’s drive towards nation-building.

## Goals and objectives

Currently, the SEAMEO Secretariat is working with other organizations, such as UNESCO, UNICEF, SIL International, Save the Children, CARE International, Mahidol University of Thailand, and three SEAMEO Regional Centres, namely SEAMEO Regional Centre for Educational Innovation and Technology (INNOTECH), SEAMEO Regional Language Centre (RELC), and SEAMEO Regional Centre for Archaeology and Fine Arts (SPAFA), to enhance the learning capacity of ethnolinguistic minorities on the way to achieving the goals of EFA. These efforts require different approaches and target different audiences. The current World Bank-sponsored SEAMEO initiative regarding mother tongue-based education attempts to generate synergy and support among these projects (SEAMEO, 2008). The goals and objectives of the SEAMEO project “Mother Tongue as Bridge Language of Instruction” coincide with those of this book, and include:

- an exploration of how Southeast Asian countries, through appropriate language and language-in-education policies, can achieve the goals of Education for All by widening access, reducing grade repetition and dropouts, and improving learning outcomes.
- a review and assessment of the use of the mother tongue as the language of instruction.
- assistance to SEAMEO member states in devising strategies for making their language and language-in-education policies and consequent practices as appropriate and relevant to their respective situations as possible.

This publication intends to add value by sharing regional good practices in terms of strategies, policy measures, and know-how. The project has thus far already provided a platform for open discussion of language issues and practical concerns in implementing and sustaining language policies, and this book hopes to maintain these processes throughout the region. The intention is to benefit all eleven SEAMEO member countries, namely Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor Leste, and Vietnam. Publication and dissemination of the project and its outcomes to international agencies, NGOs, and academics within and outside the eleven Southeast Asian countries will help draw the interest of others beyond those immediately involved in this SEAMEO project.

The primary readership for this book is the key policy makers in the eleven SEAMEO member countries, particularly Ministers of Education. The SEAMEO Secretariat has included language-of-instruction issues in the agenda of SEAMEO Centre Director Meetings, SEAMEO High Officials Meetings, and SEAMEO Council Conferences. The SEAMEO Secretariat aims through such consultations and publications to share the findings and recommendations of this project and encourage countries to learn from similar regional and global experiences. The book also hopes to serve as a resource package that can be used by educators, students, and other stakeholders as they consider the creation and implementation of appropriate language-in-education policies to meet the needs of learners from minority language communities.

## ***Consultative conference***

In February 2008, a three-day consultative meeting brought together international experts, as well as key officials representing the Ministries of Education from ten Southeast Asian countries, to take stock of and evaluate current language-of-instruction practices and policies (SEAMEO, 2008). Experts, educators, scholars, and various multilateral agencies and NGOs from other countries presented their experiences in mother tongue-based education and reviewed issues and concerns.

The forum aimed to explore:

- a) current language-of-instruction policy issues in the SEAMEO countries.
- b) lessons gained from individual cases/field experiments in the region.
- c) experiences in other countries/regions regarding the use of the mother tongue as a bridge language of instruction.

This forum was also intended to provide mechanisms for facilitating further action relating to the language of education, and provide a venue for networking, bilateral consultations, and engagement of forum experts in possible future work. Taken together, the conference was a regional response which could later be revisited by the Ministers in their own Council Conferences.

## ***Development of a compendium of policies, country case studies, and good practices***

This volume is largely based on the presentations and deliberations of the consultative conference, and it aims to bring together, in a single volume:

- a) relevant legislation and national policies and regulations related to the use of the mother tongue as the language of instruction.
- b) some case studies of projects or initiatives introduced by various countries' Ministries of Education, written up by identified experts, and annotated by international experts and consultants.
- c) policy recommendations and region-wide strategies.

## ***Key concepts and definitions***

The use of ethnolinguistic minority languages in education is a rather recent idea in Southeast Asia. Many educational planners and practitioners around the region are still not always fully aware of the issues involved in the use of minority learners' mother tongues in education. As a result, many concepts relating to language policies and multilingual education are not always understood in the same way by all in a diverse region such as Southeast Asia. This was apparent, for example, in the first drafts of the country reports written for this project, even though guidelines and definitions of the key working concepts were distributed to the authors. These disparities are understandable, as all the authors are nationals of their respective countries, and their terminology reflects the different realities in different countries.

This being the case, it is essential that a book such as this, which attempts a regional comparative analysis, employ key concepts in a coherent and systematic manner. Terminology in all chapters has thus been edited to follow a common understanding of key concepts. The following section provides brief definitions of the key concepts used in this book.



**Language policy** in this book means legislation on and practices pertaining to the use of languages in a society, whereas **language-in-education policy** means legislation on and practices pertaining to **languages or media of instruction** and **languages of literacy** used in basic education. A **language of instruction** is a language through which the contents of the curriculum in a given educational system or a part of it are taught and learned, whereas a **language of literacy** is a language through which literacy is learnt, conveyed, for example, through printed materials and oral instruction. It is worth noting that this book does not focus on the teaching of foreign languages – unless, as in the case of English in Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Singapore, it is an official language of the country or an official language of instruction – and thus no discussion of teaching foreign languages is included.

The term **first language** or **L1** refers to a language a person speaks as a **mother tongue, vernacular, native language, or home language**. It should be noted that bi- or multilingual people may consider several languages their mother tongues or first languages. The **mother tongue** is seen here as a language that a speaker (a) has learnt first; (b) identifies with; (c) knows best; (d) uses most (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000; UNESCO, 2003); or (e) speaks and

understands competently enough to learn academic content at the appropriate age level (Benson & Kosonen, 2009).

The distinction of **language and dialect** (also called non-standard variety of a language) is treated in this publication from the linguistic point of view, which emphasizes intelligibility. Thus, only when people speaking different speech varieties understand each other sufficiently and can communicate without difficulty can they be said to speak dialects of the same language. If intelligibility between speakers of different speech varieties is insufficient, they speak different languages.

Several of the original papers submitted to SEAMEO used terminology such as “hill tribes” or “indigenous people.” As these terms are contested and understood differently in different countries – and some countries and people avoid using them altogether – they are rarely used in this volume. When the term **indigenous** is used in this book, it generally refers to something that originates from the place in question rather than something that has recently come from outside (see also the definition for a local language). In reference to the people who are the focus of this publication, the book uses the term **ethnolinguistic minority** to refer to a group of people who:

- a) share a culture and/or ethnicity and/or language that distinguishes them from other groups of people.
- b) are either fewer in terms of number or less prestigious in terms of power than the predominant groups in the state.

It should be noted, however, that there are ethnolinguistic groups in some Southeast Asian countries who are not minorities, even though their languages do not have official status and are not used as the main languages of instruction in education. Due to this fact, the term **non-dominant languages (NDLs)** – rather than the more ambiguous “minority language” or “indigenous language” – is generally used in this book to refer to languages or language varieties that are not considered the most prominent in terms of number, prestige, or official use by the government and/or the education system.

A **local language** (also called vernacular or indigenous language by some) is considered in this book as a language spoken in a fairly restricted geographical area, and usually not learned as a second language by people outside the immediate language community. A local language often has at least some of the following characteristics: it is a language (a) without a written form; (b) whose development is not yet complete; and/or (c) that is not considered suitable for use in education, due to its low status or small number of speakers. In minority settings, the local language is usually the first language of the given ethnolinguistic minority group.

A **language of wider communication (LWC)** is a language that speakers of different local languages use to communicate with each other. LWC is also called a **lingua franca** or **trade language**. At the national level, the LWC is usually the national or official language. In the multilingual situations of Southeast Asia, LWCs are often major regional languages that various ethnolinguistic groups use in communication with each other.

A **second language (L2)** is a language that is not the mother tongue of a person, but one that the speaker is required to study or use. It may be a foreign language or a language of wider communication. A second language may be a language that is not spoken in the immediate environment of the learner, or it may be one widely spoken outside the home. For ethnolinguistic minorities, the second language usually is the national or the official language, employed in contexts such as schools, interaction with government agencies, or communication with other language groups.

A **national language** is “a language that is considered to be the chief language of a nation state” (Crystal, 1999; 227), whereas an **official language** is a language that is “used in such public domains as the law courts, government, and broadcasting. In many countries, there is no difference between the national and official language.” (ibid.)

**Language development** is a part of language planning, or what Spolsky (2004) calls language management. Language planning, in its simplest form, can be divided into three parts: status planning, corpus planning, and acquisition planning (Cooper, 1989). Status planning refers to language policy, such as decisions about which languages are used for official and educational purposes. Corpus planning means, among other things, the development of orthographies, i.e. writing systems and standardization of language use. In this article, language development, for local languages, refers mainly to corpus planning. Acquisition planning has to do with methods used to help people learn languages.

**Script** is “the graphic form of the units of a writing system (e.g. the Roman vs. the Cyrillic alphabet).” (Crystal, 1999: 299) Roman script is used for *Bahasa Indonesia*, *Bahasa Malaysia*, and Filipino, Thai script is used for Thai, and Lao script for Lao. Each of these scripts can be adapted to create orthographies for minority languages. A **writing system** is a “system of visual marks on a surface” to record a spoken language (ibid.: 368). Orthography is “a standardised system for writing a particular language. The notion includes a prescribed system of spelling and punctuation.” (ibid.: 244) The **alphabet** of a language is a set of symbols, usually letters, which represent the sounds of the language.

**Bilingual/multilingual education (MLE)** means the use of more than one language for instruction and attaining literacy, and **biliteracy** refers to the use of more than one language for reading and writing. **Mother tongue-/L1-based or first language first MLE** means a system of multilingual education which begins with or is based on the learners’ first language or mother tongue. This term is used to distinguish first language-based MLE from education that employs several languages, but does not include the learners’ first languages.

**Submersion education** is the opposite of using the learners’ mother tongue in education, and it refers to deployment of a language of instruction that the learner does not speak or understand. Submersion education commonly takes place when minority children with limited proficiency in the majority language (usually the official/national language) are put into majority language classrooms without any provision for accommodating or alleviating the learners’

disadvantages caused by not knowing the language (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000: 582-587).

**Oral use of a language** refers to the employment of an auxiliary language to enable learners to understand the contents of the curriculum and its textbooks. It is important to distinguish this concept from bi- and multilingual education, as in some countries of the region the oral use of NDLs in education is thought to be multilingual education.

**Mother tongue as a 'bridge' language of instruction** refers to situations in which an educational programme is organized so that mother tongue speakers of non-dominant languages can build a culturally and linguistically appropriate educational foundation in their home language first, and subsequently learn additional languages. They thereby gain the potential to use all their languages for life-long learning.

The use of ethnolinguistic minorities' mother tongues implicitly refers to multilingualism, multilingual education, and multiliteracy in at least two languages, including the first language of the learner. The authors acknowledge that education and literacy in a small minority language alone is inadequate in the world today. People speaking non-dominant languages should also be provided opportunities, if they so wish, to learn at least the national language of a given country.





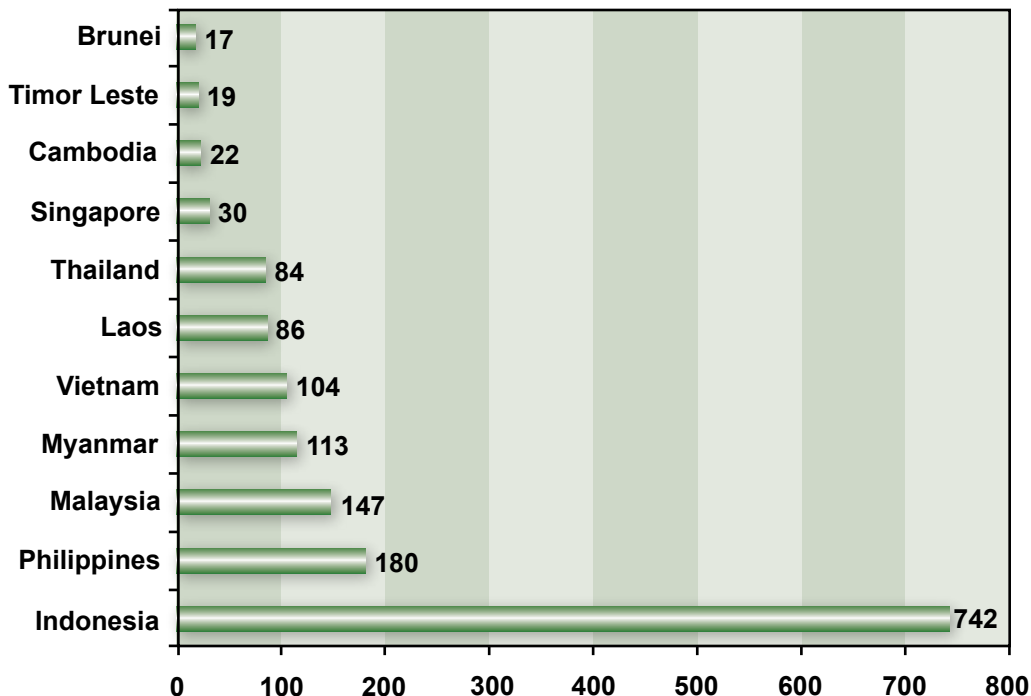
## The Southeast Asian setting

Southeast Asia is a culturally and linguistically diverse region. All Southeast Asian nations have their respective dominant ethnolinguistic groups and national/official languages, but that does not contradict their great cultural and linguistic diversity. In addition to the majority populations, hundreds of ethnolinguistic minorities live in the region.

Exact figures pertaining to languages spoken in Southeast Asia are difficult to determine, but available estimates indicate that around 1,000 languages are spoken in the region. Figure 1 shows the estimated numbers of languages spoken in Southeast Asian nations. The number and listing of languages is a contested issue in some countries of the region, and thus there is considerable discrepancy in the figures obtained from different sources.

Education systems throughout the region generally favour the dominant ethnic groups, cultures, and languages. Non-dominant languages (NDLs) are seen by most decision-makers as a problem rather than a resource. Many speakers of NDLs do not have sufficient knowledge of the languages used as media of instruction in the national systems of education and, consequently, they experience inequalities in access to, quality of, and achievement in education (Benson & Kosonen, 2009; Cambodia, 2008; Kosonen, 2007, 2008; Kosonen, Young, & Malone, 2007; Lao PDR, 2008; Myanmar, 2007; Prapasapong, 2008; UNESCO, 2005, 2007a, 2008). The section on Thailand in Chapter 3 of this volume elaborates on these issues in Thailand, on the basis of two surveys of educational achievement.

**Figure 1. Estimated Numbers of Languages Spoken in Southeast Asian Countries**  
(Source: Ethnologue, 2005)



## Key issues in the region in terms of language-in-education policies, language of instruction, and multilingual education

There are many challenges in Southeast Asia in providing good quality education for all ethnolinguistic minority children. The language of education is among the more difficult to address, and hitherto it has not received adequate attention. One reason may be the general confusion around this issue. Many of the arguments against multilingual education are not real obstacles, but rather beliefs arising from insufficient information.

It is often argued, for example, that providing education in small minority languages is not feasible. Reasons for such claims include the lack of written forms for such languages, and the shortage of learning and teaching materials, literature, and teachers who speak these languages. Furthermore, the production of local language materials and training of mother tongue teachers is often considered too costly. In many nations, top-down approaches to educational planning and management are preferred; consequently, human resources existing in all communities may not be fully utilized for educational and socio-economic development. There are many examples around the world, and also in Southeast Asia, to indicate that local communities can play an essential role in providing local language education for their own people. In many of these cases, government agencies are working in collaboration with ethnic minority communities.

This section provides a list of reasons, or rather assumed obstacles, commonly given in Asia for ignoring pluralistic language-in-education policies that would take non-dominant languages into account and promote multilingual education. It should be noted that all of the following challenges have successfully been addressed in many countries (though not necessarily yet in Southeast Asia), and therefore they are not real obstacles for multilingual education, if there is political will to start addressing them.

### *Economic factors*

- Multilingual education is claimed to be too expensive.

### *National unity and political factors*

- Using many languages in education presumably fragments the nation.
- The national/official language supposedly cannot be taught as the 'second language' to ethnolinguistic minorities, because some people consider it inappropriate to call the first language of a nation a 'second language' in the context of education.
- Nation-building is not yet complete, and therefore it is asserted that the use of the national language should be preferred.
- Using multiple languages may lead to uncontrollable empowerment of linguistic minorities.

### ***Misunderstanding of language and education issues and multilingualism***

- Using several media of instruction supposedly confuses students.
- Using non-dominant languages presumably delays the learning of dominant (national, official, international) languages.
- It is claimed that parents want only the national/international language for their children, as they do not understand the possibilities of multilingual approaches.
- It is difficult to distinguish between languages and dialects, and between the official as opposed to a linguistic classification of languages.

### ***General, technical, and logistical challenges***

- There are no orthographies for non-dominant languages.
- There is no literature or learning materials in non-dominant languages.
- Multilingual classrooms and linguistic diversity in schools cause problems.
- There are not enough teachers from minority language groups.
- Minority communities are supposedly not interested in the use of their local/non-dominant language in multilingual education.
- One ethnic group speaks many 'dialects', as the official ethnolinguistic classification may not reflect current linguistic reality.
- MLE is not seen as a high priority by donors/programme implementers.

### ***Written policies versus implementation***

- Supportive policies exist on paper, but policies are not always implemented, as it is said, for example, "the prevailing conditions are not yet supportive."

The following chapters of this book attempt to address many of the assumed obstacles listed above.

## **The organization of the book**

This book is divided into six chapters. This introductory chapter, written by the editors of the book, introduces the issues and key concepts and sets the stage for further discussion.

Chapter 2, providing an overview on language-in-education policies in Southeast Asia, is written by Kimmo Kosonen, one of the editors. It provides a brief summary of the situation in each of the eleven SEAMEO member states. The chapter is mostly based on a comparative analysis of reports on countries' policies, but it also draws on other sources, particularly when discussing the situation in SEAMEO countries that did not submit policy reports for the SEAMEO project.

Chapter 3 elaborates on language-in-education policies in different countries, providing a section for each of eight SEAMEO countries. The discussion is based on papers written for a regional consultative workshop organized in Bangkok in February 2008. The cases of the Lao PDR, Myanmar, and Timor Leste are not included, as country reports on their policies were not available. Due to limitations

of space, several countries' sections are shorter than the original papers, which are available on the SEAMEO website (SEAMEO, 2008). The sections were written by nationals of each country, and the authors' names are provided at the head of their section of Chapter 3. Their affiliations can be found in an appendix.

Chapter 4 provides an overview of good practices in multilingual education in Southeast Asia, and is written by Catherine Young, one of the editors of the book. The chapter is mostly based on a comparative analysis of the case studies submitted, but it draws on other sources as well.

Chapter 5 includes seven case studies from different Southeast Asian countries; the discussion is based on papers written for the February 2008 regional workshop. As all SEAMEO countries do not yet have initiatives that employ minority learners' mother tongues as bridge languages of instruction, cases from only some of the countries are presented here. The case studies have been edited for this publication, and the longer original papers are available on the SEAMEO website (SEAMEO, 2008). The original case studies were written by nationals of each case country, and the authors' names are provided at the head of their section in Chapter 5.

Finally, Chapter 6 discusses ways forward in Southeast Asia in terms of using non-dominant languages as bridge languages of instruction. The chapter provides general, region-wide recommendations. The original idea of having specific recommendations for each SEAMEO member state proved impossible to accomplish, as only two of the eleven countries submitted country-specific plans of action. Therefore, the chapter is mostly based on the discussions recorded at the February 2008 consultative workshop, and is written by the editors of the book. The recommendations are mostly the editors' summaries and interpretations of the issues recommended by the workshop participants, as well as recommendations of their own based on their analysis of the regional situation.

References for all chapters are compiled together, and can be found at the end of the book. The appendices of the book also include all the contributors' basic information and their institutional affiliations. The contributors' full contact information can be found on the project website (SEAMEO, 2008).





A young boy with dark hair and glasses, wearing a light blue school uniform, is looking out from a doorway. He is leaning against the door frame. The background is slightly blurred, showing other people in a classroom setting. The text 'Chapter 2' is overlaid on the right side of the image.

# Chapter 2

**Language-in-education  
policies in Southeast Asia:  
an overview**

## Chapter 2

# Language-in-education policies in Southeast Asia: an overview

*Kimmo Kosonen*

This chapter discusses and compares language-in-education policies and practices in the eleven SEAMEO countries. The focus is on the use of non-dominant languages (NDLs) spoken by ethnolinguistic minorities in basic education (mostly primary education in the formal and nonformal systems and, to some extent, also literacy) and the assessment of latitude given to NDLs in education.

A brief summary of the situation in each of the SEAMEO member countries is provided. In addition to reports on policies submitted to SEAMEO, the chapter also draws from other published sources. Chapter 3 elaborates on language-in-education policies in eight SEAMEO countries, but does not include country reports from the Lao PDR, Myanmar, and Timor Leste, as their countries' policy reports were not submitted to SEAMEO. Therefore, the sections in this chapter provide the only discussion on those three national situations.

In many Southeast Asian countries, and countries in other regions as well, the issues of language-in-education policy, ethnolinguistic minorities, and non-dominant languages are rather sensitive. Some concepts and issues are also contested. There is a variety of interpretations of issues related to non-dominant languages, ethnolinguistic minorities, and policies concerning them. As not all country sections in Chapter 3 address all the pertinent questions outlined in the SEAMEO project guidelines, this chapter attempts to complement discussions in Chapter 3. To gain the most thorough view on each country's case, the reader is advised to accompany the country overviews in this chapter with the more elaborate discussion written by "insiders" in Chapter 3.

Table 1 offers a visually comprehensive synopsis of this chapter, attempts to summarize the key policy facts, and provides an accessible comparison of the language-in-education policies in Southeast Asia. The narrative after the table recapitulates, explains, and interprets each national situation.



Table 1. Language-in-education Policies in Southeast Asia: an Overview

Country	Official and/or national language(s) (OL/NL)	OL and/or NL stipulated in the Constitution (year of adoption)	Use of NDLS stipulated in the Constitution	Language(s) in education stipulated in the Constitution (C) or Language Act (LA)	Language(s) in education (in Education Laws/Acts)	Language(s) in other important education documents)	Is the use of NDLS as media of instruction allowed/legal (yes/no)?
Brunei	Standard Malay, English	Malay (1959 C) English (1985 EA)	No	-	Malay, English (1984 EP)	-	No
Cambodia	Khmer	Yes (1993)	No	-	Khmer, LLS (2007 EL)	-	Yes
Indonesia	Indonesian	Yes (1945); (amended 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002)	Yes, LLS respected and preserved (Article 32)	Yes, LA in process	Indonesian, LLS, FLs (1954 EL 12; 1989 EL2; 2003 EL 20)	Yes	Yes
Lao PDR	Lao	Yes (1991)	No	No	Lao (2000 EL)	-	Yes
Malaysia	Standard Malay	Yes (1957, article 152)	Yes, preserved and sustained for use and study	No	Malay, Chinese, Tamil, ILS (1996 EA)	No	Yes
Myanmar	Myanmar (Burmese, Bamar)	Yes (1974) Yes (2008, Ch.XV-2)	Yes (1974) Yes (2008) LLS to be developed	Yes (1974) Burmese, LLS No (2008)	-	-	Yes
Philippines	Filipino, English	Filipino (1987)	Yes, LLS, Aux	Yes (1987), English, Filipino (OL)	English, Filipino (OL), Arabic (1987)	English, Filipino (OL), Arabic, other LLS	Yes
Singapore	Standard Malay (also NL), Mandarin Chinese, English, Tamil	Yes (1965, Part XIII, Section 153A)	Yes, preserved and sustained for use and study	Yes (C, 1965)	N.A.	English (main), other OLS	Yes
Thailand	Thai (de facto)	No (1997) No (2007)	No (1997) No (2007)	No	No	Yes	Yes
Timor Leste	Portuguese, Tetum <sup>1</sup>	Yes (2002)	Yes, valued and developed	Yes	Tetum, Portuguese (2008 EL)	Portuguese, Tetum (Lo)	Yes
Vietnam	Vietnamese	No (1992) <sup>2</sup>	Yes (1992)	Yes, Vietnamese, LLS	Vietnamese, LLS (2005, EL, Article 7)	Vietnamese, LLS (several documents)	Yes

**Notes:**

LL: local language; NDLS: non-dominant language; RL: regional language; FL: foreign language; IL: indigenous language; NL: national language; OL: official language; Lol language of instruction; Aux: auxiliary language; C: Constitution; EA: Education Act; EL: Education Law; EP: Education Policy; LA: Language Act

<sup>1</sup>Indonesian and English are working languages as long as deemed necessary (C, sect 159).

<sup>2</sup>Earlier Constitutions, however, stipulate Vietnamese as the official language.

## Policies and practices in different countries

Table 1 summarizes the key language and language-in-education policy facts in each Southeast Asian country. The following discussion proposes to elaborate on and interpret each national situation. The main themes of this chapter will be applied to each of the eleven countries separately.

### *Brunei Darussalam*

Brunei Darussalam is the smallest Southeast Asian nation in terms of population. Even so, like other SEAMEO countries, Brunei is ethnically and linguistically diverse. The majority of the population belongs to various Malay groups, speaking several Malay languages. There are also several ethnolinguistic minorities with their own languages. These include a number of languages indigenous to the area as well as non-indigenous languages, such as varieties of Chinese, and languages of more recent migrants. It is estimated that seventeen languages are spoken in Brunei, though this figure does not include all the languages of temporary migrant labourers (Ethnologue, 2005; Jernudd, 1999; Jones, 2008; Kaplan & Baldauf, 2003; Kosonen, 2005; Leclerc, 2009; Martin, 1999, 2008; Tucker, 1998; UNESCO, 2007a).

Standard Malay, as used in Peninsular Malaysia, is the official language according to the Constitution of 1959. The use of Standard Malay is restricted to formal situations like government, business, and education, and is not



generally current in daily interpersonal communication. The most widely spoken language in the country is Brunei Malay, which serves as the medium of wider communication, and is spoken as the first language by a vast majority of the population (ibid.).

The education system uses Standard Malay and English as the media of instruction, according to a language policy emphasising bilingualism in those languages. Standard Malay is used more at the pre-primary level and in the early grades of primary education. English is a more prominent medium at higher levels of learning (Kaplan & Baldauf, 2003; Leclerc, 2009; Leong & Sim, 2004). Although the education system is well resourced, the use of two supra-regional languages, English and Standard Malay, which few speak at home, rather than languages indigenous to Brunei, poses some problems (Martin, 1999, 2008).

It has been observed that some students have difficulties in fully understanding the languages of education and, therefore, the contents of the curriculum. Consequently, learning achievement in Brunei is not as impressive as one might expect in such a resource-rich system. One reason may be that almost all students have to struggle through two languages in which they may not be fully proficient at the beginning of formal education. Brunei Malay is often spoken in classrooms to help students understand the curriculum content (Martin, 1999, 2008; SEAMEO, 2008). Government policy and subsequent practice, moreover, overlook the use of all local languages, including the *de facto* colloquial national language, Brunei Malay (Martin, 1999, 2008). Brunei is the only SEAMEO country where the use of local languages in education is legally proscribed. It is estimated, therefore, that only a small proportion of Bruneians receive education in their first or home language, at among the lowest rates in all Asia. The system is, however, benefiting some sections of the society, as some elite youth of Malay origin and some Chinese can already be considered first-language speakers of English (Ethnologue, 2005; Jernudd, 1999; Jones, 2008; Leclerc 2009; Martin, 1999, 2008; SEAMEO, 2008; Tucker, 1998; UNESCO, 2007a).

## Cambodia

In Cambodia, where twenty-two languages are spoken, the Khmer are without a doubt the largest ethnolinguistic group, comprising approximately 90 percent of the population. This makes Cambodia one of the linguistically least diverse nations in Asia. The populations of most ethnolinguistic minorities are small, apart from the Cham, Chinese, and Vietnamese, whose populations are in the hundreds of thousands (Ethnologue, 2005; Kosonen, 2005, 2007; Leclerc, 2009; Neou Sun, 2008).

The Constitution of 1993 establishes Khmer as the official language. The Khmer script also has official status. Until the late 1990s, the medium of instruction at all levels of education was in Khmer, though some schools had also been teaching Chinese and Vietnamese as subjects of study (Leclerc, 2009). L1-based bilingual education programmes in formal and nonformal education have been initiated by various INGOs in close collaboration with provincial education authorities and local ethnic minority communities. Currently, there are L1-based bilingual programmes in both formal and nonformal education

for children as well as adults. Cambodian pilot projects have so far introduced five non-dominant languages, namely Brao, Bunong, Kavet, Krung, and Tampuan, as media of instruction in bilingual education (CARE International Cambodia, 2004; Kosonen, 2005, 2007; Kosonen, Young, & Malone, 2007; Middelborg, 2005; Noorlander & Ven, 2008; Neou Sun, 2008; Thomas, 2002, 2008; UNESCO, 2007b, 2008).

The experience in programmes using non-dominant languages has hitherto been good. Students in these programmes are learning to read in their first languages as well as Khmer and use these media for further learning. Before these endeavours, many ethnolinguistic minorities in the eastern highlands had never had access to education services. An important reason for the apparent success of the nonformal education projects using NDLs has been the major role played by local communities. Language committees have been crucial in language and curriculum development, the production of learning materials, and identification of volunteer teachers. Important factors of success in the Highland Children's Education Project in the formal sector include the community governance of the project schools, local staff who speak NDLs, teachers' salaries being equivalent to government contract teachers, and active participation of the local communities in curriculum development (ibid.).

Until late 2007, there was no explicit policy support in Cambodia for the use of non-dominant languages in education. The positive results of L1-based pilot programmes may have influenced positive developments in the language-in-education policy. The Education Law approved in 2007 gives authorities the right to choose the language(s) of instruction, by issuing special sub-decrees or decisions in areas where Khmer Lue languages, i.e. NDLs related to Khmer as well as Jarai, which is not related to Khmer, are spoken (Neou Sun, 2008; Thomas, 2008; UNESCO, 2008). For the first time, the law gives explicit latitude for non-dominant languages in education in Cambodia. Unfortunately, it is not clear whether the law also refers to the three largest NDLs, namely the Cham, Chinese, and Vietnamese, which are commonly considered immigrant languages. Lao, with a larger population than many Khmer Lue groups, also falls into this category. It is interesting to note that earlier drafts of the law gave stronger support to non-dominant languages by stating that ethnic minorities have the right to instruction in public schools in their first language, but over the years the terms of policy support for the use of NDLs have been weakened.

## Indonesia

Indonesia, with more than 740 languages, is linguistically the most diverse country in all of Asia. It is second globally after Papua New Guinea, where some 850 languages are spoken. The official and national language – according to the 1945 Constitution – is Indonesian (*Bahasa Indonesia*). Indonesian is also the language of instruction at all levels of education. Only an estimated 15 percent of the population can speak Indonesian as their mother tongue, however. Regional languages of wider communication as well as local non-dominant languages are widely used, though mostly orally, around the country. A large proportion of Indonesians speak Indonesian as a second language with varying levels of proficiency. Languages such as Javanese, Madurese, and Sundanese, for

example, are spoken by tens of millions of people, and several other languages have millions of native speakers (Ethnologue, 2005; Dardjowidjojo, 1998; Jernudd, 1999; Kaplan & Baldauf, 2003; Kosonen, 2005; Kosonen et al, 2007; Leclerc, 2009; Maryanto, 2008; UNESCO, 2007a, 2007b, 2008; Walter & Ringenber, 1994).

The Indonesian Constitution of 1945 guarantees the use and development of non-dominant languages and encourages people to use, develop, and preserve their local languages. Furthermore, Law No. 20 of 2003 (Chapter VII, Article 33, Section 2) states that a mother tongue other than Indonesian can be used as the language of instruction in the early stages of education, if needed in the delivery of particular knowledge and/or skills. Despite positive policy statements, however, in practice the formal system of education generally uses only Indonesian as the language of instruction. Non-dominant languages are rarely used in formal schools, except orally, to create a good learning environment. In most cases, instruction and literacy begin and continue in Indonesian. Local languages were used prior to 1954 as media of instruction, but currently these and other NDLs are mainly taught as second languages in some schools. Sometimes even decades-old learning materials are used (Dardjowidjojo, 1998; Jernudd, 1999; Kaplan & Baldauf, 2003; Kosonen, 2005; Kosonen et al, 2007; Leclerc, 2009; Maryanto, 2008; UNESCO, 2007a, 2007b, 2008).

The use of non-dominant languages in the formal system of education is thus restricted to elective courses in elementary grades below Grade 9 (Kaplan & Baldauf, 2003; Kosonen, 2005; Leclerc, 2009). Only nine NDLs have local language curricula for Grades 1-3 of elementary school (UNESCO, 2007b). According to a 1996 act on local content curricula, local communities may contribute to “locally generated curricula,” and NDLs may be used in this curricula if communities so choose. In some areas, local language materials with Indonesian translations are produced for the local curriculum. Non-dominant languages are more widely used in nonformal education, particularly in adult literacy. Local language committees and NGOs are, consequently, playing important roles in the development of NDLs and the production of literacy materials in such languages (Dardjowidjojo, 1998; Kosonen, 2005; Kosonen et al, 2007; Ringenber, 2001; Riupassa & Ringenber, 2000, 2003; UNESCO, 2007a, 2007b, 2008).

## **Lao PDR**

In the Lao People’s Democratic Republic (Lao PDR or Laos), the estimated number of languages spoken is eighty-six. According to the Constitution of 1991, Lao is the official language, and the Lao script is the official script. Lao is the dominant language in the country, with more than 3 million first language speakers. In addition to Lao, at least nine other languages are each spoken by more than 100,000 people (Ethnologue, 2005; Leclerc, 2009). The main exceptions are Khmu, spoken by the largest ethnolinguistic minority and accounting for around 11% of the national population, and Hmong, with around 8% (Lao PDR, 2007), though there are actually two Hmong languages subsumed by this title.

There is no general agreement on the number of languages or ethnolinguistic groups in Laos, and various sources give different figures (Chamberlain, Alton, & Crisfield, 1995; Ethnologue, 2005; Kingsada, 2003; Lao PDR, 2007; Leclerc, 2009; Schliesinger, 2003). Chazée (1999), for example, lists 132 ethnic groups, whereas the national census for 2005, following the established government classification, disaggregates the population into forty-nine ethnic groups (Lao PDR, 2007). The Laotian case differs from its neighbours because even the official figures show that the population speaking non-dominant languages is around the half of the total population. There is evidence that the dominant group, who are first language speakers of Lao, may in fact make up less than half of the population (Chazée, 1999; Kosonen, 2005, 2007).

Different figures for the number of languages can be explained by the lack of comprehensive language mapping in Laos, and by the fact that the government has followed a Soviet-influenced approach to the classification of ethnic groups (e.g. Benson & Kosonen, 2009; Bradley, 2005; Spolsky, 2004; Stites, 1999) also practiced in China and Vietnam – one that is not necessarily based on the languages people speak. Thus, it is possible that some speakers of Lao-related languages are listed as speakers of Lao to make the dominant group appear larger than it actually is. Of course, it is also possible that some people from non-dominant groups dissemble their identities by claiming to be Lao-speaking during census taking.

In Laos, there are no explicit policies relating to the use of non-dominant languages in education. The Constitution and other policy documents, however, stipulate that 'ethnic groups' and 'ethnic group areas' ought to receive special government attention. The Education Law of 2000 stipulates the use of Lao in education, and can be interpreted to allow the use of Lao only (Kosonen, 2007; Lao PDR, 2008; Leclerc, 2009; UNESCO, 2008). This interpretation has blocked many efforts to introduce NDLs into education and made the language issue politically sensitive (Kosonen, 2005, 2007). The situation has improved in recent years, however, and the current National Socio-Economic Development Plan (NSED, 2006) promotes the use, learning, and teaching of NDLs that already have orthographies, estimated to be less than twenty. The Plan also promotes the further development and maintenance of NDLs as steps in developing the poorest areas of the country. Furthermore, Lao People's Party (2007) proposes further research on orthography development in non-dominant languages, and recommends that minority language orthographies be based on the Lao-script to contribute to the quality teaching of Lao to non-Lao speakers.

No non-dominant languages are currently used in education, though some small pilot projects are being planned. Nevertheless, the political environment is becoming more NDL-friendly, and various departments of the Ministry of Education and Training, in collaboration with international agencies, are raising awareness of how NDLs may be used in education (e.g. Lao PDR, 2008; UNESCO, 2008). Non-dominant languages are used orally in many classrooms to help children understand the curriculum contents in cases when teachers speak the learners' language (Kosonen, 2005, 2007; Lao PDR, 2008; Phommabouth, 2006; UNESCO, 2008).



Despite some positive developments in recent years, the status of education and literacy for members of various ethnolinguistic minorities is still different from that of the Lao-speaking population. Available educational statistics show that the enrolment, retention, and achievement rates of children, and adult literacy rates among all ethnic minorities, are much lower than the national average (ADB, 2000a; Komorowski, 2001; Kosonen, 2007; Lao PDR, 2004, 2007, 2008; Sisouphanthong and Taillard, 2000).

## Malaysia

It is estimated that about 140 languages are spoken in Malaysia. The Malays, the dominant ethnolinguistic group, make up about the half of the total population. The population of some ethnolinguistic minorities is in the millions. The Constitution of 1957 establishes Standard Malay (*Bahasa Malaysia* or *Bahasa Melayu*) as the official and national language. The Constitution also guarantees people's freedom to use, teach, and learn any language, as well as the preservation and maintenance of non-dominant languages (David & Govindasamy, 2007; Ethnologue, 2005; Leclerc, 2009; Nagarathinam, 2008).

The government system of formal education has two kinds of schools: 1) national primary schools and 2) national-type primary schools. The national primary schools use Standard Malay as the main language of instruction, whereas mathematics and science are taught in English. The national-type primary schools use some other language, such as Mandarin Chinese, Tamil, or an alternative Indian language, as the main medium of instruction, and mathematics and science are taught in that language and English (David & Govindasamy, 2007; Jernudd, 1999; Kaplan & Baldauf, 2003; Kosonen, 2005; Kua, 1998; Leclerc 2009; Nagarathinam, 2008; Smith 2003; UNESCO, 2007a, 2008).

In national primary schools, i.e. Malay-medium schools, Tamil and Mandarin, as well as other non-dominant languages, including ethnolinguistic minority languages, can be studied as subjects called 'Pupil's Own Language' (POL). This is offered on some conditions: 1) there are at least fifteen students whose parents request a mother tongue class, and 2) teachers and materials for the language in question are available. Initial early childhood education can be offered in any language, but even at the pre-primary level both Standard Malay and English must subsequently be used in addition to the main language of instruction (ibid.).

Earlier, only larger non-indigenous minority languages, such as Mandarin and Tamil, were used in education, but over the past decade or so, other minority groups have seen their languages employed in education programmes as well (David & Govindasamy, 2007; Kua 1998; Nagarathinam, 2008; Smith 2003; UNESCO, 2007a, 2008). The use of non-dominant languages is mainly limited to teaching them as school subjects in primary Grades 3 to 6; they are generally not used as languages of instruction for other subjects of study.

In the East Malaysian state of Sarawak, Iban has been taught as a school subject for several years. Another fairly large community, the Bidayuh, recently started early childhood education in five local languages with support from UNESCO (UNESCO, 2008). In the state of Sabah, also in East Malaysia, Kadazandusun has been taught in government schools for some time. In Peninsular Malaysia, an Orang Asli language called Semai is being taught in some government schools. Local communities working through language foundations and non-governmental organizations have played important roles in language development and inclusion of minority languages in the school system (Kua, 1998; Lasimbang & Kinajil, 2000; Nagarathinam, 2008; Smith, 2001, 2003).

## Myanmar

Over 100 languages are spoken in the Union of Myanmar, although some estimates indicate that the actual number may be closer to 200. The majority group, the Myanmar (Bamar or Burmese), accounts for about 75 percent of the population. Many other ethnolinguistic groups have large populations. For example, the Shan comprise more than 10% of the nation, with a population of around 3 million. The Arakanese, Sgaw Karen, Pwo Karen, Pa'o Karen, Mon, and Jingpho populations are estimated to be around or over a million each, and another thirty ethnolinguistic groups have populations over 100,000 (Ethnologue, 2005; Leclerc, 2009). Several of the larger groups live in states named after their group. Different sources have widely varying population figures due to a lack of recent linguistic surveys and contested ethnolinguistic groupings.

Currently, the main language of instruction in the government system of education is Myanmar (Burmese), which is the official language according to the 2008 Constitution. Until the late 1980s, however, in many states with sizable minority populations, large numbers of people received basic education in the most dominant regional language. Mother tongue-based education was provided on the basis of the 1974 Constitution, which affirmed the right of minority nationalities to be taught their languages along with Burmese (Leclerc, 2009). Theoretically, the 1974 Constitution was in effect until 2008, when a new Constitution was approved, but the implementation of policies on non-dominant languages in education was discontinued by the government in the late 1980s. The 2008 Constitution no longer has statements on the language of education, though it reaffirms the minorities' right to use and develop their languages and receive state assistance in the process.

It is estimated that some 30 percent of children do not speak Myanmar when entering the education system. This is seen as a major challenge for their learning and the quality of their education in general. The national Education for



All Action Plan recommends special strategies to teach the national language to minority children at the pre-primary level. In addition, about 2,300 bilingual preschools operate in the country, presumably using both NDLs and the national language, but there is no information about the details of language use in these preschools (Myanmar, 2007).

Non-dominant languages are currently not used in the government system of education, though in some Mon State schools Mon is supposedly taught as a school subject outside regular school hours (Irrawaddy, 2008). This facility has been cut back recently, however. There is evidence that Chin, Karen, and Jingpho, moreover, are still taught in certain remote elementary schools. All government-sponsored nonformal education, including literacy classes, is conducted in Myanmar (Ethnologue, 2005; Education for All – Myanmar, 1999; Jernudd, 1999; Kosonen, 2005; Leclerc, 2009; Middelborg, 2002; Myanmar, 2007).

In Myanmar, non-dominant languages are mostly used in nonformal education by civil society organizations and language communities, particularly in the northern states inhabited predominantly by ethnolinguistic minorities (Cheesman, 2003; Kosonen, 2005). NDLs are mainly used in nonformal education by local Buddhist and Christian communities. For example, Karenni, Mon, Palaung, Shan, Tai Khuen, and various Karen communities use their respective languages in Buddhist monastic education (Kosonen, 2005; Owen, 2008; Myanmar, 2007). Sgaw Karen is used quite widely in nonformal community schools in border areas, as well as in nonformal education organized by churches and neighbourhoods (Kosonen, *ibid.*).

### ***The Philippines***

In terms of language diversity, the Philippines is second only to Indonesia in Southeast Asia, as 180 languages are estimated to be spoken in the country (Ethnologue, 2008). Languages such as Bicol, Cebuano, Ilongo, Ilocano, and Tagalog are spoken by millions of people and widely used as languages of wider communication in their respective areas. Most ethnolinguistic minorities are much smaller. Orthographies already exist in most of the languages, and more than 100 languages possess written materials (Ethnologue, 2005; Dekker & Young, 2007; Gonzales, 1998; Kaplan & Baldauf, 2003; Kosonen, 2005; Kosonen et al., 2007; Leclerc, 2009; Nical, Smolicz & Secombe, 2004; Quijano & Eustaquio, 2008a; UNESCO, 2007a, 2008; Young, 2002).

According to the 1987 Constitution, the national language is Filipino (based on Tagalog), and Filipino and English are the official languages. The Bilingual Education Policy of 1974, revised in 1987, states that English and Filipino are the languages of education and the official languages of literacy. The Constitution also gives regional languages a status as auxiliary languages in their respective areas, and they can also be used in education to facilitate understanding of the curricula in the official languages of education. The goal of the bilingual policy is to create a population bilingual in the official languages. The majority of Filipinos do not speak either of these languages as their mother tongue, however. In fact, it is estimated that only about a quarter of the population receives education in

their first language. The prominence of Filipino and English means that the majority of Filipinos study through languages other than those they speak at home (ibid.).

Regional and local languages have been used in government schools as “transitional languages” for initial instruction and early literacy up to primary Grade 3, although these activities have not been carried out on a large scale. Since the 1987 revised policy, regional non-dominant languages have been elevated to the role of auxiliary languages. In practice, however, this has usually meant that NDLs are used orally to explain the curriculum to students, rather than using them seriously as media of instruction. In some cases, Lubuagan for example, when the learners’ home language has been used as the language of instruction, learning achievement has clearly improved (Dekker & Young, 2007; Dekker & Dumatog, 2003; Dekker, Dugiang, & Walter, 2008). The use of NDLs varies, depending on the teachers and the availability of learning materials in those languages. Nevertheless, as orthographies of most of the languages are fairly similar, many people literate in Filipino can often quite easily transfer their literacy skills into their mother tongue (Dekker & Young, 2007; Dekker & Dumatog, 2003; Gonzales, 1998; Jernudd, 1999; Nical et al. 2004; Quijano & Eustaquio, 2008a; UNESCO, 2008; Young 2002).

Non-dominant languages are used more widely in the nonformal sector. Much language development has been accomplished by NGOs in nonformal education. Nonformal education programmes using local languages are usually run by community organizations, NGOs, and churches, and are rather small in scale. Some nonformal education endeavours have close links with the formal system, although most nonformal education focuses on adult literacy. Arabic is also used in Qur’anic schools, mainly in the South of the country (Dekker & Young, 2007; Gonzales, 1998; Hohulin, 1995; Jernudd, 1999; Kosonen, 2005; Nical et al., 2004; Young, 2002).

In the Philippines, non-dominant languages are used in education, particularly in nonformal education, perhaps more widely than in other Southeast Asian countries. Still, Filipino and English continue as the main languages of education throughout the nation, even after recent debates over current policy and the importance of the learners’ home language in education.

## **Singapore**

Around thirty languages are believed to be spoken in Singapore. Three quarters of the population are ethnic Chinese speaking many different varieties of Chinese. The rest of the population comprises Malays, who make up around 14% of the population, and Indians, who account for around 9% and speak many different languages, though Tamil speakers are the largest community. About 2% of the population consist of other ethnolinguistic groups. Most Singaporeans are multilingual, and it should be noted that in Singapore ethnicity and the home language and/or mother tongue do not always correspond (Chua, 2007; Ethnologue, 2005; Jernudd, 1999; Kaplan & Baldauf, 2003; Kosonen, 2005; Leclerc, 2009; Pakir 2004; Pang, 2008; UNESCO, 2007a).

Singapore is a nation aiming at societal multilingualism and bilingualism among its population. In terms of official languages, the case of Singapore is unique in Southeast Asia, as the Constitution of 1965 stipulates four official languages: Malay, Mandarin Chinese, Tamil, and English. As in Brunei and Malaysia, the national language is Standard Malay. The Constitution guarantees the use, teaching, and learning of other languages, and also supports the maintenance of Singaporean non-dominant languages (ibid.).

English is the main language of instruction at all levels of education, though some subjects are taught through one of the official “mother tongue languages,”<sup>3</sup> i.e. Malay, Mandarin, or Tamil. Students speaking Indian languages other than Tamil can also study those languages as subjects. There is a system in place for students whose home language is none of the above, but some speakers of non-dominant languages still have to study through two languages not spoken at home. Speakers of other languages can freely choose from those offered in the school curriculum, but there is no provision for education in non-dominant languages as such (ibid.).

Most Singaporean Chinese have not traditionally spoken Mandarin as their first language, and this is a reason why many are still counted as receiving education in another language than their mother tongue. The situation is rapidly changing, however, as younger generations are adopting English and Mandarin as their dominant home languages. Census figures show that English is gaining ground as the main home language among all the major ethnic groups. Among the Chinese population, Mandarin is increasing as a home language in comparison to other Chinese varieties (ibid.).

## Thailand

Standard Thai, which is based on Central Thai as spoken in the capital, Bangkok, is the *de facto* official and national language of Thailand. An estimated 50% of Thai citizens speak Standard or Central Thai as their first language. Standard Thai is widely spoken throughout the country, but there are no reliable data on the extent of people’s bilingualism in it (Kosonen, 2005, 2007, 2008). More than eighty languages are spoken in Thailand. The population of some language groups, such as Isan, Kammeuang, Pak Tai, Patani Malay, and Northern Khmer, are in the millions. In addition, there are at least one hundred thousand speakers for each of Sgaw Karen, Kui, Phuthai, and some Chinese languages (Ethnologue, 2005; Kosonen, 2007, 2008; Leclerc, 2009; Schliesinger, 2000).

Standard Thai is the medium of instruction at all levels of education. For about a half of the Thai population, however, possibly more, this medium of instruction is not their first language, and many children have comprehension problems in the early grades (Kosonen, 2008; Smalley 1994). For many but not all people speaking

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<sup>3</sup>In Singapore the term “mother tongue language” refers to a compulsory school subject which teaches the three other official languages in addition to English.

other Tai languages, for example Isan and Kammeuang, the use of Standard Thai is possible, if not optimal. For ethnolinguistic minorities speaking languages not related to Thai, the use of Standard Thai as the language of instruction is a major obstacle in educational achievement.

The Thai Constitution of 1997, along with the more open Thai society since the early 1990s, has provided new opportunities for ethnolinguistic minorities to use their languages. Most non-dominant languages in Thailand already have writing systems and at least some literature (Kosonen, 2002, 2003, 2005, 2007, 2008; Smalley, 1994). The debate on language issues is intensifying at the Ministry of Education (MoE) as well as in the mass media (Kosonen, 2007, 2008). Two different pilot projects are using Patani Malay, a widely spoken non-dominant language in the South of Thailand (Aluyufri, 2008; Jumpatong, 2008; Paramal, 2008). The first, sponsored by the Ministry of Education in 12 schools, follows a weak model of bilingual education with only oral L1 use, while the second is an action research project supported by Mahidol University and UNICEF and based on the principle of long-term use of L1 for literacy and learning. In nonformal education, NGOs and civil society organizations have used NDLs for a long time. There are small-scale nonformal education programmes, particularly in Northern Thailand, in a dozen or more NDLs run usually by local NGOs. These programmes usually focus, however, on basic literacy in minority languages, and none of these initiatives actually amount to multilingual education (Kosonen, 2003, 2005, 2007, 2008).

Currently, Thailand does not have a written language policy, and education laws do not touch upon the issue of language of instruction. As a result, there are no prohibitions in using NDLs in education. It is likely that L1-based bilingual education projects, particularly the Patani Malay project supported by Mahidol University and UNICEF, may provide useful experiences for language policy development. The situation is unpredictable, though. For example, a supposedly effective and highly publicized government-run pilot project in the Pwo Karen



language (Kosonen, 2008; Siltragool, Petcharugsa, & Chouenon, 2008; UNESCO, 2007b, 2008; see also a case study in Chapter 5) was abruptly closed down by education authorities in 2007. The Royal Institute is currently facilitating discussions and meetings on the development of a first written language policy, which would likely include a language-in-education policy as well. With several partner agencies, including SEAMEO, the Institute organised an international conference entitled “National Language Policy: Language Diversity for National Unity” in Bangkok in July 2008 to pave the way for language policy work (Royal Institute of Thailand, 2008). The status of non-dominant languages in Thai society and the latitude given to them in education is still ambiguous, and different groups of people hold different views and interpretations of the language issue. A written policy would clarify the situation.

### *Timor Leste*

Timor Leste is the newest member of SEAMEO. An estimated nineteen languages are spoken in the country (Ethnologue, 2005). According to the Constitution of 2002, Tetum and Portuguese are the official languages, and English and Indonesian have the status of working languages as long as their use is considered necessary. The Constitution also states that Tetum and other national languages will be valued and developed by the state (Cabral & Martin-Jones, 2008; Ethnologue, 2005; Leclerc, 2009; Leite, 2008; Millo & Barnett, 2004; SEAMEO, 2008; Timor Leste, 2008; UNESCO, 2007a).

According to the National Census of 2004, approximately 37% of the population speaks, reads, and writes Portuguese to some extent, and 86% speaks, reads, and writes Tetum.<sup>4</sup> However, these figures are based on self-reported declarations, and may range from a competency of few words to full fluency. No definition is available about what level of proficiency is referred to here (Timor Leste, 2008). Linguists with knowledge on the language situation in the region would see these figures as highly inflated. Furthermore, the 2004 Census figures do not distinguish between first and second language speakers of Portuguese and Tetum. It is a widely acknowledged fact that only a proportion of Timorese are first language speakers of either of the official languages (Cabral & Martin-Jones, 2008; Ethnologue, 2005; Leclerc, 2009; Millo & Barnett, 2004; Timor Leste, 2008).

The language-of-education situation in Timor Leste has been in a constant flux ever since Independence in 1999. Currently, both official languages are used as languages of instruction in formal education. In some places, the learners' mother tongue is also used orally to facilitate the learning process, especially at the primary level. It is estimated, however, that only about 40% of children know Tetum or Portuguese, the two languages of instruction, when they start formal

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<sup>4</sup>It is not clear which variety of Tetum is referred to here, as there are two distinct varieties: Tetum Dili (Prasa or Praca) and Tetum Terik. Rough estimates indicate that about 30% of the Timor Leste population speaks one of these varieties as their first language (Cabral & Martin-Jones; Ethnologue, 2005; Leclerc, 2009; Timor Leste, 2008).

education. This is likely reflected in low levels of achievement. In 2006, for example, 80% of Grade 3 students did not achieve minimum levels of learning in mathematics, Tetum, and Portuguese (Timor Leste, 2008).

A new language-in-education policy was adopted in October 2008 (Basic Law on Education), making both Portuguese and Tetum languages of instruction. Timorese education officials give credit to SEAMEO's regional consultation of February 2008 as an important step in the formation of the new policy. The current policy is a great improvement in comparison to the former Education Policy of 2004-08, which used Portuguese as the main language of instruction, with Tetum used mostly orally as an auxiliary language. In the proposed bilingual model, Tetum is the main language of instruction in Grade 1, though with some latitude given to Portuguese as well. In Grade 2, half of the curriculum is taught in Tetum, and half in Portuguese. In Grade 3, Portuguese dominates, and from Grade 4 onwards Portuguese is the only language of instruction and literacy, while Tetum is taught as a subject of study (Timor Leste, 2008).

As the majority of active and qualified teachers in Timor Leste were educated when Timor Leste was still part of Indonesia, teaching in Tetum and Portuguese remains a challenge, despite teacher training programmes. The Ministry of Education (MoE), with the help of development partners such as UNICEF, CARE International, and the World Bank, have produced teaching and learning materials in both Tetum and Portuguese as well as bilingual teacher guides and teacher training manuals (Timor Leste, 2008).

Timor Leste is still facing great challenges in terms of access to and quality of education. The dropout rate in the lower primary years is high. The MoE is in the process of identifying the causes of high repetition and dropout rates and low achievement levels. Some assessments already available indicate that these challenges are partly determined by the language of instruction and literacy (Leite, 2008; Timor Leste, 2008).

## **Vietnam**

The Socialist Republic of Vietnam officially recognises fifty-four ethnic groups. According to unofficial estimates and linguistic surveys, approximately 100 languages are spoken (Ethnologue, 2005; Leclerc, 2009). Reasons for this apparent discrepancy are similar to those discussed in the case of Laos. It is estimated that Vietnamese is spoken as a first or second language by about 90 percent of the population (Ethnologue, 2005; Kosonen, 2004, 2006a; Leclerc, 2009; Vu, 2008). The Kinh people, otherwise known as the Vietnamese, account for about 86 percent of the population. Ethnolinguistic minorities comprise about 14 percent, of whom many lack exposure to the Vietnamese language (Aikman & Pridmore, 2001; Kosonen, 2004, 2006a; Tran Kieu, 2002). Several minority groups have large populations. The Tay, Thai, Muong, Hoa (i.e. Chinese), and Khmer have populations of more than one million each. Five more groups, the Nung, Hmong, Dao, Gia Rai, and Ede, have populations in the hundreds of thousands. Nearly thirty non-dominant languages already have writing systems, and language development is on-going in others (Baulch, Truong, Haughton &

Haughton, 2002; Benson & Kosonen, 2009; Ethnologue, 2005; Kosonen, 2004, 2005, 2006a, 2006b; Leclerc, 2009; Lo Bianco, 2002; Save the Children - UK, 2002; Schliesinger, 1997, 1998, 2003; UNESCO, 2008; Vu, 2008).

Many members of larger and more urbanized ethnic groups such as the Hoa, Muong, and Tay speak Vietnamese competently, and some have altogether lost their heritage languages. Studies show that enrolment of these minority groups in primary education is on par with or even higher than that of the dominant Kinh (Kosonen, 2006b, p. 244-245), and there is anecdotal evidence that educational achievement among these groups is comparable to that of the Kinh. This is because data are disaggregated by group classification rather than by language(s) spoken (Ethnologue, 2005; Kosonen, 2004, 2006a, 2006b). The success of people from these groups in Vietnamese-medium education has been used to argue against the need for mother tongue-based education.



The national and official language is Vietnamese, and it functions as the language of wider communication around the country. The use of non-dominant languages in society and education is strongly supported by various policy documents (Kosonen, 2004, 2005, 2006a; Vu, 2008), as well as in the 1992 Constitution and the Education Law of 2005. Yet the Education Law declares that Vietnamese is the official language in education. There is some confusion about conflicting statements of this sort in different official documents and the relative weight of various statements. Despite supportive policies, Vietnamese remains in practice the main language of instruction at all levels of education, even in non-Vietnamese-speaking areas. More than 10 NDIs are used in education in some areas for programmes referred to until recently as “bilingual education” (Kosonen, 2004, 2006a; Tran, 2003; UNESCO, 2008; Vu, 2008).

In practice, however, most of these programmes teach NDLs as subjects of study. In addition, most activities are top-down in approach, and local ethnolinguistic minority communities contribute little, if anything, to the effort. Up to 20% of the curriculum could be used for teaching minority languages, but not all schools in minority areas fully use this opportunity. Likewise, according to the education policy, minority languages could be the main languages of instruction in minority area kindergartens, but few early childhood education institutions implement this policy (Kosonen, 2004, 2006a; Save the Children - UK, 2002).

Despite the wide gap between written policy and actual practice, new initiatives have been launched recently. These projects employ non-professional teaching assistants who speak learners' languages and promote oral classroom communication in the learners' mother tongue, though not yet to the point of using these languages as the language of literacy. A recently launched pilot programme developed by the Ministry of Education and Training (MoET), with UNICEF's assistance, has adopted a fully bilingual approach, based on the learners' first language, from preschool to the end of the primary level in several schools in three provinces, representing three languages — Hmong, Gia Rai, and Khmer. This programme uses L1 literacy as a basis for learning additional languages and academic content (Benson, 2006; Benson & Kosonen, 2009; Vu, 2008).

## Regional trends in the use of non-dominant languages in education

In all Southeast Asian countries except Brunei Darussalam, the Lao PDR, and Singapore, non-dominant languages are used in education to some extent. Nevertheless, this does not mean that NDLs are languages of instruction and literacy. Brunei, Malaysia, Singapore, and Timor Leste permit several languages, though only dominant ones, as languages of instruction in the government system of education, whereas the Lao PDR utilizes only the national language. Non-dominant languages do have oral functions in most of these countries. In Myanmar, education in non-dominant languages occurs only in the nonformal sector, and is provided only by non-governmental actors. The use of NDLs as languages of instruction in Cambodia, Thailand, and Vietnam is still at the beginning stages in some pilot projects. In Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines, NDLs are deployed in education in various ways, but only infrequently as the language of instruction, and more so in the Philippines than in the two other countries.

Most mother tongue-based education in Southeast Asia takes place in the nonformal sector, particularly at the preschool level or in adult literacy classes, and most programmes are run by non-governmental actors, such as local and international NGOs and other civil society actors. In some cases, such endeavours have become part of the national system of education. Notwithstanding many challenges, pilot projects using non-dominant languages as media of instruction and literacy in government systems are commencing or ongoing in several Southeast Asian countries. It is important to note, however,



that the use of non-dominant languages in SEAMEO countries is still mostly at a preliminary stage, and that current pilot projects are rather small in scope. Oral use of NDLs in education seems to be common in many minority areas where teachers share the language with their students.

In some SEAMEO countries, a gradual movement towards potential mother tongue-based multilingual education has started. In these countries, as well as in other parts of the world, such a process usually starts with community and NGO efforts in adult and pre-primary education, and is nonformal in nature. As a result, the government's formal system may include local language components in the curricula, mainly by using these languages orally in classrooms or teaching them as subjects. This has paved the way to stronger forms of multilingual education, or even to a change in national language policy, as in Papua New Guinea.

Regionally, there is an increased interest in the use of non-dominant languages in education. In many SEAMEO countries, ethnolinguistic minority communities themselves are active in contributing to the use of their mother tongues in some form of education. This can be seen in an increasing number of countries with educational pilot projects employing NDLs. International organisations such as UNESCO and UNICEF, intergovernmental agencies such as SEAMEO, and various donor agencies are also focusing more than before on the use of mother tongues in education.

## Conclusion

Most members of ethnolinguistic minority communities in Southeast Asia have to start their education in a language they neither understand nor speak. Lessons learned elsewhere in the use of non-dominant languages in education could certainly be adapted to these contexts. Biliteracy and mother tongue-based multilingual education benefit particularly those who are monolingual in a local language or lack proficiency in the official language or another currently used language of instruction. Consequently, it is imperative to search for different options that could be considered viable for alleviating the educational constraints experienced by ethnolinguistic minority communities of Southeast Asia. This would benefit hundreds of minority communities and tens of millions of people.

The idea of using non-dominant languages in the government system of education is somewhat new in Southeast Asia, though supportive statements have been found in the policies of several countries for decades now. The past two decades, however, have seen a growing interest in using NDLs for learning, mainly to improve educational access and quality, and especially in light of the Education for All programme and the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals. Generally, international agencies and non-governmental actors have spearheaded the debate and provided advocacy and initiative in this matter.

Policy support for the use of non-dominant languages differs widely in the eleven countries discussed. The scope ranges from Vietnam's language-in-education policy, which for decades has been one of the most pro-NDL policies in Asia, to Brunei, where the use of non-dominant languages in education is currently not seen as legal. Nonetheless, it is important to note that even strong policy support on the books does not necessarily guarantee good implementation.

In some countries, such as Thailand and Cambodia, activities using NDLs in education have preceded actual written policies. These countries have allowed non-dominant language groups and their partners, namely academics and NGOs, to use NDLs in education. Recently, both countries have reviewed their language-in-education policies. The Cambodian Education Law of 2007 now provides a certain degree of latitude in which some NDLs can function. Thailand, however, has yet to issue an official document concerning NDLs in education, and the debate continues. It is important to note that the use of NDLs in education in these countries initially began with NGO-supported nonformal education.

Ministries of Education in the region generally recognize that some ethnolinguistic groups are not benefiting from education provided in the national languages. However, to alleviate the situation, they tend to focus on strengthening the teaching of national languages to minorities rather than considering an increased use of the learners' first languages in multilingual education. Furthermore, the concept of bilingual or multilingual education is still mostly seen as an approach to teach the national language and English (or Portuguese in the case of Timor Leste), and NDLs are still generally given little attention as possible languages of instruction and literacy. In some cases, even the weakest two-language models, requiring minimal use of the learners' first language as a language of instruction, have been called "bilingual education".

Nevertheless, developments in the use of non-dominant languages in education and the latitude given to ethnolinguistic minorities in Southeast Asia have generally been positive over the past decade. If the current trends, efforts, and advocacy continue in the years to come, it is likely that in some Southeast Asian countries the situation of non-dominant languages and ethnolinguistic minorities will improve.









# Chapter 3

Various policies in  
Southeast Asian countries

## Chapter 3

# Various policies in Southeast Asian countries

### Introduction

*Kimmo Kosonen*

This chapter elaborates on the variety of language-in-education policies and practices in Southeast Asia, with sections on eight SEAMEO countries. The cases of the Lao PDR, Myanmar, and Timor Leste are not included, as reports on their national policies were not available. Due to space limitations, several sections are shorter than the original papers, which are available on the SEAMEO website (SEAMEO, 2008). All original papers were written by nationals or residents – usually Ministry of Education officials – of each country, and the authors' names are provided at the beginning of each section.

This chapter stems from a survey and comparison of the language and language-in-education policies in the eleven SEAMEO countries, and the discussion is based on papers presented at a regional consultative meeting in February 2008 (Bui & Bui, 2008; Jones, 2008; Maryanto, 2008; Nagarathinam, 2008; Neou Sun, 2008; Quijano & Eustaquio, 2008; Pang, 2008; Prapasapong, 2008; SEAMEO, 2008). Each Southeast Asian Ministry of Education – apart from the three countries mentioned above – identified local authors, who were then requested to discuss the following points regarding languages and language use in their countries: 1) the status and use of various languages in the society; 2) the use of various languages in education; 3) laws and regulations regarding the use of various languages in the society and education; and 4) restrictions in the use of various languages. In addition, the authors were requested to pay particular attention to the use of: 1) the national language(s); 2) the official language(s) if different from 1); and 3) non-dominant languages (NDLs), particularly in education.

Further, the authors were asked to discuss how the aforementioned policies are currently being implemented, and the following questions were given to help in this assessment: 1) What languages are actually used in classrooms in ethnolinguistic minority areas? 2) Which languages are used for teaching, learning, reading, and writing in those areas? 3) Which languages do teachers speak with ethnolinguistic minority students? and 4) Which languages do minority students speak at home, with their friends, and in the local community?

Though Southeast Asian countries share many similarities, each national context is quite different in terms of language and language-in-education policies, how these policies are put into practice, and how much latitude is given to non-dominant languages in education. It is interesting to note the variety of approaches

in these eight cases. It is quite obvious that each of the eight countries highlighted here have chosen different approaches and strategies to address their linguistic diversity and the implications of this diversity for their national systems of education.

Firstly, Gary Jones provides a comprehensive account of the language-in-education situation in **Brunei Darussalam**, with a particular focus on historical developments. Brunei is an interesting and unique case in Southeast Asia, as two non-indigenous languages, Standard Malay and English, are the main languages of education. Non-dominant languages – even the most widely spoken Brunei Malay – are not used as media of instruction. The Brunei case also shows that an extended use of non-indigenous languages in a society – not unlike the case of Singapore – can, to a certain degree, cause a language shift in the society. This section shows that some young Bruneians already use English as their dominant home language. This trend usually applies to the better-off and well-educated sections of the society, however, and is unlikely in the foreseeable future among the population at large.

In his paper on **Cambodia**, Neou Sun points out that the status of the national language, Khmer, is unequivocally set forth in the Constitution and the national Education Law. Until recently, there were no official statements on the status of non-dominant languages in Cambodia, though some local languages have been used in pilot education projects for many years. These initiatives were undertaken by international NGOs in collaboration with various government agencies. An Education Law, adopted in 2007, now officially gives latitude for the use of NDLs in education. Yet it is not exactly clear which languages can be used as languages of instruction, or how. Further regulations on the use of NDLs will be issued later. One issue in particular is worth noting in the case of Cambodia. The paper makes no reference to the use of three important languages, i.e. Lao, Mandarin Chinese, and Vietnamese (two of which form the largest language communities in the country after Khmer), as they are seen as immigrant languages. The obvious conclusion is that current Cambodian policy treats different NDLs differently. It is also worth noting that the section on Cambodia explicitly states that the main rationale of the country's bilingual education policy is to teach the national language to some ethnolinguistic groups through their mother tongue.

The section on **Indonesia** by Maryanto provides a thorough historical account of the development and importance of *Bahasa Indonesia* as the national language of the country. It also discusses national legislation on languages and education, clearly pointing out that Indonesian policy supports the use of local languages in education. Unlike several other cases in this chapter, however, this section does not discuss the challenges facing learners who are less skilled in the national language. Maryanto takes the position that Indonesian can be feasibly applied throughout the country, and that the use of non-dominant languages is not necessary apart from colloquial oral use in classrooms to create a jovial learning environment. This is a position with which supporters of mother tongue-based education, such as the editors of this volume, cannot agree.

In fact, evidence exists that the use of Indonesian as the sole language of instruction is problematic. The situation in Indonesia is not much different from other SEAMEO countries such as Cambodia, the Philippines, and Thailand, where many ethnolinguistic minorities have been observed with serious difficulties in learning through only the national language. For example, OECD's PISA (Programme for International Student Achievement) study showed that in Indonesia 69% of fifteen-year-old secondary school students performed at or below the lowest of five proficiency levels for reading literacy, and 94% performed at or below level two (OECD, 2004). These low levels of tested reading literacy mean that many students are certainly not fluent readers of Indonesian, and may find it difficult to use Indonesian as a tool in further learning or in daily life. It is likely that the language of literacy, *Bahasa Indonesia*, is a factor in these unsatisfactory results, as not all students participating in the PISA study have high proficiency in Indonesian. Unfortunately, the paper presented here fails to recognize the drawbacks of using Indonesian as the sole language of education, and gives perhaps a brighter view on the country's language-in-education situation than what others might observe.

The paper on **Malaysia** by Ramanathan Nagarathinam shows that Malaysian policy and practice are polar opposites of those in Cambodia. In addition to Malay, the national language, and English for teaching mathematics and science, the main provisions in education are for the larger non-dominant languages, i.e. Mandarin Chinese and Tamil. Learners from these language backgrounds can receive mother tongue-based education on certain conditions. Some smaller NDLs are also being used in education, but they are mostly studied as subjects rather than used as media of instruction.

The section on the **Philippines** by Yolanda S Quijano & Ofelia H Eustaquio shows how non-dominant languages are used in Philippine education perhaps more widely than in other Southeast Asian countries. Nonetheless, it is clear that Filipino, the national language, and English are the main languages of education throughout the nation. Some local and regional tongues are used as auxiliary languages in the early grades and in some pilot projects of mother tongue-based multilingual education. The prominence of Filipino and English means that the majority of Filipinos study via other languages than those they generally speak at home. The paper cites some experiments and studies showing that students' learning achievement improves when education is based on their first or home language. The language-in-education situation in the Philippines is currently being debated, and there is a continuing discussion on the balance of using Filipino, English, and non-dominant languages, some of which in fact are major regional languages. Some stakeholders see that the increased use of learners' first languages in early education would be beneficial not only to individuals but also to the whole nation.

The paper on **Singapore** by Elizabeth S Pang discusses a national situation unlike any other in Southeast Asia. Singapore has four official languages: Malay, Mandarin Chinese, Tamil, and English. As in Brunei and Malaysia, the national language is Malay. In education, English is the main medium of instruction, though some subjects are taught through one of the official "mother tongue languages," i.e. Malay, Mandarin, or Tamil. There is a system in place for those whose home language is none of the above; even then, some speakers of



non-dominant languages have to study through two languages not spoken at home. This section thoroughly discusses government reviews of teaching and learning the four official languages. Such studies on the pros and cons of using various languages of instruction would be useful in all Southeast Asian countries.



Busaba Prapasapong in her section on **Thailand** provides a comprehensive account of the language situation in the Kingdom. Unlike most SEAMEO countries, few government documents in Thailand discuss language-related issues. Thailand is another special case in Southeast Asia in that the status of even the national or official language, Standard Thai, is not backed by any official documents. Rather, the status of Standard Thai as the *de facto* national language is accepted as such by most Thai citizens. Likewise, the use of non-dominant languages is neither officially endorsed nor prohibited. In practice, however, NDLs are used only in several small pilot projects.

This section is particularly important in demonstrating the serious learning difficulties speakers of NDLs may face. The paper refers to recently conducted surveys on learning achievement in areas where many learners do not have proficiency in Standard Thai, the language of instruction. The surveys clearly show that ethnolinguistic minority children with low skills in the language of instruction have lower learning achievement in all main subjects than students whose home language is used as the language of instruction. It is likely that if similar surveys were conducted in other SEAMEO countries the results would also be similar, demonstrating thereby the obvious discrepancies in educational quality along ethnolinguistic lines.

Finally, the section on **Vietnam**, written by Bui Thi Ngoc Diep & Bui Van Thanh, gives an excellent review of Vietnamese policy documents that strongly support the use of non-dominant languages in education and as media of instruction. The paper also describes various models of bilingual education used in Vietnam since the 1950s to implement the language-in-education policies. The paper acknowledges that using mother tongue-based multilingual education is beneficial for ethnolinguistic minority learners, but many practical challenges exist in Vietnam that prevent a wide implementation of the strong models of multilingual education.

The authors also claim that many minority children have sufficient skills in Vietnamese that mother tongue-based education may not be necessary for them. It should be noted, however, that this observation may apply only to more urbanized ethnic minorities for whom Vietnamese may already be one of their home languages. The situation is similar in other countries, and thus there is a clear need for research on language proficiency among ethnolinguistic minorities. Only with valid information can the most relevant learning strategies be planned for each context.

As in the case of some other papers in this chapter, those promoting L1-based education may find it difficult to agree with some of the arguments in the section on Vietnam. Particularly problematic are some rationales given for not providing mother tongue-based education for those who lack competence in Vietnamese. The issue is even more important in Vietnam, as the country has the strongest explicit policy support for the use of non-dominant languages in the society at large as well as in education. The question remains why Vietnam, with such strong written policies, is not doing any more than its neighbours in mother tongue-based education.



## The evolution of language-in-education policies in Brunei Darussalam

*Gary M Jones*

### The national setting

Negara Brunei Darussalam, to give the country its full title (henceforth Brunei), is a small sultanate on the north coast of Borneo. It has a coastline of 161 kilometres along the South China Sea and a total land area of 5,765 square kilometres. The country is bounded by the much larger Malaysian states of Sarawak and Sabah. Part of Sarawak actually separates one Brunei district, Temburong, from the rest of the country.

Brunei is the third largest oil producer in Southeast Asia, producing 163,000 barrels a day, and is the fourth largest producer of liquefied natural gas in the world. Thus the oil and gas industry is obviously of key importance to Brunei, playing by far the biggest role in the country's economy. The country has a small garment manufacturing industry, as well as agricultural and fishing industries, but all other industries in the country are overshadowed by oil and gas. The government is the single biggest employer in the country, employing approximately one third of the labour force.

The 2004 census reported a population of 357,800 people. Of this number, 237,100 (66.2%) were recorded as coming from the majority Malay indigenous community; 12,300 (3.4%) from other indigenous groups; people of Chinese origin numbered 40,200 (11.2%); and people from other unspecified races 68,200 (19%). This census also showed a high proportion of young people in the population.

Virtually all Malays, as well as many people from other ethnic groups within the country, are Muslims. Thus Islam is the most widely practiced religion in the country and is the Official Religion of Brunei, as stated in the country's Constitution, with His Majesty the Sultan of Brunei as head of the faith. Other faiths that are practiced in the State include Christianity and Buddhism.

### The people and their languages

For such a small country, Brunei has a diverse population and a melange of speech communities. As a result of its geography, seven distinct Malay communities (Belait, Bisaya, Brunei Malay, Dusun, Kedayan, Murut, and Tutong) as well as two other non-indigenous communities (Iban and Kelabit) call Brunei home. Historically, these communities lived apart from each other, separated by rivers, forests, and mountains. As a result of this isolation, these communities developed different dialects, languages, and cultures. It was only in the last century that road- and bridge-building brought these communities into regular contact with each other. While most Bruneians still identify with one of these communities, intermarriage and relocation for purposes of work, education, or family mean that the former ethnic divisions are now breaking down.



Until 1991, it was assumed that the seven Malay communities in Brunei all spoke dialects of the same language. However, research by Nothofer (1991) dispelled this notion. He showed that the principal dialects of Malay spoken in Brunei include only Brunei Malay, *Kampung Ayer* (meaning Water Village, a large stilted village next to the country's capital), Kedayan, and Standard Malay, but exclude the other five indigenous varieties. Thus Belait, Bisaya, Dusun, Murut, and Kedayan should not be considered dialects of Malay but as separate languages.

Locally, the most widely used local dialect of Malay is Brunei Malay, which is assumed to have its origins in the *Kampung Ayer* dialect. However, the dialect that is used in official correspondence and which is taught in schools is Standard Malay,<sup>1</sup> which originated in West Malaysia.

Other significant language communities in the country are Iban and Kelabit. While indigenous to Borneo, these communities are not indigenous to Brunei, having crossed into the country from neighbouring Sarawak. Similarly, a small community of Penan people, perhaps numbering only fifty-one (Martin & Sercombe, 1992), also resides in the country.

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<sup>1</sup>Standard Malay is also the official language of Malaysia and one of the official languages (and the national language) of Singapore.

Apart from the Bornean people, the other significant ethnic group is the Chinese who, as stated earlier, make up 11.2% of the country's population. Mandarin is the *lingua franca* of the Chinese community, with the two most dominant communities being Hokkien and Hakka (Niew, 1989, 1991). It should be noted, however, that many young Chinese now use English as their first language.

In addition to these local people, the remaining 19% of the country's population is comprised of 'other races', referring to the country's large expatriate foreign workforce. This consists of large numbers of construction and manual labourers from the Indian sub-continent, Indonesia, and the Philippines. In addition, together with Malaysia and Singapore, these countries also provide many of the country's doctors, engineers, nurses, and middle managers. Many of the country's teachers and other professionals come from the United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand. As will be described, Brunei was formerly almost totally dependent on its foreign workforce, but most technical and professional positions are being increasingly localized.

All the languages described above are used in Brunei today. However, only three, Malay, in its various forms, Chinese, and English, are likely to be encountered on a regular basis, especially in urban areas. Today, Bruneians from whichever background are familiar with and use Brunei Malay, except when they know that they are talking to someone from their own language community. Similarly, most Bruneians, particularly the young and better educated, know English and often switch codes between this language and whichever form of Malay they are using. Official notices and road signs throughout the country are written in either Standard Malay or English. Notices on shop fronts are written in *Jawi* script (a form of written Malay derived from Arabic) and English (as well as Chinese, if it is a Chinese business). Sign boards, official notices, and advertisements are only written in these languages, never in any of the country's other languages. Thus, both publicly and privately, aside from Standard and Brunei Malay, the country's other languages are not being promoted or widely used.

It is also very important to note here that while Standard Malay, Chinese, and English have strong literary histories, the same is not true of the other languages. Brunei's non-dominant languages have an oral tradition but not a written one. Thus there are no texts, dictionaries, reference works or teaching-learning materials that potential students could use.

## The development of a language-in-education policy

### *The early years*

Tracing the origins of Brunei's present language-in-education policies is relatively easy. Formal education is a recent phenomenon in the Sultanate, and the history of the country's educational development has been well documented.

Although Brunei was once an important regional power, by 1906 its political survival was in jeopardy and the country turned to Britain for protection from its avaricious neighbours (see Cleary & Eaton, 1992). Thus began a close relationship between Brunei and Britain that has continued to this day – a relationship that, among other things, has greatly shaped Brunei's education system.

From 1906 Brunei became a British Protected State, with a British Resident who advised the Sultan, the ruler of the country, on all matters other than those pertaining to religion. For the most part Brunei continued to manage its own affairs, safe in the knowledge that it was protected from outside aggression by Britain. For his part, the British Resident provided the same sort of advice to the Sultan and his government that was being given to rulers of the various Malay states that now constitute Malaysia. Initial advice concentrated on transport, communication, and health care. By 1911, however, some attention was being given to education. Between 1914 and 1918, four vernacular schools for boys were established in the country, although no further schools were added till 1929.

In 1923, oil was discovered in Brunei. This was to transform the country from an economic backwater into a comparably wealthy state. The development and exploitation of the country's oil and natural gas reserves did not have an immediate social or economic impact on the country. Rather, the change was slow, with a gradual appreciation of the benefits and problems that the oil industry could bring. Initially, of course, there was the revenue. In 1909, Brunei enjoyed revenues of GB£27,640; in 1919, this figure was GB£132,300, and by 1929, GB£145,800. Throughout the 1930s, as oil fields were developed, so income improved. By 1939, state revenues had risen to GB£1,274,644, or almost ten times what they had been ten years earlier. Brunei was on the path to becoming what it is probably most famous for being today – a small oil-rich sultanate.

It was the Bruneians who initially came into contact with oil workers who had the most pressing need to learn English. These included local officers who represented the government in negotiations as well as customs officers, clerks dealing with equipment, and anyone else party to the myriad operations involved in setting up an industry.

One indication of the need to improve communications occurred in 1928 when "a start was made teaching elementary English at afternoon classes. These were attended by members of the Government Subordinate Staff and the Police" (McKerron, 1929: 19). These are the first recorded English classes in Brunei. Such classes, and adult education in general, proved popular, and have continued up to the present in one form or another.

As the number of schools increased and as greater attention continued to be given to education, so, inevitably, did questions about the type of education and, in particular, the medium. In 1929 “an Enactment to provide for compulsory attendance at schools (Enactment No.3 of 1929) was passed giving the Resident power to declare from time to time the parts of the State in which compulsory attendance could be enforced” (McKerron, 1930: 20). Given the transportation difficulties of the day, the Act only applied to boys speaking Malay as a first language. However, as a later Resident pointed out:

As at least a quarter of the indigenous population of the state is composed of races whose mother tongue is not Malay, that criterion is hardly satisfactory. The provision of education in several languages is obviously impracticable, and it is inevitable that, linguistically at any rate, the other races must be assimilated to Malay. It is proposed, therefore, to amend the Enactment to make attendance at Malay schools compulsory for all children of Malaysian race alike. (Graham Black, 1939:34)

This is a very important amendment and one that set at least one parameter for language education in Brunei. At no time has the question of teaching in a child’s first language (other than Malay) been raised since 1939. On the one hand, this is not surprising, given the subsequent greater integration of Brunei society and the more widespread use of Malay and, latterly, English, but it is at odds with language planning in many other communities. Although greater consideration on a global scale is being given to minority languages than was done in the past, this is not the case in Brunei.

Brunei experienced Japanese occupation from 1941 to 1945. During this period, educational development came to a halt, although the Japanese did conduct some classes in their own language, and the most promising pupils continued their studies in Japan itself.

### *Post-war development*

After WWII, the British Resident returned to Brunei and the country embarked on reconstruction. With growing revenues from oil and gas, the need for English-literate Bruneians was becoming ever more apparent. Late in 1949, a professional pedagogue was appointed to the post of State Education Officer.

On this base the infrastructure for Brunei’s present education system, including the resulting language-in-education policies, was laid.

As previously stated, government revenue in 1939 was GB£1,274,644. By 1951, the figure was GB£17,302,869, and by 1953 the figure had increased five-fold to GB£98,976,643 – an enormous sum of money compared with twenty years earlier, and an income that was to bring huge change to the country. In 1954, fuelled with burgeoning revenues from the sale of oil, Brunei embarked on a five-year Development Plan for Education. As the Resident reported two years later:

Relatively vast wealth has fallen to their hands, and instead of being able to use it directly, themselves, they must perforce employ others to provide for them the services they need and their money can buy. (Gilbert, 1957:42)

Recognizing the need to have English-educated Bruneians, a Government English School was established in Brunei Town in October 1951. This school had two trained teachers, one from the United Kingdom and the other from Malaya. The decisions that these two teachers made, no doubt in collaboration with the State Education Officer, have had a profound and lasting impact on the present school system. Many of the practices that they introduced back then, due to the circumstances of the time, still remain today.

The Government English School may have had two teachers, but it did not start with any pupils. There was no formal English being taught in Brunei, so there were no English-medium pupils to send to it. Subsequently, four selected primary schools introduced English lessons at Primary Grade 4, when the pupils were eight years old. The more able pupils were then given tuition in English by the State Education Officer himself before proceeding to the English School. It is this procedure that determined at what age English-medium education would be introduced to Bruneian pupils. Even today, fifty-seven years later, English-medium education is introduced to pupils in Primary IV. Unlike the first pupils who were selected for the English School and had the benefit of individual attention from the State Education Officer, however, today's pupils have no such support. Whether they are ready or have the aptitude or not, all pupils follow the same curriculum. Not surprisingly, given that the procedure was established to solve an immediate problem in 1951, and was designed with gifted children in mind, this sudden transition creates problems for many children. (For a fuller account of the education system and some of the problems, particularly those associated with curriculum issues, see Jones, 1996a.)

An important statement about language and culture, related to the introduction of English in Primary IV, was included in the Resident's Annual Report of 1951:

There are other matters, however, which must be considered with this type of school. One is the very important consideration as to the extent such schools should be made available; and again, what repercussions they would have in respect of the languages and cultures of the two main racial groups in Brunei, i.e. the indigenous races and Chinese. There is also the consideration of the impact upon the economy of the State if all children went direct to English schools. Again it is felt that the great majority of parents are in favour of their children acquiring their first and early education throughout the medium of the child's mother tongue in vernacular schools, with the study of English as a second language. This study . . . begins in their third and fourth year. There is no reason, it may be said, providing the subject is taught by a qualified teacher, and providing also that sufficient time is devoted to it, why results should not be as good as those in recognised English schools

(Barcroft, 1952: 33-34)

This is the first recorded statement linking language and culture in Brunei, and raises an issue that has been current ever since. On the issue of the preferred medium of education, Barcroft would seem to be contradicting earlier and subsequent statements: this subject appears to have given rise to some confusion. The last question, about whether the results can be as good as those from English schools, is still open to debate. The assumed standard attained by



graduates from such schools is also vague. While parity with English schools was the objective, this does not necessarily assume a particularly high level of attainment for all pupils. In 1952 the same author reports:

Thus, pupils who enter a Malay School at 6 years of age and make formal progress through the six Primary Classes would at the age of 12 be able to take up an Artisan Course where Primary V English is required as the basic qualification. (Barcroft, 1953: 40)

On the assumption that a sufficient command of English to undertake an Artisan Course translates to only a minimum competency in the language, the language proficiency expectations of graduates from the Malay medium were clearly very limited, more so than the previous year's statement might suggest.

It is also informative to note that the "great majority of parents" favoured the mother tongue. But which mother tongue? The writer is almost certainly assuming that this is Malay, which would have been far from the reality for many children at that time, and certainly not Standard Malay. This suggests a naïve appreciation of the country's linguistic mosaic.

By the completion of the Development Plan in 1959, 15,006 pupils were enrolled in the State's schools, 30% of whom were girls.

The State Constitution was also drawn up in 1959. It states:

The official language of the State shall be the Malay language and shall be in such script as may by written law be provided.

The Article stipulates that English might be used with Malay for a further period of five years for all official purposes and thereafter until dictated by written law; the assumption being that Malay would eventually replace English, and quickly, for all official business. Sheik Adnan notes that:

A survey carried out to find out the wishes of the people before the drawing up of the State Constitution indicated that there was unanimous support for choosing Malay as the official language. (Sheik Adnan, 1983: 10)

The choice of Malay (Standard Malay, not Brunei Malay) as the national language was to have implications for the choice of language within any National System of Education. It draws attention to the perceived demand for English as the language of opportunity, and for Malay as an integrative language bound up with the heritage and culture of the local population.

In 1959, a Central Advisory Committee on Education appointed two Malaysians, Aminuddin Baki and Paul Chang, to advise the Brunei Government on general policy and principles to be followed in education. Having spent only two weeks in Brunei, and using the Malaysian Tun Razak Education Report of 1956 as the source of their recommendations, Baki and Chang presented their report.

The recommendations of the Report were accepted by the Government and subsequently became the National Education Policy of 1962. This Report places “an emphasis on the need to foster a common loyalty among all the children of every race under a national education system and policies.”(Report of the Education Commission of Brunei, 1972: 3)

National unity is a recurring theme throughout both the Malaysian and Bruneian reports. The Razak Report states:

We believe further that the ultimate objective of the educational policy of this country must be to bring together the children of all races under a national education system in which the national language is the main medium of instruction, though we recognise the progress towards this goal cannot be rushed and must be gradual.

(Razak Report on Education, 1956)

It is clear that in both Malaysia and Brunei, having established a need for an education system and having provided an infrastructure, both countries then gave greatest consideration to the political ramifications of education. Both countries are multilingual and multiethnic (although this is more immediately obvious in Malaysia than in Brunei). For both countries, national unity and a clear sense of national identity were of great importance. Other issues such as syllabus design and teacher supply were still being considered and worked on, but at the macro-level the focus was on the integrity of these newly independent states. Assurances were needed that the various peoples could work together for the common good.

Brunei, however, failed to implement the Baki-Chang Report or the National Education Policy that followed it. While preparations for implementation were being made, an insurrection broke out in the country. Although the insurrection was quickly quashed, the normal routine of the country was severely affected, as well as plans that had yet to be implemented. Instead, after the trouble, the country and government tried to re-establish itself, going back to practices and procedures that had existed before the insurrection. In this milieu, the proposed changes seem to have been dropped.

Throughout the 1960s, the Government continued to add to the number of schools, teachers, and, of course, pupils attending school. Development was across the board at both primary and secondary levels, and included both Malay- and English-medium Government schools. The number of girls in schools grew enormously, so that there were almost as many girls enrolled in schools as boys.

The question of the medium of instruction, however, had not been resolved. The Chinese community had its own schools and language of instruction, with books supplied from Taiwan; the religious authorities had a small number of pupils being taught through the medium of Arabic, while the Government schools were divided between English and Malay, with books from Britain and Malaysia respectively. An Education Commission set up in 1970 subsequently presented the Report of the Education Commission, 1972, which called for implementation of the 1962 Education Policy.

This Report provided the basic structure and procedures for the present Ministry of Education. What was not implemented, however, was the very first recommendation: “to make Malay as the main medium of instruction in National Primary and Secondary Schools as soon as possible in line with the requirements of the Constitution” (Education Report, 1972: 9).

The commissioners went on to refer to the country’s constitution and national unity as well as providing sound educational reasons for adopting Malay. It also recommended that until such time as Brunei’s own system had been prepared the country should adopt the Malaysian system of education.

Once again, however, fate intervened to prevent the introduction of Malay-medium education. In 1974, political and diplomatic relations between Brunei and Malaysia deteriorated, to the extent that Bruneians studying in Malaysia were recalled and the option of adopting the Malaysian system of education was cancelled. Furthermore, Brunei had no diplomatic relations with Indonesia, the only other country with Malay-medium universities, so it could not send its students there. This was not a problem for English-medium students; they had always gone to universities in the United Kingdom and to other English-speaking Commonwealth universities. The solution for Malay-medium Bruneian students was to send them to English-speaking universities, having first provided them with crash courses in English (up to two years) at private language schools in Britain.



### 1984 – the present

The question of language medium remained unresolved for another ten years, until the introduction of the Education System of Negara Brunei Darussalam in 1984. This System, apart from fairly cosmetic changes, is still the one that is used in Brunei today. It has been well documented (Jones, Martin & Ozog, 1993 and Jones, 1996b, for instance) and needs little elaboration here. Briefly, the System attempts to weave the recommendations of the 1972 Report into a bilingual education system rather than a Malay-only model. The concept of solidarity and nation-building is given great emphasis throughout the 1984 document. The System is something of a balancing act, trying to satisfy the Malay-medium lobby while also recognizing the need for English. Within the document, bilingualism is promoted:

3.1 The concept of a bilingual system is a means of ensuring the sovereignty of the Malay Language, while at the same time recognising the importance of the English Language. By means of the Education System of Negara Brunei Darussalam a high degree of proficiency in both languages should be achieved.

(Brunei Government Publication, 1984: 4)

It is clear that once again planners were at the mercy of circumstances. Without a doubt, it was the events of 1962 and 1974 that had a decisive influence on the adoption of a bilingual education system in Brunei. A decision that might appear to have been far-sighted, given the subsequent decisions of other countries, notably Malaysia, to adopt such systems themselves, was made not for any pedagogic reasons but because of the circumstances of the day. How much the lack of Malay-medium tertiary education was a factor is indicated by point 3.2 of the System:

3.2 This recognition of the importance of the English Language is partly based on an assumption of its importance for academic study, and thus its ability to facilitate the entry of students from Brunei Darussalam to institutions of higher education overseas where the medium of instruction is English. Such a perception may, of course, be subject to review should Brunei Darussalam itself be able, in the future, to provide its own facilities for higher education.

(ibid: 4)

Brunei has, in fact, been able to provide its own facilities for higher education, but the majority of programmes in these institutions are English-medium, reflecting the actual demand from students and employers. Since 1984, there has been an enormous upsurge in the amount of English being used worldwide; thus the demand today from Bruneian students is mostly for instruction in English. Once again, events have overtaken the planners.

### The situation today

In his 2005 PhD thesis, Noor Azam Haji Othman provides a detailed account of *Changes in the Linguistic Diversity of Negara Brunei Darussalam*. Among other things, it provides an analysis of how and why Bruneians have moved from using one language medium to another. Perhaps most pertinent to this paper are his observations on the use and spread of English in Brunei, particularly since he had not intended to mention this language at all but to concentrate solely on Bruneian languages.

During his research, which he attempted to conduct solely in Brunei Malay or the other local languages that he knows, Tutong and Dusun, the role of English in peoples' lives was repeatedly cited. Noor Azam remarks that "English was constantly being referred to by the informants throughout the discussions about indigenous languages as though it were an indigenous member of the language ecology" (Noor Azam, 2005: 203). In fact, Noor Azam notes that some of Brunei's new generation have shifted to English, especially among the elite and well educated. As Noor Azam explains, there are a number of possible explanations for this.

Historically, Britain played a far more benign role in Brunei than it did in other countries that were colonized. Britain appears to have helped Brunei's development rather than hindered it, and thus its actions were favourably received. In addition, Brunei's royalty has close personal relations with Britain's royalty; the armed forces of both countries co-operate closely, and many Bruneians study in British schools and universities. Most importantly, English has always been associated in Brunei with education, while over the last thirty years it has also become the dominant world language and one of the two languages used in the country's bilingual education system. Thus the language and Britain have been seen in a positive way. Nowadays, however, the historical ties are far less important to the spread and use of English than its utilitarian value. Noor Azam goes so far as to suggest that a Bruneian "could now be defined as a Malay-English bilingual" (ibid: 239).

Despite, or perhaps because of, the role that both English and Malay play in the country, Noor Azam pursued the question of the role of Brunei's indigenous languages in the school curriculum. The answers provided, a typical example of which is shown below, suggest very little faith in the usefulness of these languages in the country:

*Director of Curriculum Development, Ministry of Education*

- 1) Those languages cannot perform the formal and official function as a language of education, compared to Malay and English which have a complete corpus in terms of lexis, phonology, morphology and syntax.
  - 2) The area of spread of these languages is limited and does not transcend the speakers' geographical boundaries. They are spoken in informal situations. Malay is used as the main regional language in MABBIM member countries. English on the other hand is an international language.
  - 3) The number of speakers of those languages is small and limited to each ethnic group. In the ASEAN region, Malay is spoken by roughly 250 million people while English is used by the global population.
- (ibid: 195)

It is interesting to note that the Director referred to a lack of a proper standardized writing or code system for these languages. Some speakers of the languages also referred to this:

A bit difficult because we don't have this written code for these different dialects ... If I were to write in bahasa Belait, (first), I don't think anybody can understand ... the second reason is that it looks awkward to write in Belait ...

... it wouldn't look nice ... when writing letters you don't use Dusun, because it's awkward ... [Trans.] (ibid: 199)

Noor Azam goes on to argue that it probably would not be too difficult to develop orthographies for the non-dominant languages, but the will to do so is lacking.

Similarly, he witnessed very little support for these languages from the country's Language and Literature Bureau (LLB) or from the state broadcasters, Radio Television Brunei (RTB). The respondent from the LLB reminded him that they are "entrusted to propagate the Malay language" (trans.) (ibid: 201), while RTB took the pragmatic line that broadcasting in minority languages would not be very cost-effective in terms of audience size. Given the state functions of both the LLB and RTB, it is clear that linguistic diversity has no official support.

There is very little to suggest that the situation is going to get any better for the country's non-dominant languages. Bruneians have been shifting and continue to shift towards Brunei Malay and English and to learn Standard Malay. Noor Azam concludes that "the informants in this study have reported that some ethnic language speakers are abandoning their language altogether and that the younger generations of all these communities, it seems, are brought up speaking Malay as a first language." (ibid: 215)

## Conclusion

I hope this paper has demonstrated that while Brunei does have a language-in-education policy, it is one that promotes two languages that are non-indigenous to Brunei: Standard Malay and English. The reasons for this are both pragmatic and historical, and it seems very unlikely that there will be any shift away from these languages in the near future. Nor does it seem likely that any of the country's non-dominant languages will be introduced into the school curriculum.

It is not just in education that non-dominant languages are being ignored. There is no apparent will on the part of the speakers of these languages to change matters, and no apparent state support either. Most Bruneians, it would appear, want to learn Standard Malay and English for practical purposes and Brunei Malay as a means of common communication.

While this may be a very bleak assessment of the future of Brunei's non-dominant tongues, not just as educational media but as living languages, there is, perhaps, the merest glimmer of hope. Speakers of local languages like Noor

Azam are asking questions, and it is certainly not too late to record, document, and eventually continue using and even teaching these languages. The various language communities themselves, however, will have to show far more enthusiasm and support for their languages than has been the case till now.



## Education policies for ethnic minorities in Cambodia

*Neou Sun*

### The national setting

Cambodia is a kingdom in Southeast Asia with a population of approximately 14 million. Ethnic Khmer, who are predominantly Buddhist, constitute close to 90% of the total population. Their language is Khmer, which belongs to the Mon-Khmer branch of the Austro-Asiatic language family. According to the Cambodian Constitution, Central Khmer is the official language of Cambodia; “the official language and script is Khmer” (Cambodia, 1993, Article 5). Along with Khmer, 21 other languages are spoken in the country. The languages and the estimated populations of the speakers of these languages are listed in Table 2.





**Table 2. Population of Language Groups in Cambodia.** (Source: Ethnologue, 2005)

<i>Language Group</i>	<i>Population</i>
Khmer, Central	12,110,065
Vietnamese	393,121
Chinese, Mandarin	350,000
Cham, Western	220,000
Tampuan	25,000
Mnong, Central/Bunong	20,000
Lao	17,000
Kuy	15,495
Jarai	15,000
Kreung	9,368
Stieng, Bulo	6,059
Brao	5,286
Chong	5,000
Kavet	3,012
Kraol	2,600
Kaco'	2,000
Somray	2,000
Pear	1,300
Lamam	1,000
Sa'och	500
Suoy	200
Samre	50

Civil war and the Khmer Rouge regime destroyed and paralysed almost all socio-economic infrastructure and human resources during the 1970s, and the country reverted to primitive conditions. Since its liberation and re-establishment on January 7, 1979, the Government of Cambodia has invested considerable effort in restoring the institutions and utilities damaged by three decades of civil war. Development of human resources has been a priority. During its rebuilding of schools, the Government called upon survivors of the Pol Pot Regime who were literate and able to work as school teachers to serve under the slogan "Literate People Teach Illiterate People". In pursuit of this idea, the Government has formulate laws, policies, and mechanisms to promote and improve the education system in Cambodia.

## Laws and policies on Education

The Cambodian Constitution of 1993 provides equal rights and opportunities for all Cambodian citizens to receive at least formal basic education.

The State shall protect and upgrade citizens' rights to quality education at all levels and shall take necessary steps for quality education to reach all citizens. (Cambodia, 1993: Article 65)

The State shall establish a comprehensive and standardized education system throughout the country that shall guarantee the principles of educational freedom and equality to ensure that all citizens have equal opportunity to earn a living. (Ibid.: Article 66)

The State shall provide primary and secondary education to all citizens in public schools. (Ibid.: Article 68)

The State shall protect and promote the Khmer language as required. (Ibid.: Article 69)

In December 2007, the Cambodian National Assembly adopted a new Education Law. Article 24 of the Law states that:

The Khmer language shall be the language of instruction, and a subject of the core curriculum used for general education in public schools. Private, general-education schools must have the Khmer language as a subject in their curriculum. . . . The language used by Cambodian learners of minority origin shall be determined by the Prakas<sup>2</sup> of ministries responsible for education. (Cambodia, 2007: Article 24)

In 2006, the Ministry of Rural Development drafted a National Policy on the Development of Ethnic Minorities,<sup>3</sup> some points of which relate to education. It stated, for example, that human resource development should conform to the real interests and wishes of the minority peoples. It was deemed a priority that literacy programmes and nonformal education should be organized in order to strengthen the local knowledge, cultures, and languages of ethnic minorities. Language textbooks should be bilingual (in both Khmer and the relevant minority language), and orthographies for ethnic minority languages should be created on the basis of the Khmer script.

As one of the members of the Collective Committee of the Dakar Framework for Action in 2000, the Royal Government of Cambodia issued Sub-Decree (Anukret) No. 84 ANK. BK., dated August 27, 2001, on the creation of the National Committee of Education for All.

The EFA Committee is composed of the representatives of the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sport (MoEYS), the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Economy and Finance, the Ministry of Planning, the Council of Ministers, the Ministry of National Defence, the Ministry of Rural Development, the Ministry of

<sup>2</sup>Prakas refers to other legal regulations, such as decrees or decisions.

<sup>3</sup>Editors' note: Ethnic minorities in this paper refer to ethnolinguistic groups whose languages do not have a traditional written form.

Women's and Veterans' Affairs, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries, the Ministry of Social Affairs, the Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts, the Ministry of Information, the Ministry of Religion and Cults, and the representatives of the Development Council of Cambodia. The Committee's mission is to develop 'Education for All' strategies, and to draft policies and regulations that support and facilitate implementation of 'Education for All' in Cambodia. The sub-decree also advised the Committee to seek co-operation from communities, local and international NGOs, civil society, and the private sector.

In 2004, the Pedagogic Research Department of the MoEYS developed its Policy for Curriculum Development 2005-2009. Some points of the policy are particularly relevant to bilingual education and education for ethnic minorities.

Schools, local authorities, community groups, NGOs, and private education providers are expected to develop programmes that will enrich and broaden the national curriculum. (MoEYS, 2004: section 3.3)

Schools, in partnership with parents, their local community organizations, and NGOs, develop and administer a Local Life Skills Programme of 5 45-minute lessons per week to supplement the national curriculum. (Ibid.: section 3.4)

The standard medium of instruction is Khmer. Textbooks will be published in Khmer except for foreign language textbooks. In schools where there is a large number of speakers of minority languages, teachers may conduct some instruction of the class in the minority language, and may translate key vocabulary contained in textbooks from Khmer to the minority language as a means of assisting student learning. (Ibid.: section 3.19)

The MoEYS established an Office of Special Education in the Department of Primary Education. The office is required to provide equal education to disabled children and the children of ethnolinguistic minority groups.

### **Policy implementation: teaching Khmer to ethnic minorities through their mother tongue**

Language plays an important role in society. Through language, people come to know the civilization and culture of their nation, their identity, and the rhythms of their daily life.

Providing language education to non-Khmer-speaking ethnic minorities in some remote areas of Cambodia is a priority of the Royal Government of Cambodia. To achieve this goal, the Government is looking into all possible ways to help ethnic minorities. This is done, for example, by constructing community schools, where ethnolinguistic minority children can learn their mother tongues first, after which they learn to speak, read, and write Khmer. In addition, literacy classes are established, and ethnolinguistic minority people are encouraged to attend them. School-aged ethnolinguistic minority children are also encouraged to attend

community schools. Furthermore, the Government collaborates with international NGOs in orthography development for minority languages and in establishing literacy classes in minority communities.

### ***Government-NGO collaboration in the provinces of Rattanakiri and Mondulhiri***

The MoEYS of Cambodia, by a memorandum of understanding, authorized International Co-operation Cambodia (ICC) and Care International in Cambodia to organize educational projects in the northeastern provinces of Mondulhiri and Rattanakiri, in 2002 and 2003, respectively, where ethnic minorities such as the Bunong, Tampuan, Krueng, Brao and Kravet peoples constitute a substantial part of the population. The objectives of the projects are:

- To encourage teaching of Khmer literacy and numeracy in ethnic communities of the Northeast. These activities could be expanded to some western provinces.
- To push for orthography development in ethnolinguistic minority languages based on the Khmer script, including linguistic and anthropological research into other ethnolinguistic groups in order to help them to develop orthographies for their languages.
- To pilot the creation of literacy classes in other provinces.
- To use materials and methods of nonformal education to educate and train minority people.
- To contribute experience and techniques aiming to achieve the goal of education for all Cambodians. Particular attention is to be paid to those who cannot speak Khmer and live in remote areas. The goal is to include them in the Royal Government of Cambodia's 'Education for All' and encourage them to take part in discussion of the effectiveness and implementation of bilingual education.<sup>4</sup>

### ***Activities***

To complete this project, the MoEYS, UNICEF, International Cooperation Cambodia (ICC), and Care International in Cambodia have to perform the following activities:

- To co-ordinate and co-operate with provincial authorities who are implementing the programme, which includes research on minority languages, piloting literacy materials, teacher training, and post-literacy for:
  - training in Khmer (reading and writing).
  - providing Khmer literacy to minority peoples.
- To provide necessary technical assistance for literacy programmes, firstly among the Bunong people and then to other minorities.

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<sup>4</sup>Bilingual education in the Cambodian case means a system which uses a minority language (the mother tongue) in instruction first, so that the second language (Khmer) can be acquired.

- To provide technical assistance in piloting the learning of Khmer and mathematics in response to the needs and interests of ethnolinguistic minority communities, and to provide materials for teacher training and literacy classes. Those materials should focus on:
  - teaching Khmer to minority people who speak Khmer poorly or not at all.
  - providing Khmer literacy classes from basic to advanced levels.
- To conduct field practice, implementation, and evaluation of training and teaching of Khmer to minority communities.
- To provide technical assistance in piloting the use of minority languages, and preparing materials for teacher training in specific minority communities.
- To provide documents and information relating to curricula, especially reports on studies and surveys that exist in the MoEYS.
- To dispatch ministry officials who will co-operate with ICC and Care International in Cambodia by directing and facilitating relationships with officials in rural areas through bilateral agreements.
- To send staff, advisors, representatives, and officials to conduct field visits for monitoring and evaluation.
- To co-operate with provincial authorities in research concerning language education, teacher training, and the development of pilot literacy materials.
- To conduct research on languages and develop orthographies based on the Khmer script for different minority languages.
- To develop materials on “how to speak Khmer” for minority peoples who speak Khmer poorly or not at all.
- To organize Khmer literacy classes from basic to advanced levels.
- To develop textbooks in minority languages from basic to advanced levels.

### Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport

- To partner with UNICEF, ICC, and Care International in Cambodia in developing teaching and learning materials, selecting literacy teachers, and developing nonformal education curricula in the Bunong, Kreung, Brao, Tampuan, and Kravet languages.
- To partner with Save the Children–Norway in translating students’ Grade 1 textbooks from Khmer to Kuy in order to help Khmer-speaking teachers understand key words in the Kuy language that could help them to teach Khmer to Kuy children in Grade 1 in the province of Preah Vihear.
- To set up a committee composed of representatives from the Pedagogic Research Department, the Department of Non-Formal Education, and the Royal Academy of Cambodia. The purpose of the committee is to provide technical support and advise the ICC and Care International in Cambodia in the bilingual education process, and to approve all related teaching and learning materials as well as their methodologies.
- To conduct a number of meetings with UNICEF, ICC, and Care International in Cambodia on the orthographic development of the Bunong, Brao, Tampuan, Kreung, and Kravet languages, based on the Khmer script.

- To conduct field trips to Mondulkiri and Rattanakiri in order to visit, monitor, and evaluate bilingual literacy classes and offer advice for improvement.
- To correct and approve all literacy manuals in the Bunong, Kreung, Brao, Tampuan, and Kravet languages.
- To correct and approve texts translated from the Bunong, Kreung, Brao, Tampuan, and Kravet languages into Khmer.

### *ICC and Care International in Cambodia*

- To conduct meetings and workshops for discussions on how to encourage student involvement in literacy classes.
- To establish evening literacy classes.
- To establish bilingual libraries in villages and in the main offices of ICC and Care International in Cambodia.
- To conduct meetings to discuss problems encountered by literacy teachers and students.
- To produce and print literacy books.
- To conduct meetings with MoEYS officers in order to correct literacy books for final MoEYS approval.
- To conduct in-house training for teachers of literacy classes.
- To conduct surveys of the opinions of students and villagers regarding literacy classes.

## **Conclusion**

The implementation of projects in Rattanakiri and Mondulkiri that use ethnic minority languages to help those minorities acquire the official language, together with experiences from other countries that have used students' mother tongues in education, demonstrate that such an approach nurtures the learners' interest in education and literacy in both the mother tongue and the national or official language. Providing biliteracy and educational options for ethnic minorities in Cambodia may be an excellent way to increase their interest and participation in education, and may well serve to promote educational quality and achieve education for all in Cambodia.

## Regional and local languages as languages of oral instruction in Indonesia

Maryanto

### The national setting

The Republic of Indonesia is a vast archipelago of more than 17,000 islands covering about one-seventh of the equator. Today, the archipelago is inhabited by over 225 million people. Indonesians, despite their apparent differences, have similar regional and historical backgrounds, confirming the truth of the Sanskrit motto *Bhineka Tunggal Ika*, or Unity in Diversity. They inhabit one country, *tanah air Indonesia* (literally the land and water of Indonesia), constitute one nation, *bangsa Indonesia*, and have one common language, *Bahasa Indonesia*. Nonetheless, they are blessed with a wide range of ethnic identities and religious beliefs as well as a variety of languages.

Ethnologue (2005) lists 742 languages for Indonesia. Indonesian children may speak any one out of hundreds of languages as their home language or mother tongue. Ten regional languages can be considered as major: Acehnese, Balinese, Banjar, Batak, Bugis, Javanese, Madurese, Minang, Sasak, and Sundanese. From a schoolchild's point of view, the linguistic situation is complicated. The local language first acquired by children in one home village may be different from that in another village. For example, the variety of Javanese which children learn from their parents in Semarang, Central Java, is clearly a different language from the one acquired by their peers in Tegal, Central Java, although the distance between Semarang and Tegal is only about 150 kilometres. These two dialects are mutually unintelligible.

### The language of instruction from a historical perspective

During the Dutch colonial period, beginning in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century, part of colonial policy was to transmit and impose the colonialists' aims and culture by means of the Dutch language. It is interesting to note that long before the Dutch arrived in Indonesia, a coherent idea of the cultural and linguistic unity of the region already existed, as Malay was serving as a means of wider communication in the area. Malay had been the *lingua franca* in Southeast Asia for more than a thousand years before the Dutch came. Historical evidence reveals that the ancient Hindu Kingdom of Sriwijaya, centred in the vicinity of present-day Palembang and flourishing from 650 to 1370, employed Malay as its administrative language.

As Sriwijaya was an important commercial power, Malay was also the language of trade, in a form known as *Melayu Pasar* or Bazaar Malay. In the thirteenth century, trade opened the islands to a new foreign influence, with the arrival of Muslim merchants from Gujarat in India. Their visits made a significant difference, as Islamic kingdoms started up along the coastal areas where they did their trading. The merchants used Malay with the native rulers as well as with the local people, and the new faith of Islam was introduced together with the Malay



language. As a result, Malay adopted Arabic script as the basis of its orthography.

In the sixteenth century, the Portuguese came to the archipelago with interests both in trade and in propagating religion. They were attracted by the rich spice islands of Maluku. Through the Malay language, the Portuguese succeeded in spreading the Christian faith and establishing their spice trade. They were, however, gradually displaced by the Dutch East Indies Company. Initially, the Dutch came to trade as well. Becoming increasingly powerful, they eventually acquired a monopoly in the spice trade and conquered the territory. They took over the archipelago for more than three centuries and used Dutch as their administrative language.

During the Dutch colonial period, education was very limited. Even before the nineteenth century, the Dutch government did not pay any attention to the education of the native population. Dutch education was limited to elementary schools for children of the Dutch, Christians, and members of the military. In 1848, however, there arose a reform movement in the Netherlands that sought to establish schools for indigenous children. The first three-year elementary school was opened for natives in 1849. The languages of instruction were Javanese, Sundanese, and Madurese.

In 1893, the Dutch government divided native schools into two types: five-year schools, which were called first-class schools (for children of the nobility and other important figures) and three-year second-class schools (for children of commoners). In the two types of native schools, regional languages were provided as languages of instruction. Moeliono (1986) notes that Malay functioned as an additional medium of instruction at schools where the regional languages could not be employed. Dutch was adopted as the language of instruction at first-class schools in 1914, when the native schools of this type became seven-year schools.

A regional language and Malay were employed as languages of instruction in new native schools called village schools. Three-year village schools were first established in 1870, but in 1916 they became five-year schools equal to the second-class schools which had been established earlier. Both types were considered equivalent in standing. In 1912, Dutch replaced the regional languages and Malay as the language of instruction from the first year. It should be noted that it was in this period that the Dutch government initiated the use of Latin scripts for Malay and Javanese.



The ensuing Japanese occupation (1942-1945) led to the abrupt abolition of Dutch in favour of Indonesian, based entirely on Malay, as the chief language in the Indonesian community. All official administration, press releases, and radio announcements were delivered in Indonesian. As it became more commonly used by the Indonesian people, it developed a considerable freedom of expression. At schools and universities, the teaching and use of Indonesian became obligatory.

### The language of instruction after independence

Indonesia declared her independence on 17 August 1945. The proclamation of independence was written in Indonesian, as was the 1945 Constitution which the Republic promulgated on the following day. It is stipulated in the Constitution, Chapter XV, Article 36, that the language of the state is Indonesian. It should be noted that the status of Indonesian as the national language was established at a congress on 28 October 1928, in a resolution known as *Sumpah Pemuda*, or the Youth Pledge. Part of that resolution reads as follows.

- Firstly: We the sons and daughters of Indonesia declare that we belong to one fatherland, the land of Indonesia.
- Secondly: We the sons and daughters of Indonesia declare that we belong to one nation, the Indonesian nation.
- Thirdly: We the sons and daughters of Indonesia uphold the language of unity, the Indonesian language.

Since independence in 1945, Indonesian has been both the national and the official language of the Republic. Indonesian has played an important role in the growth of the country. National development has been explored, communicated, projected, and reproduced through the channel of Indonesian. In other words, Indonesian is believed to be a necessary and helpful tool for facilitating the implementation of development programmes in various fields, including education.

One obstacle to the implementation of development programmes was the widespread illiteracy of the Indonesian people, which represented one of the saddest legacies of the colonial regime. Most people were unable to read and write in Indonesian. On Independence Day in 1945, less than 10% of the entire Indonesian people could read or write in Indonesian. It is reported that in 1945 only 600,000 children out of 85 million Indonesians were attending elementary schools, and only 500 were in secondary school. At that time, as stated earlier, the obligatory teaching of Indonesian and its use in schools had only begun to be promoted during the Japanese occupation.

Freedom from illiteracy was a major concern in the development of Indonesian education. An anti-illiteracy campaign was set up in 1947 under the guidance and support of the Indonesian Ministry of Education. A general programme of Indonesian language teaching was commenced throughout the country.

Textbooks were written in Indonesian, such as *Mari Membaca* (Let's Read), and were widely used. The objective of such courses was to transmit the skills of reading and writing in Indonesian. Since the programme was launched, the literacy rate in Indonesian has been improving continuously.

According to the 1980 census, 39% of Indonesian people over five years old could neither speak nor read in Indonesian. Instead, they only spoke their home language or mother tongue. In 1990, a similar national survey revealed that only 17% of Indonesian people over five years old were still illiterate in Indonesian,<sup>5</sup> i.e. unable to read the Indonesian alphabet. This segment was identified as living below the poverty line, mostly in remote areas which had not yet gained access to development. Recently, these areas have received special attention from the Indonesian government, which has set a target for them of total freedom from illiteracy within this decade.

Language statistics support the opinion that the spread of Indonesian across the country has been tremendous. As stated earlier, in 1945 less than 10% of Indonesia's population of 80 million could speak Indonesian. By comparison, in the 1990s, Indonesian was spoken by 83% of the 160 million Indonesian over five years old.<sup>6</sup>

This 83% can be divided into two groups. 68% use Indonesian along with their regional language. Another 15% use Indonesian as their 'sub-national' language, i.e. in their daily communication. The growing volume of information which is transmitted through Indonesian television programmes is bound to increase the size of the latter group.

The successful spread of Indonesian across the country has confirmed its use as the main medium of instruction in contemporary Indonesian education. The National Educational System Act (No. 20 Year 2003, Chapter VII, Article 33) states that (1) Indonesian, as the state language, is to be the language of instruction in national education; (2) local and regional languages may be used as languages of instruction in the early stage of education as far as they are needed to transmit certain types of knowledge and skills; (3) foreign languages may be used as languages of instruction at certain levels of education to strengthen students' ability in foreign languages.

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<sup>5</sup>Editors' note: It is not clear how being 'literate' is defined here. It would be useful to compare the situation presented here with the reading literacy results of fifteen-year-old Indonesians in the 2003 PISA study (OECD, 2004). The PISA study showed that 69% of Indonesian students had a low level of reading literacy in Indonesian. This may indicate that low functional literacy skills are linked to the language of literacy, i.e. Indonesian, which for most Indonesians is their second language.

<sup>6</sup>Editors' note: These figures are dramatic indeed. It would be good, however, to know what 'speaking Indonesian' actually means here and what level of proficiency constitutes 'speaking Indonesian'.

## Oral use of local languages

The use of local languages in education is not prohibited in Indonesia. In practice, local languages are preferable as means of producing conviviality between teachers and students. In classrooms, a joke is often expressed in a local language. It is not uncommon to see university students and lecturers who have just come from other regions trying to master the regional language of their new home, because they do not want to become the butts of local humour. Local languages in education thus have a phatic<sup>7</sup> function, rather than that of academic communication.

This situation seems to apply to education at elementary levels. Nowadays, it is a normal pattern in villages or remote areas where most of the schoolchildren are already bilingual. They enjoy sufficient exposure to the home language spoken by their parents, and imbibe Indonesian at the 'sub-national' level through watching television programmes. Cartoons and other media for children have a positive impact on this type of bilingualism. As a result, in the first grade, children's home language serves as a secondary language of instruction because they are usually ready to listen to their teachers speaking in Indonesian.<sup>8</sup>

In some parts of the country, children learn Indonesian almost simultaneously with their home language. In their study conducted in Bali, Arnawa and Sulibrata (2002) suggest that Balinese should not be considered as the only home language of the children, as many Balinese children are also fluent in Indonesian. Bilingualism is currently more common in urban areas, but it is likely to expand to rural areas as well. In places like Bali, the study of the local language as a subject is generally taken by children without much interest. Bilingual students feel that studying the local language as a school subject is somewhat of a burden. As a result, Indonesian policies concerning the teaching of local and regional languages as subjects of study have been difficult to implement.

The use of local languages in oral instruction is also minimal. The language is added when the teacher feels that Indonesian is not sufficient. At present, Indonesian is the general, cross-curricular medium of education at the elementary levels. All subjects of study are taught in the national language. It is not unusual for Indonesian to be the language of instruction when a local language is taught as a subject of study in urban areas where the local language is included in the contents of the curriculum. All teaching and learning materials are written in Indonesian. But such materials can be taught orally in the local language when necessary.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>'The social function of language, used to show rapport between people, or to establish a pleasant atmosphere.' (Crystal, 1999: 258)

<sup>8</sup>Editors' note: An important question arises. The children may listen, but how well do they actually understand Indonesian, particularly in the more remote areas of Indonesia? It is quite likely that not all children are ready to 'listen to Indonesian' when they enter Grade 1. It is important to distinguish between colloquial (BICS) and academic (CALP) language skills. Many children may have good BICS in Indonesian (surface-level language), but may lack sufficient academic language (CALP) to excel in education.

<sup>9</sup>Editors' note: It is not clear in this paper whether Indonesian policy allows the use of written materials in local languages, and if such materials exist or have been developed.

## Staffing and training

Teachers of even basic education are not necessarily educated in the communities where they teach. Ideally, at school, teachers can assume the role of parental substitutes and use the same language as that spoken at home. In such an ideal classroom situation, more active participation can be achieved and more effective teaching methods can be employed.

First language teaching can enhance the acquisition of literacy and other skills and raise the level of achievement in the classroom. In Indonesian communities where *Bahasa Indonesia* is commonly used at home, either by broadcasting media (like TV and radio) or by the parents themselves, low levels of learning achievement (and high levels of dropout and repetition) are not associated with the language of instruction itself. Poor performance usually stems from other problems, mostly economic, and partly due to a lack of teachers' awareness of their students' first or home language.

In some communities which have not yet been penetrated by mass media and where parents use Indonesian as their second language, the use of a local language might prove unsuccessful in classroom instruction. One obstacle has to do with parents' inability to see the benefit of the local or foreign language used at their children's schools. The local language is thought to be one spoken only at home, and not beneficial for furthering their children's careers. Because of this perception, teachers see no need to have a good command of their students' home language. Parents and teachers alike tend to resist the use of the children's home language as a language of instruction.

Furthermore, when the central government adopts a policy of decentralizing basic education in favour of school-based management, the policy is often not well-implemented. At present, school teachers are recruited and managed regionally, but teacher development and deployment have not yet been improved. Pre- and in-service teacher training programmes that are still managed centrally rather than regionally have not yet been redesigned to train teachers in the use of local languages for classroom instruction nor in the development of teaching and learning materials that employ those languages. To address this challenge, professional development for school teachers must be included in bilingual education policy planning, and the supply of bilingual teachers must include campaigns focused on linguistic skill and awareness.

## Conclusion

After Indonesian independence in 1945, the Indonesian national language has been used as the language of instruction. All subjects of study at elementary schools are taught in the national language, making it the single medium for the entire curriculum. Regional, local, or home languages are used orally by teachers on a supplementary basis, and these languages are generally not used as the main language of instruction.

In the case of Javanese, for example, the local language is rarely used in the written form, but it is widely used orally. The oral use of the local language should be regarded as the approach of individual teachers rather than of the government policy. Success in the use of children's home language for instruction purposes, especially in elementary schools, depends on the teachers' ability to speak the local language. The main problem in Indonesian education is not how to use the local and regional languages, but how to provide schoolchildren with teachers who can employ these languages. In terms of language-in-education policy, the use of local languages is not prohibited in Indonesia. This policy can only be implemented by providing teachers who are able to speak the same local or regional language as the schoolchildren from the first grade on and make use of it as a medium of instruction.



## Policies, developments, and challenges in mother tongue education in Malaysian public schools<sup>10</sup>

*Ramanathan Nagarathinam*

### The national setting

Malaysia is a federation of states comprising two main regions, namely Peninsular Malaysia, sharing borders with Thailand and Singapore, and East Malaysia, sharing borders with Brunei in the north and Indonesia in the south.

Malaysia has a population of 26.2 million, and is made up of three major ethnic groups. The Malays comprise 50.8 percent of the population, the Chinese 23.3 percent, and the Indians 6.9 percent. There are other groups as well: indigenous non-Malays account for 11.1 percent, other citizens<sup>11</sup> 1.5 percent, and non-citizens<sup>12</sup> about 6.9 percent.

More than half of the population of Sarawak and 66% of the population of Sabah are indigenous non-Malays.<sup>13</sup> The arrival of other ethnic groups has, to a certain extent, reduced the percentages of the indigenous population in these two states. They are divided into dozens of ethnolinguistic groups.

Many different languages are spoken in Malaysia. *Bahasa Malaysia* (the Malay or Malaysian language) is the predominant language, but English, Chinese,<sup>14</sup> and Tamil are also widely spoken. Ethnolinguistic groups in East Malaysia speak several other languages. *Bahasa Malaysia* is the official language, used in government departments and the business sector.

There are 141 spoken languages in Malaysia: forty languages in Peninsular Malaysia, forty-seven in Sarawak, and thirty-two in Sabah. *Bahasa Malaysia* is the main language of instruction in national schools, although under a recent policy change English is used for the teaching of mathematics and science. Most Malaysians are bilingual, and many speak more than two languages.

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<sup>10</sup>The section on Malaysia is based on the following sources: Akta Pendidikan, 1996; Demographics of Malaysia, 2008; Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2008; Ethnic Groups in Malaysia, 2008; Ethnologue, 2005; Kusuma, 2001; Languages of Malaysia, 2008; Laws of Malaysia, 2005; Policy for the Teaching and Learning of Languages, 1998; Sharma, 1979; and Undang-Undang Malaysia, 1996.

<sup>11</sup>Europeans, Americans, Eurasians, Arabs, and Thais.

<sup>12</sup>Immigrant workers during the 80s and 90s, such as Indonesians, Bangladeshis, Pakistanis, Filipinos, Burmese, and Cambodians.

<sup>13</sup>Non-Malays consist of Kadazan, Bajau, Murud, Kedaian, Orang Sungei, Bisaya, Sulu, and Tidong in Sabah, and Iban, Bidayuh, and Melanau in Sarawak.

<sup>14</sup>The Chinese include Cantonese, Hokkien, and Hainanese, who speak non-standard varieties of Chinese (often called dialects due to a shared writing system) such as Hokkien, Cantonese, Hakka, and Hainanese.

## Constitutional provisions

Article 152 of the Malaysian Federal Constitution of 1957 states that the official/national language is Malay. However, the Constitution guarantees the freedom to learn and use other languages, except for official purposes. Official purposes here mean any business of the Government, whether Federal or State, and includes any transaction of a public authority. All court proceedings and parliamentary sessions and formal meetings are conducted in Malay, and all related documents are in Malay likewise. Article 152 states:

The national language shall be the Malay language...provided that (a) no person shall be prohibited from using (otherwise than for official purposes) or from teaching or learning any other language... and (b) nothing in this Clause shall prejudice the right of the Federal Government or any State Government to preserve and sustain the use and study of the language of another community in the Federation.

(Malaysian Federal Constitution, 1957: Article 152.)

The Education Act of 1996 guarantees that:

- (i) The Chinese<sup>15</sup> or Tamil language shall be made available if the parents of at least fifteen pupils in the school so request; and
- (ii) indigenous languages shall be made available if it is reasonable and practical to do so<sup>16</sup> and if the parents of at least fifteen pupils in the school so request.

## Influence of policies on the education system

After Malaysia achieved its independence in 1957, a National Education Policy was formulated based on the Education Ordinance of 1957. In 1960, a further review was carried out by the Education Review Committee, based on the Rahman Talib Report. Its recommendations, and those of the Razak Report, became the basis of the Education Act of 1961. Since then there have been only three types of primary schools, namely the national primary school (using Malay as the medium of instruction), the Chinese national-type primary school (using Chinese as the medium of instruction), and the Tamil national-type primary school (using Tamil as the medium of instruction).

Significant changes in the education system included the provision of universal free primary education, a common syllabus that has a Malaysian outlook and uses Malay as the national language and medium of instruction, a common national assessment, the expansion of teacher training programmes, and the provision of religious and moral instruction. The national system of education was thus established along these lines.

<sup>15</sup>In Malaysia the Chinese language refers to Mandarin.

<sup>16</sup>"Reasonable and practical" refers to aspects like financial allocation and availability of teachers.

## Rukunegara and the national philosophy of education

*Rukunegara* (the National Ideology) and the National Philosophy of Education, which were formulated in 1969 and 1990, respectively, have provided the guidelines for the present Malaysian education system. *Rukunegara* sets the stage for a united nation with a plural society, democratic institutions with a constitutionally elected Parliament, a just society with equal opportunities for all, a liberal society of diverse cultural traditions, and a progressive society oriented towards science and technology.

## The Malaysian education system

The national education system in Malaysia comprises:

- a) preschool education
- b) primary education
- c) secondary education
- d) post-secondary education
- e) tertiary education

The languages presently used as media of instruction in Malaysian schools are Malay, Chinese, and Tamil. *Bahasa Malaysia* serves as the national language and medium of instruction in national schools (*sekolah kebangsaan*) both primary and secondary. It is also a compulsory subject taught in Chinese national-type primary schools (*sekolah jenis kebangsaan Cina*) and Tamil national-type primary schools (*sekolah jenis kebangsaan Tamil*).

English as a second language is taught as a compulsory subject in all primary and secondary schools. Chinese is used as a medium of instruction in Chinese national-type primary schools, while Tamil is used as a medium of instruction in Tamil national-type primary schools. Chinese and Tamil are taught as subjects in national primary and secondary schools. Other non-dominant languages, such as Kadazandusun, Iban, and Semai, are taught as subjects of study in the states of Sabah, Sarawak, Pahang and Perak, respectively.

Pupils from the three types of primary schools merge at the secondary level for another five years of uninterrupted compulsory schooling. At this level, the medium of instruction in all schools is Malay. Those students from the Chinese national-type and Tamil national-type schools who have not acquired basic proficiency in Malay are given an opportunity to go through a year of proficiency exposure in Malay before they join their classmates in the secondary system.

Since 2003, it has been compulsory that all preschools implement the National Preschool Curriculum developed by the Curriculum Development Centre, Ministry of Education. Other languages may be used as the oral language of instruction besides Malay, which must be taught at least as a language of literacy. Currently, there are 12,757 private preschools in Malaysia where various languages are used in teaching.



## Introduction of non-dominant languages to schools

The aims of introducing ethnolinguistic minority languages into the education system are to enable the speakers of these languages to communicate among themselves and, most important of all, to ensure the maintenance of minority cultures. The Iban language was introduced as a subject of study in primary schools and lower secondary schools in 1987. The Kadazandusun language and the Semai language were introduced in primary schools in 1995 and 1997, respectively. By 2007, the number of primary schools offering these languages as subjects of study was 369 for Kadazandusun, 282 for Iban, and 30 for Semai.

National Education policy requires that all schools use common syllabi and teaching-learning materials. In regard to content, priority should be given to the Malaysian aspects of each subject.

Table 3 shows the types of schools in Malaysia and the number of schools of each type. Table 4 shows the amount of time allocated to various languages in primary schools.

**Table 3. Number of Primary Schools in Malaysia as of 2006**

Types of Schools	Number of Schools
National Primary Schools	5,774
Chinese National-Type Primary Schools	1,288
Tamil National-Type Primary Schools	523
Special Schools (Disabled Students)	28
Total	7,616

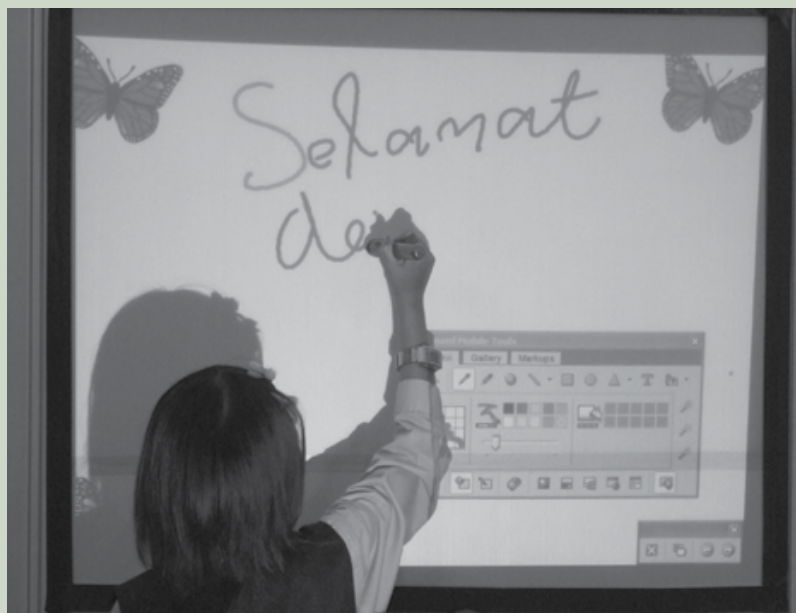


Table 4. Allocation of Time (in minutes) for Languages Taught in Primary Schools

Language	National Primary School		Chinese National-Type Primary School		Tamil National-Type Primary School	
	Years 1-3	Years 4-6	Years 1-3	Years 4-6	Years 1-3	Years 4-6
Malay	360	300	270	150	270	180
	(medium of instruction)		(medium of instruction)			
English	240	210	60	90	60	120
	(compulsory subject)					
Chinese	60	60	360	300		
	(additional language)		(medium of instruction)			
Tamil	60	60			360	300
	(additional language)				(medium of instruction)	
Iban	120 min a week (Years 3-6)					
	(status of additional language)					
Kadazan-dusun	120 min a week (Years 4-6)					
	(status of additional language)					
Semai	120 min a week (Years 3-6)					
	(status of additional language)					

## Teaching and learning materials

Teaching and learning materials for mother tongue languages are prepared by the Ministry of Education. The private sector, including Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, has been instrumental in increasing the variety of teaching materials. Programmes for enrichment of teaching and learning materials are being implemented by various divisions of the Ministry of Education, and are supported by abundant funds willingly provided by the government.

The Ministry of Education, through its Textbook Division, has been devising policies and guidelines for the development of textbooks for minority languages and encouraging writers to produce high-quality textbooks and teachers' guides. Textbooks are provided free of charge to teachers and students. In addition, professional trainers conduct courses to guide and prepare teachers to ensure effective use of the books in classrooms.

In cases where teaching and learning a minority language is hampered by lack of materials, the Curriculum Development Centre and the Education Technology Division under the Ministry of Education have played leading roles in producing teaching modules and supporting materials, such as self-access learning materials, classroom activity modules, resource materials, and materials for ICT-based learning.

All languages recognized by the Malaysian Education System have established orthographies. Malay, Kadazandusun, Iban, and Semai use Roman script, whereas Chinese and Tamil have their own unique orthographies.

### ***Multilingual classrooms***

There have been cases where Indian students attending six years of Malay-medium education in national schools are faced by an inability to express themselves in Malay when they enrol in secondary schools. This is because, while studying in national schools, they mix with students from the same ethnic group and communicate the whole day in their mother tongue. Inquiries into such cases have revealed that while at home they are only exposed to radio and television programmes in their mother tongue, while in school and at home their interaction with other ethnic groups is either minimum or nil. It is imperative that concrete action be taken to ensure effective intermingling of students from various ethnic groups while inside or outside the classroom. The Malaysian government has initiated a number of strategies to encourage intermingling of students from various ethnic groups, such as the promotion of sports, games, scouting, tours, and visits.

### **Teacher training**

Training for Malay, Chinese, and Tamil teachers is based on tests and interviews. These help identify the attributes and professional qualities relevant to the teaching profession. Currently the Ministry of Education only allows graduates to join its Teacher Training Colleges and be trained as classroom teachers. Qualification for Teacher Training College lecturers is being upgraded to the Master's and PhD levels.

On the other hand, teachers for mother tongue languages such as Kadazandusun, Iban, and Semai are selected from candidates who have acquired a minimum level of proficiency in those languages.

Further courses to refresh and update the teachers on current developments in teaching techniques and methodologies are regularly carried out. Professional information is also disseminated through in-service courses for practising teachers.

## Recent developments in language use

### *Chinese and Tamil in National Schools*

At a Cabinet Meeting on 27 April 2005, a decision was made to improve the teaching of Chinese and Tamil in National Schools by increasing the number of teaching periods. The main objective is to make National Schools the number-one option among these ethnic groups. Such a move is expected to foster and promote unity in the nation, as education is an important tool for promoting understanding and goodwill among ethnic groups. A proposal for the upgrading of Chinese and Tamil language teaching in National Schools was tabled and approved at the 185<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Education Planning Committee on 23 December 2005. The meeting also proposed that a pilot project be carried out in 2007 and 2008 with the intention of choosing the best model to be implemented in National Schools from 2009 on. For this programme of improvement in language teaching, 250 and 120 National Schools were selected for Chinese and Tamil, respectively.

### *English in teaching of math and science*

In 2003, the government adopted a measure to introduce English as a medium of instruction for the teaching of mathematics and science in primary and secondary schools. This is to ensure that Malaysia will not be left behind in this age of information technology, in which the role of English in a global context continues to grow. This policy only applies to National Schools and national-type Tamil primary schools. National-type Chinese primary schools are, however, allowed to use English and Chinese as the media of instruction in the teaching of mathematics and science.

### *Concerns about national unity and nation-building*

In an effort to foster unity among various ethnic groups, the government has adopted the positive step of a phased introduction of Chinese and Tamil as languages of literacy in National Schools. While providing common languages for interaction, this project will also promote mother tongue literacy among Chinese and Indian students in National Schools.

The government has also set up 'Vision Schools', which are National Schools built in the same area as Chinese and Tamil schools. At these schools, the pupils share common co-curricular amenities and activities. They also have common weekly assemblies.

### *Common syllabi and content*

Common syllabi and content can be advantageous in ensuring students' (i) acquisition of essential intellectual, affective, and psychomotor skills, and (ii) inculcation of patriotism and nationalistic pride.

## Conclusion

The Malays have a saying, *Bahasa Jiwa Bangsa*, which literally means, “Language is the soul of a race.” The Malaysian government has been willing and open with regard to discussing issues of mother tongue teaching and learning. The government is in constant dialogue with leaders of various ethnic groups to arrive at the most amicable formula for addressing the needs of the nation while taking the feelings and requests of the various ethnic groups into account.

The establishment of Malay-medium national schools and national-type Chinese and Tamil schools is an effort to enhance literacy in these languages. Over time, the efforts of the government have brought about effective changes in transforming these schools into knowledge-based institutions. A lot more has to be done, however, to transform and energize present and future students as they learn to become global citizens in this age of information and communication technology.

Malay has been successful and effective as a national language in leading the transformation of a rural agrarian community into a dynamic, industrial, and commercial urban community. Malaysia’s visionary leader, Tun Abdul Razak, and the education managers and leaders of this nation should be commended for a truly excellent job in promoting the national language as well as the mother tongue languages of the various major ethnic groups in Malaysia.



## Language-in-education policies and their implementation in Philippine public schools

*Yolanda S Quijano & Ofelia H Eustaquio*

### The national setting

The Republic of the Philippines is an archipelago made up of 7,107 islands, located in the southwest Pacific Ocean, about 800 kilometres off the Southeast Asian mainland. The island group is bounded on the east by the Philippine Sea, on the south by the Celebes Sea, and on the west and north by the South China Sea. It has a land area of 298,170 square kilometres. The terrain is mostly mountainous, with narrow to extensive coastal lowlands.

The Philippines produces timber, petroleum, nickel, cobalt, silver, gold, salt, and copper. Its agricultural products are sugarcane, coconuts, rice, corn, bananas, cassava, pineapples, mangoes, pork, eggs, and beef. Its main industries are the manufacture of electronic components, garments, footwear, pharmaceuticals, chemicals, and wood products, food processing, petroleum refining, and fishing.



July 2007 records reported a population of 91,077,287. Of this number, 34.5% were aged 0-14 years, comprising 16,043,257 males and 15,415,334 females, 61.3% were in the 15-64 year-old bracket, with 27,849,584 males and 28,008,293 females, and 4.1% of the population, namely 1,631,866 males and 2,128,953 females, were 65 years or older.

According to the 2000 national census, 80.9% of Filipinos were Roman Catholic, 5% Muslim, 2.8% Evangelical, 2.3% Iglesia ni Kristo, 2% Aglipayan, and 4.5% other Christians, while 1.8% had other beliefs, 0.6% were unspecified, and 0.1% of the population had no religious affiliation.

Local languages across the country are numerous and facilitate daily living and interactions with others within specific communities. The use of many languages in daily life is normal and widely accepted. Gonzales (1998) noted that the average Filipino is quadrilingual, and that the Philippines is a multilingual society with over a hundred separate languages. At present, and by consensus, Tagalog-based Filipino is widely understood and used in all domains of life.

## Languages of the Philippines

### *Regional languages*

In a country of thousands of islands, many different languages have evolved. There are various estimates about the number of Philippines languages, depending on the source. Ethnologue (2005), for example, reports that there are 171 living languages spoken by the different ethnolinguistic groups of the Philippines. Eight of these are considered major regional languages in different parts of the country. These are: 1) Bikol, 2) Cebuano, 3) Hiligaynon, 4) Ilokano or Iloko, 5) Kapampangan, 6) Pangasinan or Pangasinense 7) Tagalog, and 8) Waray or Samaranon. All of these regional languages have millions of speakers, as Table 5 shows.

**Table 5. Population of the Major Regional Languages of the Philippines.**

Tagalog	22,000,000
Cebuano	20,000,000
Ilokano/Iloko	7,700,000
Hiligaynon	7,000,000
Bicol	3,700,000
Waray/Samaranon	3,100,000
Kapampangan	2,400,000
Pangasinan or Pangasinense	1,540,000

The Philippine languages are further divided into subgroups. The first three groups are considered to be closely related to each other.

**The Northern Philippine languages**, such as Ilokano, Kapampangan, Pangasinense, and Sambal, are concentrated in northern and central Luzon. Some languages in Mindoro, such as Iraya and Tadyawan, are included in this group. The Yami language (also known as Tao of Orchid Island in Taiwan) is also a member of this group.

**The Meso Philippine languages** have perhaps the most speakers and are the most widespread, covering Central Luzon, the Visayas, and many parts of Mindanao. Certain languages spoken in Palawan and Mindoro, such as Tagbanwa, Palawano, and Hanunoo, constitute their own respective subgroups. The largest subgroup is the Central Philippine languages, which are composed of Tagalog, Bicol, Visayan languages such as Cebuano, Hiligaynon, and Waray-Waray, and the Mansakan languages.

**The Southern Philippines languages**, such as Maranao, Maguindanao, Manobo, and Subanun, are concentrated in Mindanao. Many Southern Philippine languages have been influenced by Malaysian, Indonesian, Sanskrit, and Arabic words.

The other three groups below are thought to be more distantly related to the previous three language groups.

**The Southern Mindanao languages** are languages such as Tboli and Blaan.

**The Sama-Bajaw languages** are found mainly in the Sulu Archipelago as well as parts of Borneo. Other languages in this group are Yakan and Sama. One language, Abaknon, is spoken on Capul Island near Samar, far from other Sama languages.

**The Sulawesi languages** have two representatives in the Philippines, Sangil and Sangir.

### **The national language**

The decision to have a national language dates back to the time of former President Manuel L. Quezon, who assumed the initiative and leadership in bringing about a national policy decision on this matter. He issued Executive Order 134 in 1937 proclaiming the adoption, development, and use of a national language. The National Assembly, the law-making body at that time, created the National Language Institute in 1936, which after due study recommended that Tagalog be the basis of the national language.

On August 13, 1959, the use of “Pilipino” as the official name of the national language was declared by Secretary Jose E Romero through Department of Education Order No. 7.



In the 1987 Constitution of the Republic of the Philippines, the law mandates that the national language of the Philippines is Filipino. The change of “P” to “F” was based on the alphabet developed by the Institute of National Language, which increased the number of letters from 20 to 28, including “F”. Filipino is widely used across the country, particularly in the urban centres. Filipino, as it evolves, incorporates vocabulary from the other major Philippine languages and non-local languages used in the Philippines, i.e. English, Arabic, and Spanish.

Arabic is not widely spoken in the Philippines, but there is a small number of Filipinos in the Administrative Region for Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) who are literate in Arabic for the purpose of reading the Qur’an. With the institutionalization of the *Madaris* schools by the Department of Education (DepED), Arabic is now learned by Filipino students.

## Current language-in-education policies

### *The legal basis*

The 1987 Constitution specifically provides that the “national language of the Philippines is Filipino and as it evolves, it shall be further developed and enriched on the basis of existing Philippine and other languages. For the purpose of communication and instruction, the official languages of the Philippines are Filipino and, until otherwise provided by law, English.”

Subsequently, Department Order No. 53 s. 1987 entitled “The 1987 Policy of Bilingual Education” was issued. Its aim is the achievement of competence in both Filipino and English. The policy statement emphasizes, moreover, that “the aspiration of the Filipino nation is to have its citizens possess skills in Filipino to enable them to perform their duties and responsibilities as Filipino citizens and in English in order to meet the needs of the country in the community of nations.” Within this context, the following have been identified as the goals of the bilingual education policy:

- 1) enhance learning through two languages to achieve quality education.
- 2) propagate Filipino as the language of literacy.
- 3) develop Filipino as a linguistic symbol of national unity and identity.
- 4) cultivate and elaborate Filipino as a language of scholarly discourse, i.e. continue its intellectualization.
- 5) maintain English as an international language for the Philippines and as a non-exclusive language of science and technology.

As defined in the implementing guidelines, bilingual education in the Philippines means the separate use of Filipino and English as media of instruction in different subject areas. Filipino is used as the medium of instruction in social studies, social sciences, music, arts, physical education, home economics, practical arts, and character education. English, on the other hand, is used as the medium of instruction in science, math, and technology.

This policy provides for the use of English and Filipino as media of instruction starting from Grade 1 in all schools. The use of the vernacular of the school's locality is prescribed as auxiliary to the media of instruction, but only when necessary to facilitate understanding of the concepts being taught in English, Filipino, or Arabic, as the case may be.

DECS<sup>17</sup> Order No. 11 s. 1987 was issued in pursuance to Section 3 of Republic Act No. 8190, known as "An Act Granting Priority to Residents of the Barangay, Municipality or City where the School is Located, in the Appointment or Assignment of Classroom Public School Teachers".

The Order provides guidelines to be followed in hiring teachers; it clearly states that priority shall be given to residents of the barangay<sup>18</sup> where the public elementary school is located. This allows the use of the local language, specifically where local culture should be enhanced among cultural minorities.<sup>19</sup>

On May 17, 2003, Executive Order No. 210 entitled "Establishing the Policy to Strengthen the Use of the English Language as a Medium of Instruction in the Educational System" was issued by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo. In pursuance to this Order, DepEd Memorandum No. 181 s. 2003 was disseminated to field staff.

The Order provides that "the English language will be used as a medium of instruction in the educational system to develop the aptitude, competence and proficiency of the students in the English language to maintain and improve their competitive edge in emerging and fast growing local and international industries, particularly in the area of Information and Communication Technology (ICT)."

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<sup>17</sup>DECS (Department of Education, Culture, and Sports) is the former name of the Department of Education.

<sup>18</sup>Barangay is the smallest local government unit in the Philippines.

<sup>19</sup>A commonly used term in the Philippines in reference to ethnolinguistic minorities.

## Implementation of the bilingual education policy

### *Early childhood education*

The two official languages, Filipino and English, are used as the media of instruction for five-year-old children in preschool education. These children have already developed their first language at home, though they have not learned it by formal instruction. They have acquired it informally from their family members and their interactions with adults. This is the language that the children use for basic communication from the earliest age; thus it may be considered as the child's thinking language.

The next dominant languages learned at this level are Filipino and English. In many instances, children from non-Tagalog areas learned these languages simultaneously, thus producing childhood bilingualism or multilingualism that emerges naturally through classroom activities in learning the communication skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. They also learned numeracy, sensory-perceptual, socio-emotional, motor, and creative skills in either Filipino or English.

Observations of teachers show that they predominantly use the local language in most lessons so that children, specifically in non-Tagalog areas, understand what to do. In many cases, the teachers translate the Filipino and English words into the local language. Likewise, children tend to answer in mixed languages, using the local language and Filipino or the local language and English (BEE, 2005).

### *Primary-level education*

At the primary level of education, Filipino children use Filipino as the medium of instruction in learning civics and culture in Grades 1-3, geography, history, and civics in Grades 4-6, Makabayan, which includes character education, music, arts, and physical education in Grades 1-6, home economics and livelihood education in Grades 4-6, and Filipino as a subject in all grade levels. On the other hand, children learn mathematics (Grades 1-6) and science (Grades 3-6) through English, and learn English as a subject of study at all grade levels.

Many teachers believe that the use of Filipino as the medium of instruction promotes oneness in thought as a nation and pride in being Filipino, preserves the cultural and national identity, enabling Filipinos to celebrate their commonalities as a people, and helps Filipinos understand each other even if they belong to other regions. It also promotes development of reading skills, because Filipino is the language of the mass media, to which most children have access.

Children have been observed to learn Filipino easier than English due to its regular orthography and because many children's mother tongues include some Filipino vocabulary. As a result, children generally enjoy Filipino literature.

The learning of English at this level is supported by most teachers and parents. Early exposure of children to the sounds (phonology and semantics) of the English language seems to promote familiarity. This is enhanced by educational programmes on radio and television as well as print materials, which are present in many environments. In classrooms, there are more reading materials in English than Filipino. But assessment results show that children do not fully master English skills in listening, speaking, reading, and writing targeted for the primary level.

There has been an increasing interest in using regional languages more in education. Thus, in the late 1990s, the Department of Education's Bureau of Elementary Education conducted a study known as the *Lingua Franca Education Project*. The project aimed to define and implement a national bridging programme to develop initial literacy. Through the bridging programme, an alternative curriculum in acquiring basic literacy and numeracy skills was implemented. The main goal was to make children functionally literate in their local language by using it as the medium of instruction. All subjects in Grade I were taught in the local language. Filipino was taught orally, but the initial reading stage (reading readiness and beginning reading) was taught in the local language. English was introduced as a subject of study in the second semester.

The project was first implemented in 1999 with the issue of DECS Memorandum No. 144 s. 1999, "*Lingua Franca Project*", and continued until 2003. Experimental and control schools were selected from every region. The schools were located in the poorest municipalities. The experimental schools were given the option of which language to use: Tagalog, Cebuano, or Ilocano.

The study showed that children who learned to read and write in their first language<sup>20</sup> before learning a second language were not only successful second-language learners but also excelled among their peers who were not taught in their first language. Reading in the first language developed self-confidence, and there was a smooth transfer of learning ability from the first language to the second language.

This study was corroborated by a study conducted under the Basic Education Reform Agenda (BESRA) in 2005. It showed that the abilities of Filipino children to transfer their literacy skills from Filipino to English were demonstrated with their word reading/decoding abilities. A lack of linguistic competence compromised English language performance, because it lacked a direct route to sentence comprehension (Department of Education, 2006).

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<sup>20</sup>Editors' comment: It is not clear here whether all learners were actually the first-language speakers of the three regional languages used in the experiment. However, it can be assumed that most were, and the results show some tangible benefits of the use of the learners' first language.

For some Muslim learners, the local or regional language at home was not used in school. They had little exposure to Filipino and English radio or television programmes and print media, and thus lacked proficiency in the use of Filipino or English. As a result, they felt discriminated against, and dropped out during the primary grades because they found it difficult to learn the two languages. This shows how the transition from a local language to Filipino and English at the beginning of elementary school is a learning barrier, not only for many Muslim learners but also for other learners in remote areas. It serves as a deterrent factor in continuing their schooling (USAID, 2007).



Language instruction in Philippine schools should, therefore, take such differences into consideration. English language and literacy instruction should integrate the acquisition of word reading, vocabulary, and story comprehension. Meaning should always be integrated with the more mechanical skill of decoding to ensure text-level meaning, which is better achieved among bilingual children. Filipino language and literacy instruction should focus more on the quicker acquisition of decoding skills to approximate their already advanced language abilities. This suggests that instruction in Filipino should address text-level skills at a faster rate than English instruction.

Since the Philippines is a multilingual nation and children have different first languages across the country, future studies should investigate whether the findings referred to in this paper are consistent with children whose first language is not Tagalog. It is likely that their performance in both English and Filipino will be consistent with the English-language data in the present study because they will be learning both Filipino and English literacy skills while they are acquiring oral skills in these two languages. Should such results be obtained, localization of first-language literacy should be considered, and the implementation of the Bilingual Education Policy across the country should be reviewed (Department of Education, 2006; Everatt, Smythe, Ocampo & Gyarmathy, 2004).

## Conclusion

With the current language-in-education policy in place, Filipino learners have better opportunities of becoming proficient in two languages, Filipino and English. The use of the mother tongue should be strengthened in the early years of education (Preschool, Grades 1 and 2), however, so that the development of critical thinking abilities may be strengthened. People in the academic world and other stakeholders in education are devising ways to use the mother tongue to facilitate the learning of second languages simultaneously. This approach could help Filipino learners preserve their own cultural and national identity as well as promote multilingualism to communicate within the country and with the rest of the world.



## Language and language-in-education policies and their implementation in Singapore

*Elizabeth S Pang*

### The national setting

Singapore has a multi-ethnic population and a diverse language environment. The resident population, comprising citizens and permanent residents, was about 3.6 million as of June 2005 (Ministry of Information, Communications and the Arts, 2006: 37). About 75.6 percent of the population is Chinese, 13.6 percent Malay, and 8.7 percent Indian, while 2.1 percent comprise other ethnic groups.

There are four official languages: Malay, Chinese (Mandarin), Tamil, and English, and the national language is Malay (Constitution of the Republic of Singapore, 1965). In daily life, however, English is the language of administration and the common language spoken by Singaporeans of various races. Mandarin is widely used among the Chinese population in place of other Chinese dialects,<sup>21</sup> such as Hokkien, Teochew, Cantonese, Hakka, Hainanese, and Foochow. Besides Tamil, other languages spoken by the Indian population include Malayalam, Punjabi, Telugu, Hindi, and Bengali.

The vernacular languages of Mandarin, Malay, and Tamil are important as the home languages of Singaporeans. Since the last population census in 2000, however, there has been an increase in the use of English as the predominant home language among all the major ethnic groups. Among the Malays, the better-educated showed a greater tendency to speak predominantly English at home, compared to five years before. Nonetheless, Malay remains as the principal home language of the Malays at all educational levels. Among the Chinese, Mandarin has become more popular as the predominant home language, while the use of Chinese dialects at home has declined. Although there has been a gradual shift towards speaking English at home, there was a greater tendency to switch to Mandarin in place of the Chinese dialects than to switch to English, at all educational levels. For the Indians, the increase in the use of English as the predominant home language has occurred mainly among those with secondary or lower educational qualifications. Among Indian university graduates, in contrast, the proportion using predominantly English declined. For this group, likely to be new immigrants, the proportion using Tamil at home increased and was close to the proportion using English at home in 2005.

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<sup>21</sup>Editors' comment: Many linguists consider different varieties of Chinese as separate languages. Chinese is a special case, however, as the writing system is not linked to the pronunciation of these varieties, and thus mutually unintelligible Chinese 'dialects', such as those listed above, share a mutually intelligible writing system.

Among the resident population, English is emerging as the language of the young, with more students, from primary school to university level, speaking English at home compared to the vernacular languages (Malay, Mandarin, Chinese dialects, and Tamil) between 2000 and 2005 (Ministry of Trade and Industry, 2001). There was a concomitant decline in the proportion of resident students speaking their vernacular languages at home.

## Education and language policies

Due to Singapore's lack of natural resources, education has always been a critical part of the country's development strategy. Singaporeans also accept the importance of education as a means to further themselves. Singapore's education system has gone through many changes and refinements over the last 40 years. The first twenty years, from self-government in 1959 to 1978, can be termed the survival-driven phase, with the top priorities being economic survival and nation-building. The focus thenceforth was on increasing the number of school places quickly by building schools at the rate of one per month and recruiting teachers *en masse*. The different vernacular language schools were amalgamated, and the national anthem and pledge were instituted to instil a common national identity.

Although there were Malay, Chinese, and Tamil-medium schools right up to the 1970s and even the 1980s, these schools faced falling enrolments as parents increasingly preferred to send their children to English-medium schools. By 1986, all schools were using English as the medium of instruction. Nonetheless, despite the popularity of English, the government instituted a bilingual policy in education very early on in the country's development in its efforts to build social cohesion and to maintain the linguistic and cultural roots of the main ethnic groups. Today, it remains a cornerstone of Singapore's education system.

### *Bilingual policy in education*

Singapore's bilingual policy requires all students to study both English and a mother tongue language<sup>22</sup> from the early years of primary education through to the secondary level (Primary 1 to Secondary 4/5, ages 7 to 16). English is the principal medium of instruction in schools, except for the teaching of civics, moral education, and the mother tongue languages.

The study of an official mother tongue language (Malay, Chinese, or Tamil) is compulsory for students in Singapore (Ministry of Education, 2007). A mother tongue language is one of the compulsory examination subjects for the Primary School Leaving Examination (PSLE) and the General Certificate of Education (GCE) 'Normal' (N), 'Ordinary' (O), and 'Advanced' (A) Level Examinations. From Secondary 1 onwards, however, students who face exceptional difficulties in coping with Malay, Chinese, or Tamil may request to study Malay Language

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<sup>22</sup>Editors' comment: In Singapore the term "mother tongue language" refers to a compulsory school subject which teaches the three other official languages in addition to English.



Syllabus B, Chinese Language Syllabus B, or Tamil Language Syllabus B. Syllabus B curricula are easier, but serve the important function of ensuring that students who struggle with learning Malay, Chinese, or Tamil still have opportunities to learn one of these languages at a more manageable level.

To underscore the importance of learning Malay, Chinese, or Tamil, there are mother tongue language requirements to be met for admission to pre-university institutions and universities in Singapore. Under specific circumstances, students may be exempted from studying an official mother tongue language or may be allowed to study a non-Tamil Indian language or an approved foreign/Asian language *in lieu* of an official mother tongue language at one or more of the national examinations. To do so, these students must obtain the necessary approval from the Ministry of Education.

At the primary level, foreign students with one or both parents not of Malay, Chinese, or Indian race may apply for exemption from studying an official mother tongue language. At the secondary level, students wishing to study an approved foreign language (French/German/Japanese), an Asian language (Arabic/Burmese/Thai) or a non-Tamil Indian language (Bengali/Gujarati/Hindi/Punjabi/Urdu) *in lieu* of Malay, Chinese, or Tamil must also apply to the Ministry of Education for permission to do so. Parents or guardians are responsible for their children's tuition pertaining to non-Tamil Indian languages and Asian languages.



Ministry of Education guidelines in the Principals' Handbook stipulate that principals should ensure that the language policy is strictly adhered to and that no student is allowed to drop Malay, Chinese, or Tamil unless written approval has been obtained from the Ministry.

### **Compulsory education**

Compulsory education was implemented fairly recently in Singapore, commencing on 1 January 2003. The objectives are two-fold: first, to ensure that Singaporean children acquire a core knowledge that will provide a strong foundation for further education and training; and second, to give the nation's children a common educational experience that will help to build national identity and cohesion. Even with the introduction of compulsory education, however, the responsibility of sending children to school and ensuring that they attend school still lies with parents. The community may play an active role to help them, if necessary.

With these policies in place, the proportion of residents aged 15 and over who are literate in two or more languages increased from 45 percent in 1990 to 56 percent in 2000 (Ministry of Trade and Industry, 2001). The proportion of the resident population aged 15 and over who are literate increased from 92.5% in 2000 to 95.0% in 2005 (Ministry of Trade and Industry, 2006: 11).

### **Implementation of language policies in education**

Singapore's bilingual policy in education was instituted soon after independence in 1965 and has been in place for about forty years. While many changes have taken place in the education system, including policies, education structure, and curriculum, this policy has remained largely unchanged in its essence to this day.

As Singapore has a centralized education system, there are monitoring mechanisms as well as resources dedicated to the implementation of this policy. Yet one of the major challenges faced by Singapore's students is the demanding nature of learning two languages from the early years of primary education. For most primary school students, at least one of their home languages will be used in school because provision is made for the teaching of the four official languages. In a small number of cases, and particularly for recent immigrants, neither English nor the official mother tongue languages are spoken at home. For the vast majority of students, however, the challenges they face in learning two languages stem from the fact that the standard variety that is taught in school is often different from the colloquial variety that is spoken at home. Furthermore, at least for the first four years of primary education, all students are expected to learn to read, write, and speak two languages in their standard form. From Primary 5 onwards, a small proportion of less than 20% may opt to study one language, usually the mother tongue language, as an oral language only.

The most pressing issue for the continued implementation of the bilingual policy is, however, in motivating students to learn their mother tongue well, to be enthused about learning it, and, at the same time, to maintain high standards in

both spoken and written English. As more and more students struggle in learning their mother tongue as well as English, it is critical that the teaching and learning of the four official languages be reviewed.

### **Mother tongue and English language reviews**

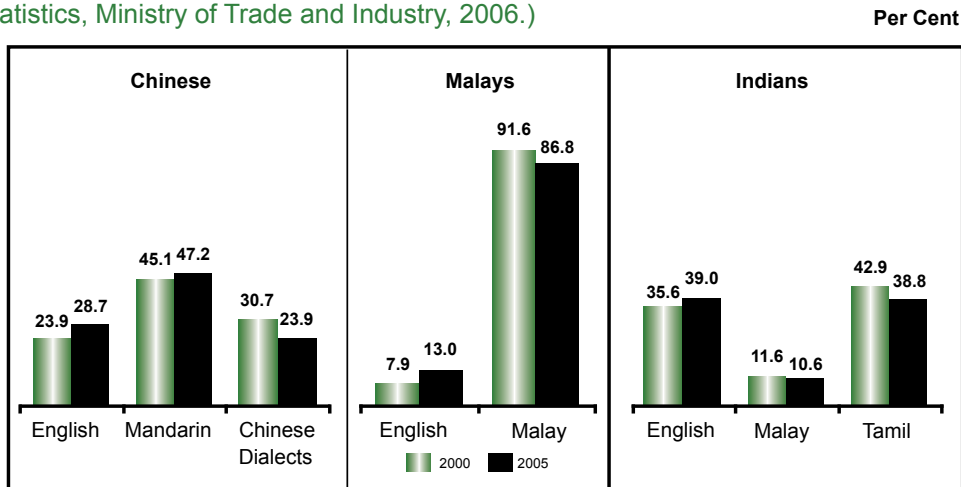
Between 2004 and 2005, major reviews of the Chinese, Malay, and Tamil language curricula were undertaken by the Ministry of Education. The impetus for these reviews was the changing language profile of the population. Between 2000 and 2005, more Singaporeans were speaking English as a predominant home language among all the ethnic groups (see Figure 2).

In February 2004, a committee was formed to conduct a comprehensive review of the teaching and learning of Chinese in Singapore schools. The Chinese Language Curriculum and Pedagogy Review Committee consulted widely in the course of its work. Feedback and views were gathered from Chinese language professionals, educationists, students, parents, and principals, as well as individuals and community organisations. This was complemented by a comprehensive survey of about 10,000 participants, school visits, and the observations of a team of overseas consultants. The recommendations of the Committee were subsequently presented in a White Paper and debated in Parliament.

This was followed in quick succession by the setting up of the Malay Language and Tamil Language Curriculum and Pedagogy Review Committees in December 2004. Both the Malay and Tamil Language Committees also consulted extensively with stakeholders, i.e. educationists, students, parents, and community organisations. All three Committees acknowledged the challenges posed by the shift in language use among Singaporeans, particularly the young and upwardly mobile.

To complete the cycle of reviews, an English Language Curriculum and Pedagogy Review was carried out in 2006, including public consultation. It was the first time that public feedback was actively sought during the review of the English language syllabus.

**Figure 2. Resident Population Aged 5 Years and Over, by Ethnic Group and Language Most Frequently Spoken at Home** (Reproduced from Department of Statistics, Ministry of Trade and Industry, 2006.)



A fundamental and pragmatic principle underlying all of the language reviews is that the way the languages are taught must respond to and anticipate changes in the environment. The environment refers both to the changing home language environment of Singaporeans as well as the wider regional and global environment. Another fundamental tenet is that English serves as the common language, or *lingua franca*, among Singaporeans, and facilitates inter-ethnic communication. It is the language of global business, commerce, and technology and will remain so for the foreseeable future. Hence, bilingualism in English and a mother tongue language remains an imperative for Singapore.

### **Chinese language review and recommendations**

The main aim of the Chinese language review was to stimulate students' interest in the language and motivate them to use it long after they leave school (Ministry of Education, 2004). A key challenge is to adopt an approach that is sufficiently differentiated and customized so that all students of Chinese ethnicity, regardless of their home language background, are able to have access to the Chinese curriculum and develop a love for the language as well as competency in using it to communicate in various settings. For those who are able to master the language, it is imperative to develop their capabilities to the fullest.

The broad objective of using Chinese to transmit traditional culture and values is still relevant, but it should be achieved in a flexible and natural way that will appeal to students' interest and imagination. The main recommendations of the Committee are:

- 1) Adopt a modular approach to the Chinese curriculum at the primary level.
- 2) Place more emphasis on the practical use of Chinese for communication.
- 3) Provide more engaging and relevant instructional materials.
- 4) Enhance the learning of Chinese through the use of information technology.
- 5) Review the examination format to reduce memorization and rote-learning.

- 6) Augment recruitment of Chinese teachers and enhance the attractiveness of teaching Chinese as a career.
- 7) Create more opportunities for students to use Chinese in school contexts.
- 8) Involve the community and media in creating more opportunities to use Chinese outside of school.

### ***Malay language review and recommendations***

The Malay language is Singapore's national language as well as an important regional language. For the Malay community, the learning of Malay is critical for the transmission of cultural knowledge, identity, and values. Keeping the language alive is essential to Singapore's multi-racial identity, and it further equips Singaporeans to seize opportunities in a fast-changing region (Ministry of Education, 2005a).

The main aim of the Malay language review is to ensure that the Malay language and culture are preserved and enriched by the Malay community. A language and culture that are thriving and constantly enriched will contribute further to Singapore's distinctiveness and identity as an Asian society.

The recommendations of the Malay language review are guided by the overall vision of Arif Budiman, that is, the learned person who contributes to society. The main recommendations are:

- 1) Provide a greater focus on the development of strong oral skills among students.
- 2) Use differentiated instruction to cater to Malay students with varied home language backgrounds and abilities.
- 3) Revise the Malay language syllabus to articulate clearly the desired learning outcomes.
- 4) Focus on developing engaging instructional materials and the use of information technology to enhance learning.
- 5) Revise examination requirements to reflect curriculum changes.
- 6) Expand existing Malay language programmes to encourage more students to study Malay more deeply.
- 7) Enhance pre- and in-service teacher training programmes to deepen teachers' knowledge of Malay literature, history, and culture.
- 8) Engage community organisations and the media in encouraging a high standard of spoken Malay.

### ***Tamil language review and recommendations***

The purpose of the Tamil language review is to ensure that Tamil remains a living language among future generations of Tamil Singaporeans and a vibrant part of Singapore's identity (Ministry of Education, 2005b). Achieving this vision will require a fundamental shift in the way Tamil is taught in schools. The Tamil language is diglossic,<sup>23</sup> with a formal version used in both speech and writing and a spoken version used in less formal interactions. Formal Tamil is used widely in Tamil language classrooms and is the form used for oral examinations. This has led to students, especially those from English-speaking homes, not being comfortable using Tamil to communicate in everyday settings where spoken Tamil is the norm. The following recommendations have thus been made:

- 1) Position spoken Tamil as part of the Tamil language curriculum.
- 2) Adopt differentiated instruction, especially in the first few years of primary instruction.
- 3) Use engaging pedagogy to promote greater interaction among students in the classroom.
- 4) Expand the time dedicated to learning the Tamil alphabet from 1.25 to 2 years.
- 5) Improve instructional materials by incorporating Singaporean content.
- 6) Develop supplementary reading materials to address the current lack of interesting reading materials.
- 7) Shift towards the use of spoken Tamil in oral examinations.

Similar to the Chinese and Malay language review committees, the Tamil language review committee also recommended the enhancement of teacher training and various ways of engaging community organizations and the media in promoting a Tamil-speaking environment.

### *English language review and recommendations*

While English is the medium of instruction in all Singaporean schools and is used widely outside the school, the current standard of English needs to be enhanced (Ministry of Education, 2006). Language and communication demands have increased considerably with Singapore's growth as an open, knowledge-based economy and with the development of new service industries. Similar to the mother tongue language reviews, the English language review also focused on making changes and refinements in curriculum, pedagogy, instructional materials, assessment, and teacher training.

The new English language curriculum to be introduced from 2010 aims to build a strong foundation in grammar and spoken English and to enrich language learning through the use of engaging and age-appropriate materials for reading and writing for all students. Teacher training will be strengthened through the inclusion of upgraded content in pre-service and in-service courses.

## **Conclusions**

The Singapore Government has accepted the recommendations of all the language review committees and has dedicated necessary resources to implement the proposed changes. The various recommendations will take some time to be fully implemented, notably recommendations pertaining to changes to the syllabi, instructional materials, and national examinations. Some of these, such as changes to examination requirements, have to be carefully studied and pilot-tested. Curriculum planners and developers are currently working on the

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<sup>23</sup>Diglossia refers to a language with two distinct forms, a formal variety and an informal variety. These forms have very clear usage patterns and users are expected to know which form to use for particular occasions.

new curriculum materials as well as studying the impact of the initial stages of implementation. For the new modular Chinese language curriculum, studies have shown encouraging results. For Malay, new initiatives have been announced to encourage more non-Malay students to study Malay as a third language through the Malay Special Programme and conversational Malay lessons. For Tamil, more Tamil language centres have been set up and greater opportunities to study Higher Tamil have been provided. The new English language curriculum will be implemented in 2010, while the outcome of the changes to the syllabus can only be determined later.

The current changes do not represent a final solution to the challenges of implementing bilingualism and biliteracy in education. New ideas and new technologies will emerge, as will new findings about effective pedagogy and educational practices. To keep pace with a changing world, the ways in which languages are to be taught and learnt will have to be constantly reviewed and evaluated.



## Language policy and practice in public schools in Thailand<sup>24</sup>

*Busaba Prapasapong*

### The national setting

The purpose of this section is to present basic data on the population and languages of Thailand, and to discuss the significance of the Thai language, Thai language policy, and the variety of languages in Thai public education.

Thailand is located in the heart of mainland Southeast Asia, one of the linguistically most diverse areas of the world. To its north lies the Union of Myanmar and the Lao PDR; to its east, the Lao PDR and Cambodia; to its west, the Andaman Sea and Myanmar; and to its south, the Gulf of Thailand and Malaysia. Thailand comprises 4 regions with 76 provinces, of which 27 provinces border neighbouring countries.

The total population of Thailand in 2006 was 65,232,000. By religion, most of the population are Buddhist, and the rest are Muslims and Christians. The total number of languages in Thailand is over 70 (Ethnologue, 2005). These languages belong to various language families. A research project conducted by Mahidol University on mapping languages of Thailand (Premsrirat et al, B.E. 2547<sup>25</sup>) reveals that there are many different ethnolinguistic groups in the country. This research shows that the Thai population can be divided among five language families.

**The Tai Language Family** comprises twenty-four languages. Some languages (including Central Thai) in this family are mainly used in Thailand. Tai languages are also spoken in other countries, such as the Lao PDR, the Union of Myanmar, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, the People's Republic of China, and some villages in Northern Malaysia. In Thailand, about 92 percent of the population speaks a language belonging to the Tai family. The most widely used language is Central Thai, followed by Northeastern Thai (Lao), Northern Thai (Kham Muang or Yuan), and Southern Thai.

**The Austro-Asiatic Language Family** comprises twenty-three main groups. It is generally believed that speakers of these languages are the original inhabitants of Southeast Asia. This language family is very valuable in terms of history, trans-cultural relations, and an understanding of various peoples in

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<sup>24</sup> The facts presented in this paper are based on various documents issued by the Thai Ministry of Education and other government agencies. In cases where information is from other sources, the specific source is cited.

<sup>25</sup> Thailand uses the Thai solar calendar to indicate years according to the Buddhist Era (B.E.). To calculate the more commonly used Julian and Gregorian calendar years (A.D.) in what Thais call the Christian Era (C.E.), one must subtract 543 years from the B.E. figure. For example, 2547 B.E. is 2004 A.D. or C.E.



Thailand and other countries in this region. The branch of the Austro-Asiatic Language Family found in Thailand is the Mon-Khmer branch, and Mon-Khmer languages are used by about 4.3 percent of the population, including Khmer, Mon, Kui (Kui/Suai), Laver (Lawa/Lua), and Tong Luang.

**The Sino-Tibetan Language Family** comprises twenty-one main groups, such as seven varieties of Chinese. They live mostly in urban areas throughout the country, except for the Haw Chinese, who live in northern Thailand. Tibeto-Burman languages (a branch of this family) are used by a large group of people in the northern parts of East Asia next to China. In Thailand, Tibeto-Burman languages are used in the northern and western parts of the country by about 3.1 percent of the population. Sino-Tibetan languages include Min Nan Chinese, Karen, Pakayor/Pole, Bisu, Akha, Lahu, and Lisu.

**The Austronesian or Malayo-Polynesian Language Family** comprises three main groups. People speaking these languages are mostly indigenous people who live on the islands of Southeast Asia, for example, in Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines. Austronesian languages are also used in Thailand, mostly in the south. About 3 percent of the total population speaks Austronesian languages, such as Pattani Malay, Moken, and Urak Lawoi’.

**The Hmong-Mien or Miao-Yao Language Family** comprises two main groups. The people speaking these languages live in the northern part of East Asia and in northern Thailand. About 0.3 percent of the total Thai population speaks languages such as Hmong/Maew and Mien/Yao.

## The roles of different languages in Thailand

Former Prime Minister General Surayud Chulanont used to identify the Thai people in a way broader than that based upon the ability to speak Thai. According to him, the Thai people included everyone living in the various regions of the country, using different languages, and having different traditions, religions, folklore, and beliefs. Whether Thais live on hills or plains, or even along the borders of the country, they are known as Thai by being kind, generous, and friendly.

The Ministry of Education has classified the languages of Thailand into three main categories:

- 1) **Standard Thai**, which is the standard, official, and legal language. Standard Thai is used for communication at the national level, to link the population of every region and all ethnic groups and promote mutual understanding. Standard Thai is also used in official activities at the national level, in textbooks, at all official occasions, and in mass communication, be it radio, television, or print media. Standard Thai was developed from the language of the well-educated and influential political elite in Ayudhaya, which was the capital of Thailand a few hundred years ago (Smalley, 1994).

Thai orthography was developed from southern Indian scripts. Present-day Standard Thai has been influenced by various ancient languages, and the languages of the people who have come to trade with Thailand over the centuries. These languages include Pali, Sanskrit, Khmer, Mon, Chinese, Arabic, and English.

- 2) **Local/regional Thai languages**, which are different from Standard Thai and are used mainly by the people in each region as the means of communal and regional communication. For example, Northern Thai (Kham Muang) is used in the Upper North, Northeastern Thai (Lao-E-sarn) in the Northeast, Southern Thai (Pak Tai) in the South, and Central Thai in central Thailand. These regional languages may vary in pronunciation from one province to the next.
- 3) **Local community languages**, which are spoken in smaller areas. Languages in this category can be further divided into various groups as follows:
  - **Ethnic languages**, which mostly belong to the Tai language family and are spoken outside of Thailand, but whose speakers have migrated to Thailand for various reasons, such as politics, war, or to find employment. These languages include various Lo languages and Mon of central Thailand.
  - **Market and urban languages**, which are various Chinese languages spoken in urban areas of various provinces, and Vietnamese, spoken in the Northeast.
  - **Languages of border areas**, including various northern “hill tribe” languages, Mon and Karen used in western Thailand, Northern Khmer, Kui in the East and Northeast, and Pattani Malay in the South.
  - **Enclave languages** are languages with a small number of speakers who also use other languages of the surrounding larger language groups. These languages include Chong, Kasong, Sumray, Choo-ung, Mlabri, Kensui (Sakai), Nyahkur, So (Tawueng), Lua (La-Wuae), Lawa (Gong), Umpee, Bisu, Urak Lawoi’, and Moken.

Premrirat et al (B.E. 2547) suggest a hierarchy of languages in Thailand from the national down to regional and local community levels (see figure 3).

**Figure 3. Language Hierarchy in Thailand (Source: Premrirat et al, B.E. 2547)**



## Language use in Thai education

### *Education policies*

The Ministry of Education has played a vital role in managing the education and development of Thai youth and the country's population as a whole. Currently, there are over 30,000 schools employing about 700,000 school administrators, teachers, and related personnel. The school-age population is about 23 million, and 15 million are undertaking basic education. Of this number, 2,497,928 are at the preschool level, 5,715,267 are in primary school, and 4,596,156 are in high school. This school population also includes 3,075,341 disadvantaged children and children from minority groups.

For nearly one hundred years, Standard Thai has been used as the standard, official language by the government.<sup>26</sup> Although the Ministry of Education has never prohibited the use of local languages,<sup>27</sup> the fact is that some local languages have gradually died out or become less popular. The use of local languages has decreased, while the Ministry has increasingly promoted the use of Standard Thai. The Ministry has urged, moreover, all Thai children to be competent in Standard Thai, and has promoted its correct usage.

As the Ministry has never prohibited the use of local languages, some schools teach local languages as additional subjects. Sometimes they use their local language as the medium of instruction, together with Standard Thai, as they deem appropriate. One practical example is that of a project by the Office of the Primary Education Commission, Ministry of Education, on teaching techniques through language acceptance. The project, in effect since 1987, teaches Thai as a second language for kindergarten students in five provinces in the South. The project has been extended to more schools up until 2001.

In addition, the Office of the Basic Education Commission and other educational organizations in several provinces have rewarded teachers who use local languages and folklore in education management. Many teachers have been successful in using local languages in learning. Schools are allowed to utilize local know-how, which may include the local language as a supplementary course of study, but there is no obligation to do so.

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<sup>26</sup>Editors' note: It is not clear here (and in many other studies) whether there is a document or a policy stipulating Standard Thai as the official and national language. Therefore, many scholars refer to Standard Thai as the de facto official and national language of the Kingdom of Thailand.

<sup>27</sup>Editors' note: Though the use of local languages in education is not prohibited, it is not always encouraged by local and provincial education authorities. In some cases, these authorities have acted in ways that made local language use difficult or impossible. A case in point is the UNESCO-sponsored NFE pilot project in Om Koi District of Chiang Mai Province, which was closed down in 2007.

Provisions appearing in the 1999 National Education Act (Ministry of Education - Thailand, B.E. 2542) have set forth the principles and guidelines of education reform, and the agencies concerned must implement them accordingly. Though there are no details in the Act on the use of local languages in learning, there are several statements pointing to the crucial principle of education management, which involves people, family, community, organizations, and other social organizations, and focuses on the learner. Students should be encouraged to develop naturally to their full potential, and acquire education suitable to their background, taking into account local wisdom, which includes language. Local wisdom and technology can serve community development, address community problems, and successfully generate knowledge in children and youth.

### *Extension of educational opportunities*

Millions of people who are not Thai citizens reside in Thailand. These foreign populations, together with the residents of refugee camps, are allowed to attend school in order to prepare themselves for returning to their home country or for continuing their lives in Thailand. The Ministry of Education believes that a variety of ethnic groups and languages is a good sign, and that the nation should try to make use of this diversity in light of its economic, social, political, and educational value.

Accordingly, strategic policies and guidelines have been set to expand the school system and enhance the variety of educational facilities that can cater to the backgrounds and capabilities of learners and local communities, in line with the legal rights of children. The Ministry also offers opportunities for many minority language groups living in urban, remote, or border areas to learn and use educational services available in Standard Thai.

### *Obstacles and limitations revealed by recently conducted surveys*

The Ministry of Education has been highly successful in helping children and youth from all ethnolinguistic groups, with or without identification cards, to receive basic education from kindergarten through to Grade 12. The quality of education available has not, however, been able to keep pace with the growth in demand, and implementation of the National Education Act and the Basic Curriculum has faced difficulties. Two surveys highlighting these issues have been conducted recently. They were:

- 1) a survey of learning achievements of students in various remote and border areas, and
- 2) a survey of Standard Thai literacy skills of students who finished Primary Grade 2 in 2006.

The findings of both surveys are similar.

The first survey showed that children in remote areas (whose competency in Standard Thai was not as high as that of other Thai students) achieved only 50% of what the generality of Thai students did. The second literacy survey was conducted by the Thai Language Institute, Bureau of Academic Affairs and Educational Standards, in the 2006 academic year. About 637,004 students from all education areas were surveyed, and it was found that about 12.45% were illiterate. In addition, in 10 education areas, over 25% of the students were unable to read and write Standard Thai.



From 2006 to 2007, the Office of the Basic Education Commission conducted another survey by collecting data from various schools in the country's border areas. This survey showed that the problem is linked to the fact that teachers and students use different languages. The teacher is familiar with using one language as the medium of instruction, but that language differs from the local language used by the students. The inference from this is that many students in border and remote areas do not understand what the teachers are teaching.

Although many stakeholders accept that the teachers' and students' languages are different, and that this fact affects the overall national education outcome, most people are still familiar with a single education system, namely that using only Standard Thai as the language of instruction. Pedagogical processes that use local languages in instruction are still new to teachers and most educational personnel. It should also be noted that the language of instruction is only one of the reasons for low learning achievement.

### *Language maintenance and bilingual pilot projects*

The Thai Ministry of Education sees all languages spoken in Thailand as important, since they represent a world heritage. Meanwhile, local languages are losing their significance in Thai society. The same is actually happening to Standard Thai, due to the fact that people, especially children and youth, mix their Thai with foreign words. This is a result of globalization, which has helped the world's leading languages penetrate all societies, even remote areas, through radio, television, print media, and the internet. Consequently, the use of small local and community languages is decreasing, and many languages are likely to die along with their users. Despite these developments, the Ministry of Education has, since 2005, supported experimental pilot projects that use some local languages in learning. These projects utilize various approaches to bilingual education, and they use local languages in parallel with Standard Thai.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>28</sup>The section on Thailand in Chapter 5 of this volume elaborates on the Thai experience of using local languages in bilingual education.

## Conclusion

The Thai Ministry of Education firmly believes that language is a key factor in determining our identity and sense of belonging to a community, a society, and a nation, as well as a mean to enhance learning achievement, especially among children and youth in remote and border areas. All agencies of the Ministry of Education have pursued this goal by seeking to expand educational opportunities and quality of learning for all children, both those who speak Thai and those who speak other languages. Moreover, support has been given for all learners to acquire new knowledge by using their own local and traditional wisdom.

In Thai education, there is considerable opportunity to use local languages in parallel with Standard Thai, and to apply bilingual education to the teaching and learning processes, especially in remote and border areas, subject to the actual conditions of each area. Pilot bilingual education projects have been implemented in the southern and western border areas of Thailand. The use of local languages, in addition to Standard Thai, in the learning process is considered an innovative approach. It is expected that continual and persistent effort, together with keen teachers and education personnel, will result in educational development and greater learning achievements. Most importantly, using bilingual education will help encourage the new generation to grow up as quality citizens, proficient in many languages, able to use Standard Thai well, and able to use foreign languages to communicate with people from other countries. The Thai Ministry of Education acknowledges, however, that successful education reform requires time and collaborative support from education personnel, related organizations, local communities, and all parties concerned.



## Language-in-education policies in Vietnam<sup>29</sup>

*Bui Thi Ngoc Diep and Bui Van Thanh*

### National setting

There are fifty-four ethnic groups in Vietnam, the largest one of them being the Kinh, i.e. the Vietnamese, making up about 86 percent of the total population. The remaining fifty-three ethnic groups are minorities comprising about 14 percent of the total population. The national language of Vietnam is Vietnamese. The fifty-three ethnic minorities still use their own languages<sup>30</sup> in communication, and accept Vietnamese as the national language as well as the language of wider communication. There are eighteen ethnic minority groups with a population of more than 100,000. The rest have smaller populations.

Being well aware of the role language plays in the development of culture and society, the Vietnamese government has always respected and protected the linguistic development of all ethnic groups. Its policies are for the development of not only Vietnamese but also minority languages. The language policies of Vietnam focus on the following three points:

- 1) Respect for the equality of languages.
- 2) Support for ethnic minority peoples to promote their languages and cultures.
- 3) Encouragement for ethnic minority people to learn Vietnamese.

The realization of these above-mentioned points is clearly seen in the management of language in education. Languages used in education are identified with two functions: educational activities, and promoting equality in education. Vietnamese is used for the first function and minority languages are used for the second.

### Important policy statements and documents

The medium of instruction in schools and other educational institutions is stipulated explicitly in the Education Law of 2005:

Vietnamese is the official language used in schools and other educational institutions. (Education Law, 2005: Article 7)

<sup>29</sup>For factual information, this paper draws mainly from the following English language sources: Benson, 2006; Kosonen, 2004; and RCEME, 2005.

<sup>30</sup>Editors' note: Many linguists, Vietnamese as well as foreign, generally disagree with the figure of 53 ethnic minorities. They think that the figure underestimates the linguistic diversity present in the country. Ethnologue (2005) for example, lists 102 languages in Vietnam. The Vietnamese data presented in the Ethnologue is partly based on thorough language surveys done in collaboration with Vietnamese and foreign linguists. Similar data is available at the Vietnamese Institute of Linguistics, for example.

Regarding the use of languages to promote equality, the Education Law declares:

The State shall create favourable conditions for ethnic minority people to learn their spoken and written language in order to preserve and promote ethnic cultural identity, and to enable ethnic minority students to learn subject materials in schools and other institutions. The teaching and learning of the spoken and written ethnic minority languages will be implemented by the government's decision.

(Education Law, 2005: Article 7)

Under the Constitution and the Education Law, the Vietnamese government has also issued Decrees, Decisions, and Circulars to concretize the contents of the Constitution and the Education Law. Noteworthy among those important legal texts is Decision No.153/CP (20 August 1969) prescribing the use of languages at various levels of the national education system, including general schools, kindergartens, and literacy classes. This Decision affirms the use of ethnic minority languages in culture, literature, and mass media, as well as in administrative documents of local and government offices:

Wherever ethnic minorities have writing systems, ethnic minority language writing systems are to be used to eliminate illiteracy and provide continuing education. Wherever people do not know or know only a little of the national language, the ethnic minority language is to be taught together with the national language in primary [continuing education] classes. . . . Wherever the people wish to and can learn in the national language, the national language should be taught in the literacy and continuing education courses, but explanations must be given in the ethnic minority language to help learners understand more quickly and grasp firmly what they have learned, and at the same time the writing systems of their mother tongue should also be taught, so that they can read books and newspapers written in their mother tongue. . . . The ethnic minority languages should be taught together with the national language in kindergartens and primary schools and children should be given opportunity to become familiar with the national language as early as possible. In secondary schools, the national language is a focal point, and at the same time, the ethnic minority language is taught as a subject.

(Decision No.153/CP, 20<sup>th</sup> August, 1969)

Subsequently, Decision No.53/CP (22-2-1980) prescribed the development and use of ethnic minority languages in education. The Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) also issued Circular No.1/GDDT (3-2-1997), which provides for the teaching and learning of ethnic minority languages. This Circular explicitly stipulates priorities, subject allocation, and teaching and learning organization, and identifies the level of teaching and learning for each language (which is different for languages written in orthographies based on the Roman script and orthographies employing 'ancient' non-Roman scripts, such as Cham and Khmer). Also important in this Decision is the scope of management for teaching minority languages:

The ethnic minority curricula must be approved by the MOET's Scientific Council and officially issued. All ethnic minority language textbooks and other teaching and learning materials must be beautifully, colourfully and attractively printed and distributed free.

(Circular No.1/GDDT, 3<sup>rd</sup> February, 1997)



## Implementation of policies

The Vietnamese viewpoint is that the development and relations of languages in Vietnam are very diverse due to historical developments. Given its heritage from the past, Vietnam believes that all nationalities, no matter what size of population, have the right to favourable conditions for protecting, preserving, and developing their own languages in ways that maintain ethnic complexity and unite the Vietnamese nation in its diversity.

Over the years, Vietnam has used three education models that include national and minority languages. The first model divides teaching into two separate stages (see table 6). In Stage 1 (Grades 1, 2, and 3), a minority language is used as the sole medium of instruction, and Vietnamese is introduced in Grade 3. In Stage 2 (Grades 4 and 5), Vietnamese is used as the medium of instruction to convey the national curriculum. This model was applied for the Thai, Hmong, and Tay-Nung languages in Son La, Lai Chau, Lao Cai, Nghia Lo, and the autonomous Northern regions in the late 1950s and early 1960s. In the second model, the minority language is taught as a subject (see table 7). Languages using a non-Roman script are taught from Grade 1 to Grade 5, and languages using a Roman script from Grade 3 to Grade 5. The third model used in Vietnam is mother tongue-based bilingual education (see table 8). In this model, the minority language is used as a medium of instruction in the early grades (Grades 1 and 2), and Vietnamese and a minority language are taught as subjects in all grades. Vietnamese is gradually introduced as a medium of instruction from Grade 3. Both languages are used as media of instruction thereafter.

**Table 6. Education Model 1, with Vietnamese and a Minority Language as Media of Instruction**

Grade 5	Vietnamese instruction
Grade 4	
Grade 3	Minority language instruction
Grade 2	
Grade 1	

**Table 7. Education Model 2, with Vietnamese as the Medium of Instruction and the Minority Language as a Subject of Study**

Grade 5	Vietnamese instruction	15-20% local language as a subject
Grade 4		
Grade 3		
Grade 2		
Grade 1		

**Table 8. Education Model 3, with Vietnamese and a Minority Language as Media of Instruction**

Grade 5	
Grade 4	
Grade 3	
Grade 2	
Grade 1	

The third approach described above suits human language development, which starts with the mother tongue, while the acquisition of the second language is based on a strong foundation in the mother tongue. Vietnamese scientists are very familiar with the theory of bilingual education and the role of the mother tongue in mental development and personality education. Everyone agrees with the theory developed by Noam Chomsky, i.e. when born, people have certain basic language abilities and are able to adapt them to any given language in the world. Children can soon form sentences in the language with which they are familiar from their home and community. Vietnamese scientists understand that although a person can speak many languages, he/she may not be able to express his/her deep feelings in languages which are not his/her mother tongue. Linguists and educators in Vietnam agree that people learn to read and write a second language more quickly if they learn reading and writing first in their home language. This means that mother tongue-based bilingual learning is quicker and more effective than learning in a medium that is not the learner's first language.

In Vietnam, however, many ethnic groups often live together with other groups in the same villages and communes. As a result, school classes often have students from various ethnic groups. This is a barrier to implementation of the third model of bilingual education described above. Many Vietnamese teachers are competent in minority languages, but they can only listen, speak, and communicate orally. There are still large numbers of ethnic minority teachers who cannot write their mother tongues. For both students and teachers, therefore, it is not appropriate to implement mother tongue-based bilingual education. In many minority areas, meanwhile, in spite of the fact that Vietnamese is the second language of minority students, it is a language that they have learned early by natural means. Also, many children already have had exposure to Vietnamese through the mass media and other ways before entering school. Vietnamese is relatively familiar to them. Many minority students live in multilingual environments, comprising both minority languages and Vietnamese. Many communities thus consider the mother tongue as an important language that they respect, but one which needs to be learned only at home. When they enter school, they want to learn in Vietnamese. Some minority children learn about their traditional culture through Vietnamese-language materials.

Vietnam has been practising bilingual education, featuring minority languages in addition to Vietnamese, for over fifty years. The teaching of minority languages in Vietnam has taken into account the differences and special features of various minority languages, such as prefixes, midfixes, and suffixes in some Mon-Khmer languages, or tones in Sino-Tibetan or Hmong-Mien languages. Over the past ten years, cultural education has been integrated into language teaching as well. Many fine aspects of spiritual and material culture, and traditional literature such as proverbs, sayings, traditional songs, legends, and epics of ethnic groups, are used as the basis of quality teaching materials. In Vietnam, bilingual education employs and respects the traditional cultures of the minorities. This has been a good way to produce more materials for bilingual education programmes.

Dialects and local languages are a sensitive issue in Vietnam.<sup>31</sup> J'rai, for example, has five dialects, namely Chor, Hdrung, Arap, Mthur, and Tbulan. Bahnar's dialects comprise Tolo, Goler, Rongao,<sup>32</sup> Krem, and Golong. Similar phenomena can be observed with other languages as well. Vietnamese educators deal with this situation by selecting the most popular dialect as the basic language or language of wider communication.<sup>33</sup> Other dialects are provided as needed. This is a way to help minority languages flourish and, as a result, people better understand each other. Vietnamese experience shows that dialect barriers can be overcome gradually – a lesson that Vietnam can contribute to mother tongue education in other parts of the world.

In order to implement bilingual education programmes effectively, MOET has assigned universities to train linguists. North West University is responsible for Hmong; Quy Nhon University is responsible for Cham; Central Highland University is responsible for J'rai, Ede, and Bahnar; and Can Tho University is responsible for Khmer. These universities have already carried out their first training programmes. In general, the challenges regarding a lack of minority teachers and language experts are being overcome.

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<sup>31</sup>Editors' note: The author's spelling of names of various ethnolinguistic groups in Vietnam differs from that generally used in English. The original Vietnamese spelling, however, is retained here.

<sup>32</sup>Editors' note: Some linguists see some of these varieties (or dialects) and some varieties of the other fifty-three officially endorsed minority languages as different languages, and not mere dialects. Of the 'dialects' listed here, Rongao (or Rengao) is considered by many linguists as a language of its own, with about 16,000 speakers according to Ethnologue (2005).

<sup>33</sup>Editors' note: This approach to language planning and minority language development shows the influence of the Soviet Union, and similar approaches can be found in China and the Lao PDR, for example. For a more elaborate discussion, see Benson & Kosonen (2009).

## Current programmes using non-dominant languages in education

Thanks to technical and financial support from UNICEF Vietnam, Vietnam is currently implementing action research on mother tongue-based bilingual education in three provinces, namely Tra Vinh, Lao Cai, and Gia Lai, for three languages, i.e. Khmer, Hmong, and J'rai, respectively. A Flexible Bilingual Approach is being applied (see figure 4), building on experience in the teaching of both Vietnamese and ethnic minority languages as subjects, and adapted for teaching Vietnamese as a second language (L2). L2 teaching starts with oral skills, and is pursued concurrent with the teaching of the appropriate minority language (L1) for initial and continued literacy. This approach is consistent with principles of first and second language learning, and is called mother tongue-based bilingual education because of the use of L1 for subject content instruction in the early years.

**Figure 4. The Flexible Bilingual Approach** (Source: Benson, 2006).

Pre-primary	Gr. 1	Gr. 2	Gr. 3	Gr. 4	Gr. 5
L1-EML/L2-Viet	L1-EML	L1-EML	L1-EML	L1-EML	L1-EML
	L1	L1	L1/L2	L1/L2	L1/L2
	L2-Viet	L2-Viet	L2-Viet	L2-Viet	L2-Viet

Principles: Preschool level builds oral L1 and L2; L1 is for literacy and instruction in the early grades; bilingual materials in Grades 3-5 ease transition; oral L2 in the early grades, then literacy transfer from L1

This approach is flexible because, starting in Grade 3, the subject content materials (student textbooks and workbooks, teacher's manuals, and supplementary texts or aids) will be developed bilingually, using a side-by-side design. This does not necessarily mean that the L1 side is a translation of the Vietnamese side, but both sides correspond to certain objectives (expected learning outcomes) of the curriculum. This design is expected to cut costs – due to maintenance of the Vietnamese side in all materials, where the EM languages can be substituted – help develop pedagogical vocabulary and concepts in EM languages, facilitate bilingual methodology, and enable flexibility in adapting teaching and learning activities to the needs and competencies of both learners and teachers.

There are three main objectives of the pilot bilingual programme. The first objective is to successfully implement a valid and feasible design of bilingual education in ethnic minority languages and Vietnamese on a small scale, in selected pre-primary and primary schools. The second objective is to incorporate action research into all levels of the programme. The third objective is to contribute to the development of policies and practices (including legal frameworks) that will promote use and development of ethnic minority languages as means for improving access, quality, and equity of education and other social services.

Vietnam is also implementing a mother tongue-based literacy programme for the Bahnar people. The pilot programme in Gia Lai province has the support of UNESCO. This pilot programme is being implemented according to government policies on minority language development, including Decision No. 153/CP (20-8-1976), which prescribes the use of language in the national system of education, namely general schools, kindergartens, and literacy classes, as follows: “Wherever ethnic minorities have scripts,<sup>34</sup> ethnic minority language scripts are to be used to eliminate illiteracy and provide continuing education.” The ultimate aim of this project is to help Bahnar youth and adult become



literate in their mother tongue and then in national language. Future programme aims to help learners better acquire their mother tongue, acquire good reading and writing skills in their mother tongue, and improve living skills and then become literate in national language. This approach will enable Bahnar learners to join further education programmes.

Since 2005, the Ministry of Education and Training has also been implementing the teaching of minority languages as subjects in various areas. A number of curricula and textbooks on teaching minority languages have been evaluated and approved.

Programmes that have been officially approved:

- Khmer language programme with 7 levels, from elementary to advanced.
- Philology and Pali language for Pali Continuing Schools in the South.
- Cham language programme (Grades 1-5).
- Programme for teaching minority languages to government officials working in minority areas (framework curricula for J'rai, Khmer, Hmong, and Cham).

Updated progress:

- J'rai language programme (3 levels) completed and textbooks printed.
- Hmong language programme (3 levels) completed.
- Bahnar language programme (3 levels) completed, textbooks not yet printed.
- Hoa (Chinese) language programme (9 levels) completed, textbooks printed.
- Ede language programme (3 levels) completed. Textbooks for level 1 printed.

<sup>34</sup>In Vietnam, the term “script” generally refers to orthography or alphabet as defined in Chapter 1 of this volume.

Numerous textbooks and other reading materials in minority languages have been developed. Textbooks and materials in all languages taught as school subjects are developed (colourfully printed using advanced technology) and distributed free of charge to students and teachers. Teachers are also provided with teacher's guides.

Furthermore, the Vietnamese government has developed grammars, glossaries, and dictionaries in minority languages. Considerable research and numerous anthologies on minority traditions and cultures have been published. These materials are the foundation for developing teaching and learning materials, and increasing learners' knowledge. There is also a Centre for Bilingual Literacy Development, which is responsible for developing and producing materials for bilingual education.

The Ethnic Minority Education Department is the government agency responsible for managing ethnic minority education, including developing languages in ethnic minority areas. For scientific research, the Research Centre for Ethnic Minority Education (under the Ministry of Education and Training) is responsible for studying ethnic minority education, including ethnic minority development policy, curricular content, and methods of language development in ethnic minority areas.



At present, the Ministry of Education and Training is responsible for drafting Government Decrees on teaching and learning ethnic minority languages in schools. The Decrees are legal texts that concretize the Education Law, consolidate past Vietnamese experience in bilingual education, and select international experience to promote bilingual education in Vietnam.

## Conclusion

Vietnam is determined to implement bilingual education through both research and teaching. Bilingual education in Vietnam draws on experiences from the region and around the globe. To some extent, Vietnam can also contribute its own experiences to the cause of bilingual education in Asia and the world.



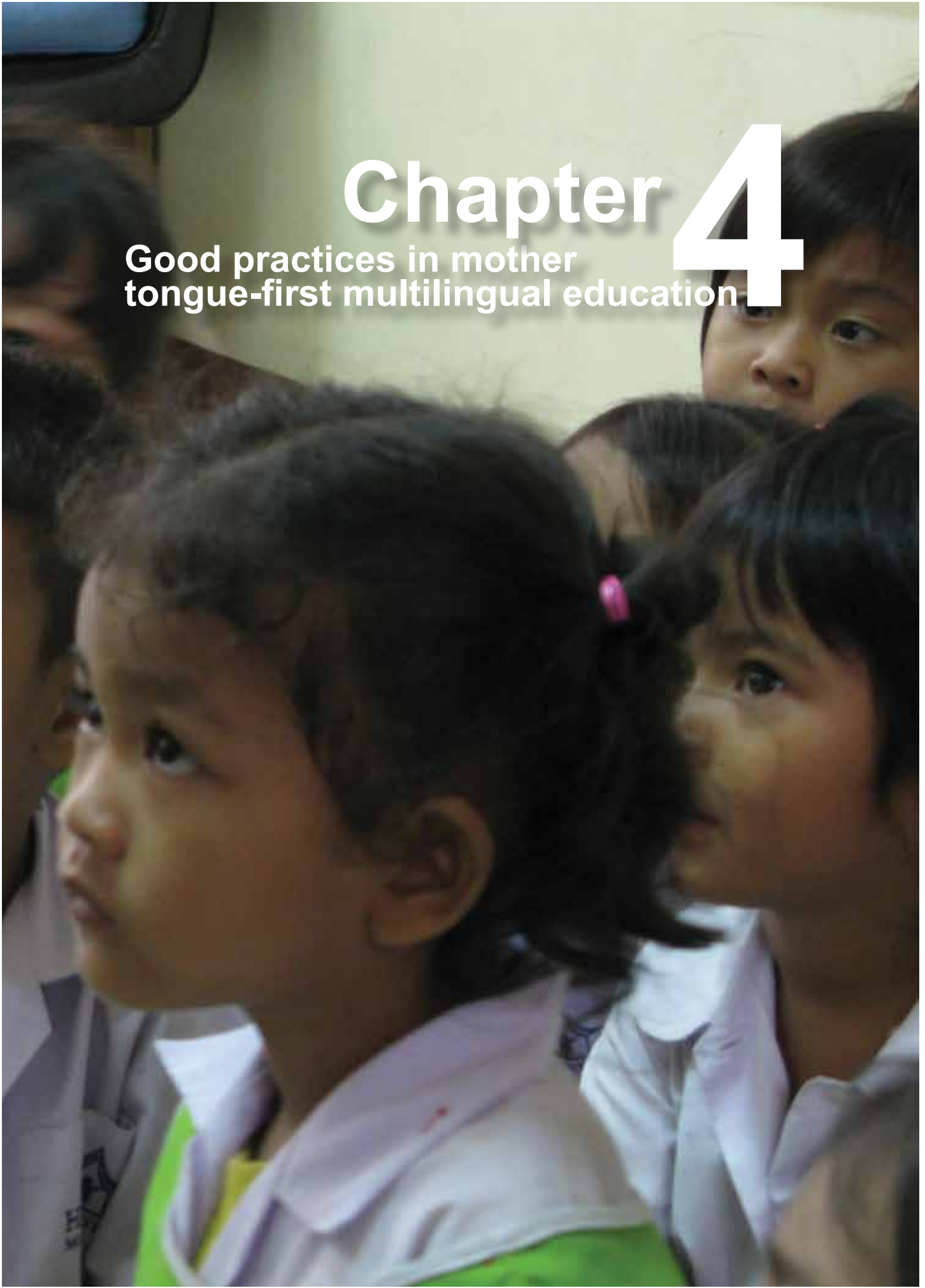




# Chapter

# 4

Good practices in mother  
tongue-first multilingual education



## Chapter 4

# Good practices in mother tongue-first multilingual education

*Catherine Young*

### Introduction

International agencies have, for a number of years, recognized the close link between language and cultural identity. Articles 14 and 17 of the UN Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the 1996 UNESCO Barcelona Universal Declaration on Linguistic Rights both promote linguistic and cultural self-expression of ethnolinguistic communities and the need to provide educational structures that will help maintain and develop the languages spoken by various language communities. These declarations affirm that education should be at the service of linguistic and cultural diversity. The UNESCO paper, “Education in a Multilingual World” (2003:8) asserts that

while there are strong educational arguments in favour of mother tongue (or first language) instruction, a careful balance also needs to be made between enabling people to use local languages in learning, and providing access to global languages of communication through education.

and

The choice of the language . . . is a recurrent challenge in the development of quality education . . . Speakers of mother tongues, which are not the same as the national . . . language, are often at a considerable disadvantage in the educational system. (2003:14)

### Mother Tongue-First Multilingual Education

The World Declaration on ‘Education for All’ (EFA), adopted in 1990 in Jomtien, Thailand, promotes an expanded vision of basic education, calling for a learning environment in which everyone has the chance to acquire the basic elements they need for further learning and full participation in society. This implies equity in access to education for all, irrespective of language, and strategies that meet the diverse learning needs of children, youth, and adults from all communities within a nation. EFA initiatives also espouse broad and deep partnerships between government agencies, NGOs, and civil society.

Research and experience (Dutcher, 1994; Tucker, 1998; Klaus, 2001; Thomas, 2002; Dekker & Young, 2007; Durnnian, 2007; UNESCO, 2007b; Dekker, Dugiang, 2008; Noorlander & Ven, 2008) have shown that quality language education occurs most effectively when learners begin to read and write in their

mother tongue – the language of the home and community – and when they advance in a structured manner to languages of wider communication used in the national education system. Use of the mother tongue in education has been shown to facilitate acquisition of literacy skills and provide the foundation for continuing autonomous learning.

In strong mother tongue-first multilingual education programmes, the curriculum is based on the culture of the ethnolinguistic community, using local knowledge and practices through which learners develop foundational concepts in all areas of learning. Thus, mother tongue-based multilingual education is a systematic approach to the provision of quality language education that promotes effective life-long learning in the language of the home, the language of the nation and, potentially, international languages of wider communication.

Mother tongue-first multilingual education is designed to respond to challenges that students face when they enter school. Learners from non-dominant ethnolinguistic communities are commonly expected to communicate in the school language – often the national language of the nation – when they begin their education, even though they may never have heard or used that language before. This affects both the learners' level of comprehension and their participation in classroom activities. In a classroom where a mother tongue-first multilingual approach is adopted, learners use their first language or mother tongue in the classroom. In the traditional, dominant language situation, learners have to learn increasingly abstract concepts using the new language before they have built a foundational vocabulary, in their first language that can help them to understand and apply the concepts. In the MLE classroom, teachers build on the knowledge and experience of the child, using the child's mother tongue to introduce new concepts. Systematically, students begin learning the additional languages of education, first orally and then for reading and writing. As the children gain confidence and fluency in the second language (L2), teachers can begin to use the second language as the language of instruction. The mother tongue of the learners will continue to be used systematically, however, for the introduction of new ideas and concepts, to review what the children have learned, and to ensure that children understand well all they have been taught.

In addition to outcomes associated with learner achievement in the classroom, multilingual education offers a context for the maintenance of local language and culture while providing national and international language acquisition and instruction, and promotes learners' integration into the national society without forcing children to sacrifice their linguistic and cultural heritage.

As described earlier in the introduction, the goals and objectives of both the SEAMEO project "Mother Tongue as a Bridge Language of Instruction" and this book include:

- an exploration of how Southeast Asian countries, through appropriate language and language-in-education policies, can achieve the goals of Education for All by widening access, reducing grade repetition and dropouts, and improving learning outcomes.
- a review and assessment of the use of the mother tongue as the language of instruction.

- assistance to SEAMEO member states in devising strategies for making their language and language-in-education policies and consequent practices as appropriate and relevant to their respective situations as possible.

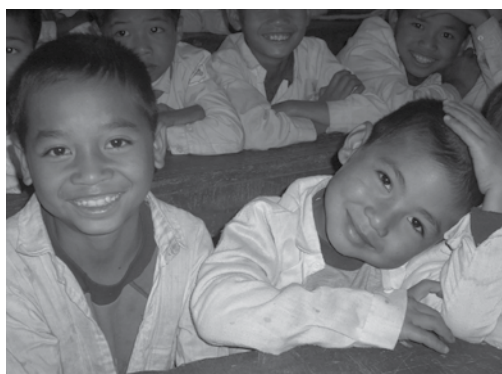
Chapter 5 of this book is a compilation of case studies describing mother tongue-based multilingual education programmes in SEAMEO member states. This paper will seek to identify some of the components of strong multilingual education programmes and identify examples of good practices found in the case studies compiled in this SEAMEO publication.

## Strong mother tongue-first multilingual education programmes

Mother tongue-based multilingual education is most often viewed as a structured programme of language learning and cognitive development, providing a strong educational foundation in the first language, with successful bridging to one or more additional languages, thus enabling the use of all languages for life-long learning. The purpose of such an approach is to develop appropriate cognitive and critical thinking skills that enable learners to operate equally in the language of their ethnolinguistic community, the national language of their nation, and international languages that are used for education and communication.

The presence of strong mother tongue-first MLE indicates the desire of the education provider to offer an equitable system with access to quality education opportunities for all. It is evident, of course, that a change in the language of instruction is not the only factor that influences quality of education. Other critical factors impinge on the experience of the learner in school and the sustainability of such an initiative in education. Some factors are directly related to classroom implementation, and others relate to the broader national or international environment within which the programme is being implemented. Initially, we will consider some of these context-level challenges, which are evident in an examination of the case studies in this paper:

- Understanding the purpose of mother tongue-first multilingual education
- Linguistic challenges
- Political challenges



## The purpose of MT-first multilingual education

A number of the case studies in this compilation demonstrate effective processes for informing and mobilizing stakeholders in order that they understand the purpose and rationale for mother tongue-first multilingual education.

### *Mobilization and awareness raising*

The case study from Cambodia (Un Siren, 2008) notes that the MoEYS was encouraged to replicate the CARE programme, initially implemented in Rattanakiri Province, because of the growing awareness among speakers of non-dominant languages of the importance of education. The Special Education Office of the MoEYS knew that parents were asking significant questions regarding languages in education and society – principally, how could they and their children learn Khmer, the dominant language, without losing their local languages. Parents were concerned that their culture might be threatened if children were forced to learn Khmer without a mother tongue component in education. Once it was demonstrated to parents that their mother tongue would be protected and that their culture and practices would be included in the instructional programmes, parents were reassured and increasingly supportive of the mother tongue-first multilingual education programme. Understanding the purpose of mother tongue-first multilingual education has contributed to parental support for the programme. In the Cambodian study, it appears that, as members of ethnolinguistic communities increasingly realized the advantages of children and their teachers sharing the same language, schools became more integral to the communities, and parents became more responsive to and co-operative with the school (Un Siren, 2008). This created stronger links between the home and school.

In the Philippines, a series of consultations and meetings with community stakeholders were conducted in order to ensure awareness and understanding of the implications of an initiative that would use the mother tongue as the initial medium of instruction in schools and integrate Manobo culture into the curriculum. The case study reports that most of the community members were pleased with and excited about the potential of such a programme, but some were apprehensive about the rationale for using Minanubu as the medium of instruction.

With continuous dialogue, consultations, and the presence of Manobo teachers who were also residents of the place and acted as advocates of the programme, the community was finally convinced. There were also efforts to explain to them the importance and benefits of using the mother tongue in teaching the early grades. In school year 2002-2003 the programme was finally accepted and initiated in Logpond 3 IP Experimental School in La Paz District. (Quijano and Estaquio, 2008)

However, changing the attitudes of parents can be a significant challenge. In the Pwo Karen programme (Siltragool, Petcharugsa, & Chouenon, 2008), it is noted that some parents of Pwo Karen students did not feel it was necessary to start gradually using the mother tongue of the learner but rather wanted their children to study Thai from the beginning of school.

Advocacy for acceptance of innovative strategies moves participants towards increased support and ownership. Mother tongue-based multilingual education appears to be most effectively implemented when it is embedded in a community that affirms its rationale, strategies, and outcomes, as seen in the Agusan Manobo example from the Philippines and the involvement of Pwo Karen in the design and implementation of the programme in Thailand.

## Linguistic factors

The design and implementation of education initiatives in non-dominant languages require an understanding of the languages involved. As mentioned in the case studies of the programmes among the Pwo Karen of Thailand and the Agusan Manobo in Mindanao, Philippines, it is important that mother tongue speakers of the non-dominant language be involved in the development of teaching/learning materials and be trained as teachers in the classroom. Some of the case studies reflect challenges that required community dialogue or the involvement of external agencies in order to make appropriate decisions in relation to linguistic choices.

### *Language Varieties*

The Malaysian case study (Logijin, 2008) describes the challenge of identifying the Kadazandusun language variety most suited to be the reference language for teaching and learning in schools, as there are different varieties of the Kadazandusun language scattered across Sabah. Thus, a symposium entitled “Towards the Standardization of the Kadazan Dialects” was organized by the Kadazan Cultural Association and was held in 1989. The community discussed their preferences regarding the variety of the language to be used in education programmes for their children and, through this symposium, the variety of Kadazandusun to be used in schools (Bundu-Liwan) was identified.

### *Writing and Spelling Systems*

When the language variety for the development of materials in the Kadazandusun education programme was identified, it was critical to establish an agreed-upon writing and spelling system for the Kadazandusun language. A consistent writing system which is acceptable to mother tongue speakers of the language and other stakeholders is an important foundation for the development of effective reading materials for mother tongue-based multilingual education. Malone (UNESCO, 2004:38) lists the following important criteria in the development of an acceptable writing system. An effective system is one that

- Is acceptable to the majority of the mother tongue speakers of the language.
- Is acceptable to the government.
- Represents the sounds of the language accurately and is relatively easy to learn.
- Enables mother tongue speakers to transfer between the minority and majority languages.
- Can be reproduced and printed easily.



The challenges that occur when such an acceptable writing system does not exist can be seen in the case study from Cambodia. The Provincial Implementation Team planned to implement a multilingual education programme among Kavet speakers in Steung Treng (Un Siren 2008). It became clear, however, because decisions about the writing system of the language and other documentation had not yet been completed by the community, that it would be difficult to develop teaching/learning materials. This again demonstrates that there are significant non-classroom factors that affect the successful implementation of a mother tongue-based multilingual education programme.

The case study of the Pwo Karen programme in Thailand demonstrates a systematic approach to the development of writing and spelling systems for a language that did not have a standardized writing system. The orthography development process was a collaborative exercise, involving co-operation between linguists and educators of SIL International: Thailand and local community members. Linguists and academics can make a significant contribution to this activity through their descriptive analysis of language data; it must be emphasized, nonetheless, that the speakers of the language are its true experts. In the case study from Thailand, an Alphabet Design workshop that was held in the village of Omkoi is described. The development of a writing system is a valuable process that requires emphasis. In the Thai case study, the authors state (Siltragool, Petcharugsa, & Chouenon, 2008),

Throughout the workshop, participants were reminded that the new writing system was provisional and would likely be adjusted further as problems were discovered and dealt with. Participants continued to test the writing system by producing materials, including a draft alphabet chart, picture dictionary, spelling guide, posters . . .

The activity of decision-making, testing, and revision within the community in order to develop a set of outcomes – an agreed-upon writing system – is a cyclical process that can involve different stakeholders. This is the type of workshop it would be useful to conduct in communities, such as those in Cambodia, that do not have a standardized writing system.

## Political factors

Although, as mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, there is institutional support for mother tongue-based multilingual education through a number of regional and international organizations, the support of government agencies at multiple levels in a nation or province significantly contributes to the success and sustainability of the educational intervention, particularly as pilot programmes move to expand.

The case study from Brunei indicates that student learning outcomes could be maximized if a structured mother tongue-first multilingual education programme, beginning with Mandarin Chinese, were established. This would most likely require substantial financial and government support in order to be successful. The affluent Chinese community in Brunei may be able to contribute financial backing in order to produce materials and organize the additional training that would be necessary to adequately equip teachers. Government support, on the other hand, evidenced through policy changes and financial investment, may take longer. It seems that school-based, privately sponsored programmes are required as long as there is no government provision for mother tongue-based programmes within the overall objectives of education policy in Brunei.

In Cambodia, it appears that provision has been made for considering the needs of children who are speakers of non-dominant languages. The Special Education Office (SEO) was created in 2000 under the Primary Education Department (PED) of the Directorate General of Education (DGE), Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sport (MoEYS). This office was given responsibility for educational development in a number of different sectors – children from poor families, children from the ethnolinguistic communities of Cambodia, children with disabilities, and street children. It was also assigned the role of examining issues of gender equity in education and the opportunities available to girls. Significantly different competencies are required to adequately address the needs of this disparate set of learners. Such a department requires specific training and capacity-building in order to meet the challenges of the target populations it is mandated to serve. Partnerships between International NGOs such as CARE and MoEYS staff seem to be appropriate ways of contributing to the enhancement of the necessary skills and capabilities.



The case study from Malaysia emphasizes the importance of political support for multilingual education programmes for learners from non-dominant languages. The report describes the process by which, in 1994, a prominent Kadazandusun leader proposed to the Federal Government that the Kadazandusun language be taught in schools in Sabah. Subsequently, this was made possible by the Education Act 1996, which states that “. . . indigenous languages shall be made available if it is reasonable and practical . . .” The process was then able to move ahead with multiple stakeholders, including the State Education Department, Kadazandusun teachers, NGOs such as the Kadazandusun Language Foundation (KLF) and the Kadazandusun Cultural Association (KDCA), and experts on Kadazandusun culture and language, involved in programme development. It appears that, in this situation, support by the Federal Government was essential for the programme to begin. Relationships with local and national government can be seen to be crucial, in many contexts, in order to assure the success of such programmes.

In the Philippines, the sustainability of the Agusan Manobo programme was directly linked to the Department of Education. Initially, the funding came from a variety of donors, primarily from the Third Elementary Education Project (TEEP) of the Department of Education of the Philippines, which received funding assistance from the World Bank and Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC). Funding for school materials and supplies came from the Division of Agusan, Department of Education, and local government units of the Province of Agusan and the Municipality of La Paz supplied funds for the honoraria of some teachers. Starting in 2006-07, however, the funds for multilingual education were to come from the Department of Education. It is clear that both the freedom and the resources required to implement such education initiatives are embedded in the relationship between those who conceptualize the programme and the political system within which educational programmes are situated.

The case studies in the following chapter will clearly demonstrate the need for close collaboration between multiple stakeholders when proposing educational initiatives in ethnolinguistic communities where non-dominant languages are spoken. Some of the most significant stakeholders determining potential programme sustainability are those who wield financial and social power in the group whose language is dominant in society. Advocacy and networking, as described above, are therefore critical for sharing information, developing a support base for pilot programmes, and sustaining such programmes as they move to increase their scale.

## School-related activities

In addition to the contextual, non-school-related factors that affect the implementation of strong mother tongue-first multilingual education programmes, there are, of course, a number of MLE-specific school-related factors that require special attention when planning MLE programmes for learners from non-dominant ethnolinguistic communities. The case studies in this compilation offer an excellent overview of some of these factors, giving examples of positive approaches that have resulted in strong programmes as well as examples of situations in which different decisions could have produced better results.

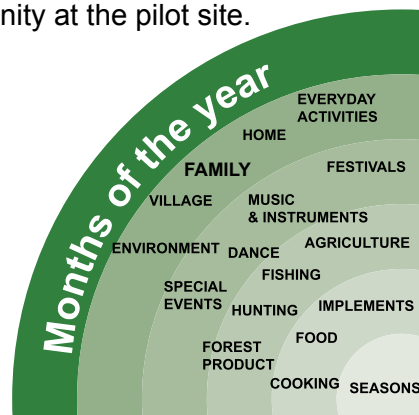
## Curriculum development

Malone (UNESCO 2004:4) reminds us that traditionally, all societies – whether they have a literate tradition or no history of reading and writing – have provided either formal or informal education for their children. Mother tongue-first multilingual education programmes in ethnolinguistic communities where the learners are speakers of non-dominant languages aim to incorporate content that is familiar to the learners into the curriculum and deliver that content in a language that is familiar to the learners. This serves to create confidence in learners and help them build bridges, not just between languages of instruction, but also between the culture of home, family, and community and the broader society in which their language community exists. A key principle in the development of local content for the curriculum is the participation of stakeholders who are mother tongue speakers of the languages in focus and who are “*experts*” in their culture. This can be seen in the processes related to the planning of a syllabus for the Kadazandusun mother tongue-first multilingual education programme in Malaysia. The Curriculum Development Centre invited stakeholders for discussions to get their ideas and opinions on a suitable Kadazandusun syllabus. The stakeholders were the State Education Department, Kadazandusun teachers, NGOs such as the Kadazandusun Language Foundation (KLF) and the Kadazandusun Cultural Association (KDCA), and experts on Kadazandusun culture and language. This inter-agency co-operation in curriculum development is an excellent model for other communities as they implement mother tongue-first programmes.

In the case study from the Philippines, the development of the mother tongue-first MLE programme received support from the local community through involvement in materials production and, in particular, the writing of stories and poems. Datu Manggosawon, who is also known by his Christian name Teofilo Gelacio, the tribal leader of the Manobo in Agusan, also helped in the preparation and implementation of the programme by visiting schools and giving input on the important components of Manobo culture and practice that should be integrated into the lessons.

In addition to the involvement of key institutions and individuals, strategies for curriculum development could include identification of local knowledge that can be used in the curriculum. In the case study from Thailand, a process is described whereby the Pwo Karen speaking teachers developed cultural themes and a cultural calendar of the Pwo Karen community at the pilot site.

The information gathered in this exercise was used to guide the composition of the teaching/learning materials and ensure that the materials were used at the appropriate time, in accordance with the community’s annual work and life cycles. Such cultural research is essential to the development of appropriate curricula and strategies. Siltragool, Petcharugsa, & Chouenon (2008) comment that,



Currently, within ONFEC, lessons learned from the Pwo Karen bilingual education programme are informing the development of Thai language materials for ethnolinguistic communities in other areas. This will help NFE teachers develop greater understanding of the nature of learners' languages and culture. Mutual understanding among the teachers, students and ethnic communities can be achieved.

## Teacher identification and training

### *Identifying Teachers*

The direct link between the curriculum and the child is the teacher who delivers the curriculum in the classroom. The identification process for teachers can be challenging. This can be seen in the case study from Hoang Thi Thu Huong (2008). While emphasising the importance of teachers sharing the language of the learners in a mother tongue-first multilingual education programme, the study notes that there was a lack of professionally qualified teachers in Vietnam who shared the mother tongue of the ethnolinguistic community in which the programme was being implemented. The Vietnamese case study describes a situation in which dominant language speakers are required to learn the language of the students in order to teach the local language and Vietnamese. This is not an ideal situation, as learners will not have received natural language input from a mother tongue speaker to develop their receptive and expressive language skills in their first language. For both formal and nonformal mother tongue-first multilingual education programmes, it appears most effective (Kosonen, Young, Malone 2007:46) to identify teachers who are fluent in the language, familiar with the local culture, and respected by others in the community.

### *Teacher Training*

It is clear that teachers have to be specifically trained in order to implement mother tongue-first multilingual education in the classroom. The case studies in Chapter 5 reflect the participation of a broad range of teachers in the implementation of mother tongue-first MLE. In the Pwo Karen programme in Thailand (Siltragool, Petcharugsa, & Chouenon, 2008), the authors note that many of the assistant teachers in the Community Learning Centres where the MLE programme was implemented had low educational qualifications themselves, whereas in the case studies from the Philippines and Brunei, all teachers involved had full national teaching qualifications. In the case study from Malaysia, teachers who were speakers of Kadazandusun were trained by the Curriculum Development Centre to deliver the specifically designed curriculum, including local knowledge components. In this training, teachers were exposed to different strategies and approaches to teaching Kadazandusun. The training of these teachers followed a cascade model. Selected Kadazandusun teachers are prepared as master trainers; after their training, they in turn train other Kadazandusun teachers at the district level. This allows training of teachers to be community-based and conducted in Kadazandusun.

The Brunei case study (Ho, 2008), by contrast relates that, although many of the subject teachers in the school in the study were bilingual or trilingual in Mandarin, English, and Malay, none were trained in mother tongue-based instruction, as there was at that time no specific training programme available. The Mandarin-English code-switching phenomenon described in this compendium thus became a strategy used by teachers in order to support learners who lacked facility in the traditional school languages of instruction.

In the Philippine context, community stakeholders were integrated into the training programme provided for teachers. Although many of the teachers were mother tongue speakers of Manobo, there were also local “experts” who shared their knowledge about the Minanubu language and culture and attended the school’s important activities. Some of these influential local stakeholders acted as resource speakers during teacher training seminars. It appears from the case study that this served to strengthen the links between the mother tongue-based MLE programme being implemented by the Department of Education (DepEd) and the local community. Quijano and Estaquio (2008) outline the training plan implemented by the Department and local offices in order to equip teachers to use the mother tongue systematically and effectively in the classroom. The training plan included:

- Orientation to the programme.
- Information on the status of Indigenous Peoples education in the Philippines.
- Producing indigenous instructional materials with input from local “experts”, and with community members serving as resource persons, speakers, evaluators, and editors.
- Construction of teaching aids and devices, including ‘Big Books.’
- Integration of indigenous education into the Basic Education Curriculum through demonstration teaching, workshops, and lectures (e.g. teaching beginners’ reading in Manobo).

Co-operation between the Rattanakiri Provincial Office of Education and CARE (Un Siren, 2008) resulted in the development of a Teacher Training Unit serving different provinces of Cambodia. Teaching capabilities were developed within the Provincial Offices, and at the national level within the MoEYS, through relationships with International Cooperation for Cambodia (ICC) and CARE and financial support from UNICEF. The UN Millennium Project (UNDP, 2005) notes that global partnerships for development are necessary in order to address issues and achieve goals that affect the most marginalized communities of the developing world. The Cambodian case study observes that on-going co-ordination and collaboration is vital for in-service training and programme expansion to continue. Inter-agency co-operation in training and programme implementation has been shown to be a successful strategy in a number of case studies in this volume.

## Instructional materials and literature development

Examples of good practices (UNESCO, 2007b) indicate that local community members can be excellent teachers if they participate in training before they teach, have regular in-service training, and have access to instructional materials that are easy to use and relevant to the learners they are teaching.

In the case study from Brunei, the authors comment on the challenges of using materials in Mandarin that were not developed for the Brunei context. Ho (2008) notes that

... the school uses materials from the Singapore school curriculum because students now sit for the Singapore-Cambridge GCE “O” level Mandarin. These materials are in the form of course books, text books and worksheets. While teachers found the materials to be generally helpful, they often have to develop and construct their own materials because the imported materials may not cater to the particular needs of the local students.

The Philippine experience (Quijano and Estaquio, 2008) documents that, although mother tongues of learners are used orally and informally in the classroom, particularly in the early grades of school – in line with permission granted in Philippines Department Order No. 25, s. 1974 – there are no instructional materials to support the use of these languages. Thus, one of the key outcomes of the Culture-Responsive Curriculum for Indigenous People (CCIP), which aimed to improve indigenous schools’ academic performance, was the production of culturally appropriate instructional materials in local languages.

This included coloured ‘Big Books,’ which were originally written by teachers themselves with the help of the community members who attended the training workshops.

The community can play an important role in the development of appropriate materials, written in the mother tongue using natural, age-appropriate language and reflecting cultural situations and practices that will be familiar to learners. This can be clearly seen in the Pwo Karen case study from Thailand. The content of the materials developed by learners covered stories familiar to the community. Within a community-based materials production workshop, described in the case study, local community members wrote the text and drew the illustrations themselves. The materials were produced using a simple, replicable method and were cheap to reproduce for use in the Community Learning Centre classrooms.

The Vietnamese study notes that the national educational programme for preschool children uses Vietnamese, which children from non-dominant language communities cannot understand well. The need for the development of appropriate materials for use in mother tongue-based programmes is discussed, but it is not clear from the case study how these materials were to be produced and how they would reflect the culture of the target communities.

The case study from Cambodia (Un Siren, 2008) mentions a one-year bridging programme from the mother tongue to the national language using translated textbooks. Although there are situations in which this can be helpful, experience shows (Hohulin 1995; Young 2002; Dekker & Young 2007; UNESCO, 2008) that materials developed in the community and written in the mother tongue can communicate concepts that meet the learning targets of the national curriculum while responding to the prior experiences of the learners. The translation and adaptation of teaching/learning materials (UNESCO, 2004), needs to be undertaken using clear processes, ensuring accurate communication of the meaning of the original text through natural forms of the target language.

The production of teaching/learning materials for mother tongue-first multilingual education programmes can promote a desire for non-school groups to develop materials in the mother tongue for other, out-of-school groups. In the Kadazandusun MLE programme in Malaysia, Logijin (2008) describes the support materials that were created by different institutional partners of the programme. The Curriculum Development Centre produced a Kadazandusun language reference book called “Puralan Boros Kadazandusun Id Sikul.” This was intended for anyone interested in the vitality of Kadazandusun, not only for use in school. It is hoped that the development of materials for school-based education programmes will motivate others to produce more books and media in the Kadazandusun language.

## Conclusion

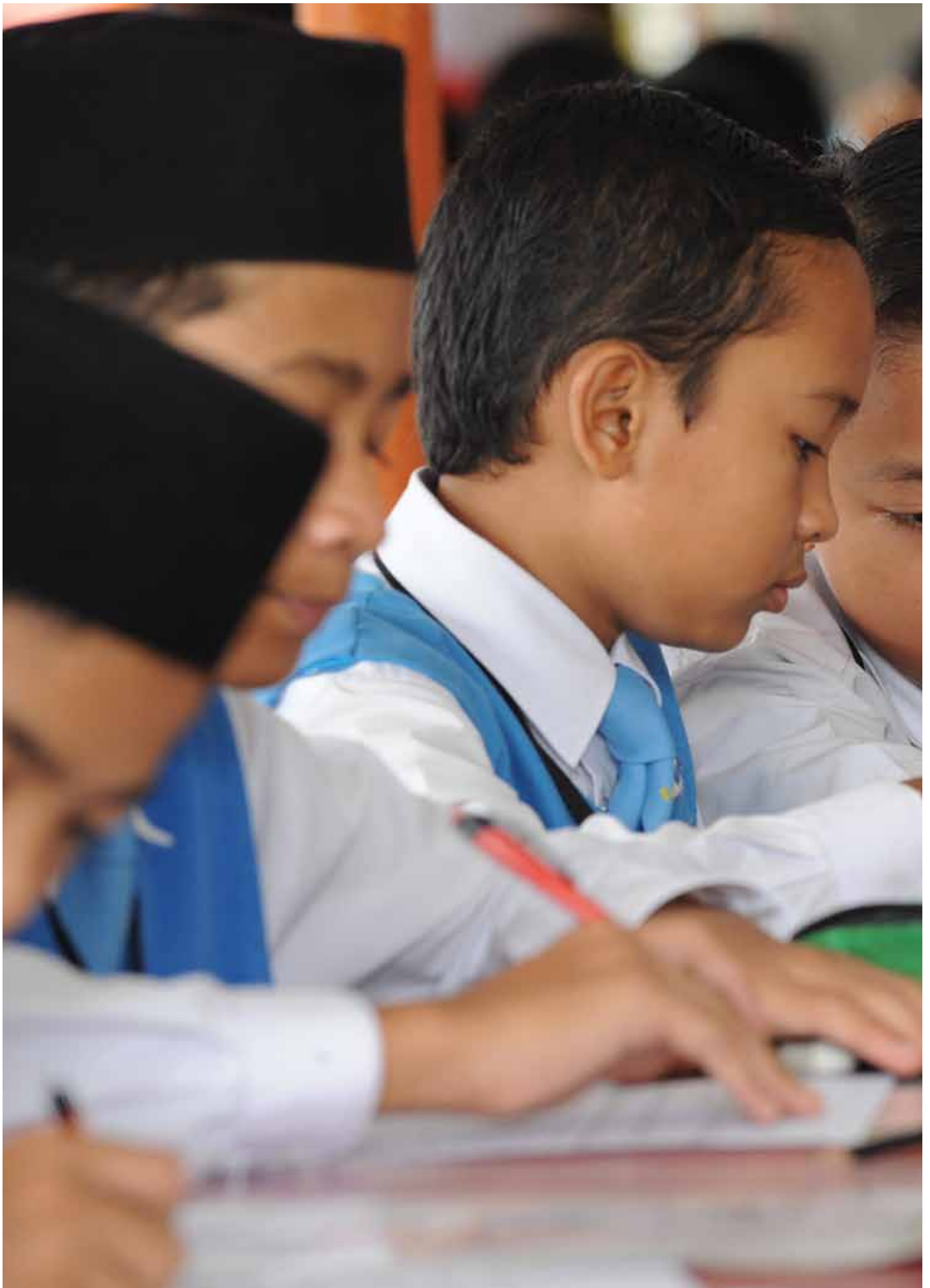
In this short chapter, it has only been possible to identify and discuss a limited number of the practices that contribute to the support of effective mother tongue multilingual education programmes. However, there are a number of general conclusions and potential recommendations that can be developed through reflection on the case studies in this compendium.

It is clear that there is a region-wide need for supportive educational policies that provide clear, non-conflicting status and support for non-dominant languages, and which institutionalize infrastructures for implementation and support of mother tongue-first MLE programmes in both formal and nonformal education systems.

Within the SEAMEO member states, it is crucial that mother tongue-first multilingual education programmes are built upon systematic, theoretically grounded practices, and that member states receive the technical support they require in order to maintain such principled approaches. Appropriately funded innovations should be occurring in minority ethnolinguistic communities in order to develop programmes that model these best practices and can be shared with governments, NGOs, and civil society organizations that are planning mother tongue-first MLE programmes.

More information on both the theoretical foundations for MLE and good practices in mother tongue-based multilingual education would further contribute to a shared understanding of reasons for implementation. Regular initial and in-service training programmes for teachers, administrators, and educational planners are necessary in order to institutionalize effective educational provision for ethnolinguistic minorities at the national and regional levels. In addition, advanced degree programmes or modules that address the issues relating to education for learners from ethnolinguistic minorities would contribute to a community of practice that constantly evaluates and reviews such provision. It is essential that rigorous academic reflection accompany pilot programmes in order to develop good practices and theoretical models for language education and curriculum development. Each type of initiative has the potential to support the others and provide clear strategies for moving pilot programmes to “scale”. Finally, sharing thorough documentation and thorough monitoring and evaluation studies will provide the information required for replicable approaches to be adopted and adapted among nations in the SEAMEO region and beyond.

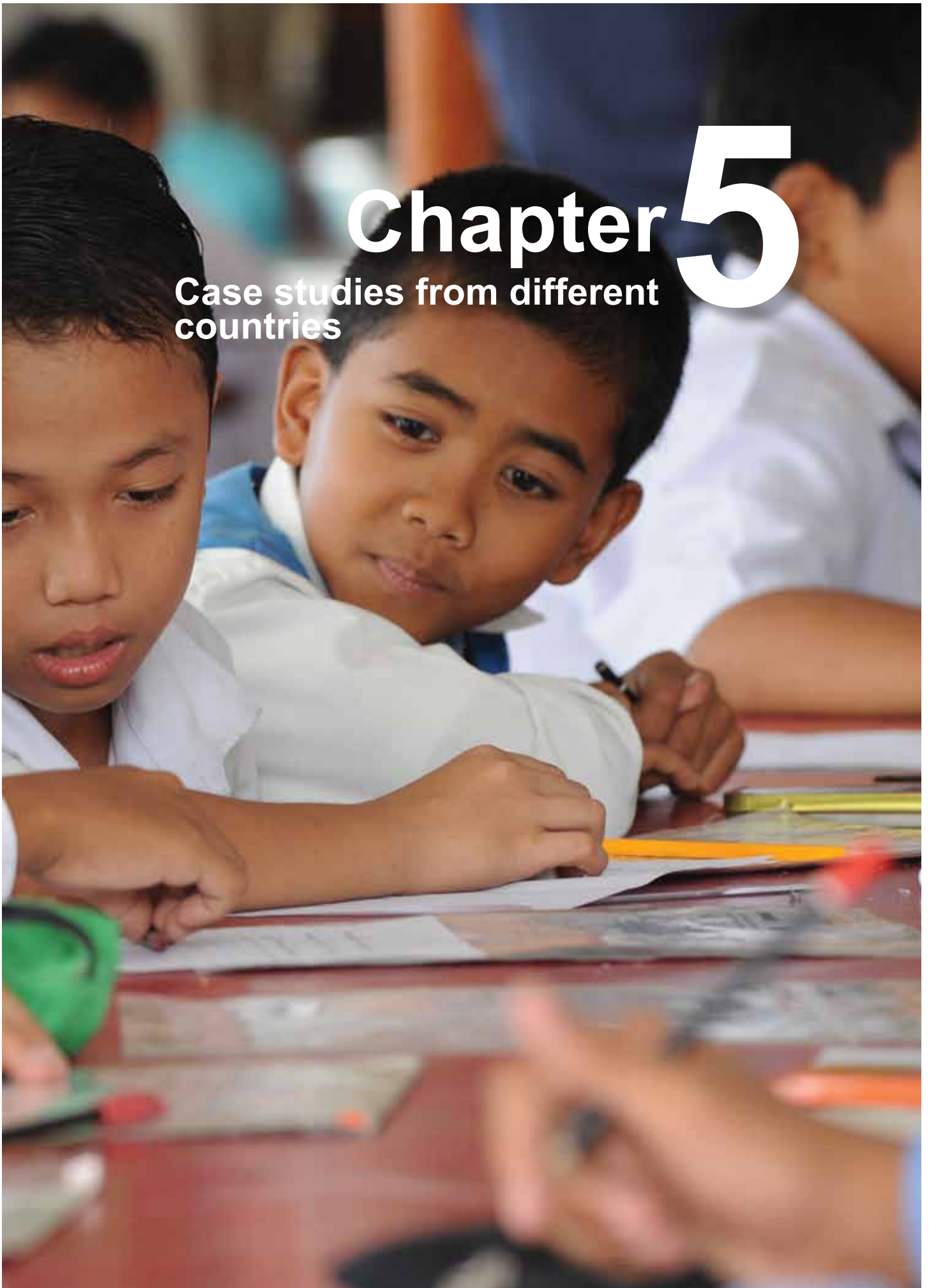






# Chapter 5

Case studies from different countries



## Chapter 5

# Case studies from different countries

### Introduction

*Catherine Young*

This chapter presents a compilation of six case studies on selected mother tongue-based multilingual education programmes in six different SEAMEO countries. Due to space limitations, several country sections are shorter than the original papers, which are available on the SEAMEO website (SEAMEO, 2008). All the original papers were written by nationals – usually Ministry of Education officials – of each country and the authors' names are provided at the beginning of each section.

This chapter contributes to the documentation of ways in which access, quality, and relevance of education can be enhanced through the use of the mother tongue among ethnolinguistic minorities.

Each Southeast Asian Ministry of Education was asked to identify local authors, who were then requested to provide general information that would allow readers to understand the context in which mother tongue-based multilingual education programmes are being implemented. They were also asked to give an introduction to the language community, with basic information about population, the economy, and simple linguistic data, and a brief description of the national education programme and its language-of-instruction policies and practices.

Each case study writer was asked to describe the ways in which the community has been involved in the development of mother tongue-based multilingual education programmes, and mention the steps taken to develop curriculum, produce appropriate materials, and train teachers to respond to the needs of the target ethnolinguistic community.

Though the Southeast Asian countries share many similarities, each national context is quite different in terms of language and language-in-education policies, and the implementation of those policies. Each case study had to describe the impact of the programme on the learners and in the community, and note the challenges identified by stakeholders.

In the first paper of this section, Debbie Ho provides a case study of the situation in a private school in **Brunei Darussalam** where Mandarin Chinese is used as the medium of instruction. In Brunei, the official and national language is Standard Malay, as stated in the Brunei Constitution of 1959. English is also widely used as a business/working language and medium of instruction in tertiary education. This case study, however, describes the role of Mandarin as a bridge

language of instruction in a private Chinese-medium school situated in the capital. The study reveals the impact that mother tongue education has on the attitudes of students and their families towards language and on language competence in school, the home and the community. It acknowledges the challenges of developing appropriate materials and adequate teacher training in a programme which is being implemented without explicit government support.

In his paper, Un Siren describes the processes of developing mother tongue-based education programmes for children from ethnolinguistic communities in remote regions of **Cambodia** who have limited access to the national school system. The paper illustrates the relationships that can develop between programmes begun by NGOs and government initiatives, and the ways in which these relationships can influence and inform praxis in the national education system. This case study reminds the reader of the need to be sensitive in the design of any education programme, and to adopt flexible, nonformal systems of delivery in order to meet the needs of learners. The issue of the identification and training of teachers who are speakers of non-dominant languages is highlighted as a particular challenge in this paper.

The section on **Malaysia** by Sandra Logijin illustrates activities of government agencies, NGOs, and community organizations as they implement and support mother tongue education among communities in Sabah, Malaysia. One motivating factor underlying this programme was the impact of changing language behaviours on the vitality of the Kadazandusun language. Sociolinguistic survey data had shown that Kadazandusun children had either become bilingual or become users of other, dominant languages, i.e. either Malay or English. This moved community leaders to consider the issue of language maintenance, and strategies for the use of the mother tongue in schools were developed. Unlike some of the other case studies in this compilation, Kadazandusun is introduced into the school curriculum in the upper grades of elementary school and continues into secondary school, after Malay and English language habits have been established. This programme contrasts with that of mother tongue-first multilingual education programmes in which the mother tongue provides the linguistic foundation to which additional languages are added.

The section on the **Philippines** by Yolanda Quijano and Ofelia Eustaquio reflects ways in which the Department of Education in the Philippines has responded to the needs of an ethnolinguistic community in Mindanao, namely through the implementation of a pilot project focused on the Manobo community of Agusan del Sur. This comprehensive and systematic paper describes the implementation of a mother tongue-first multilingual education programme in two rural schools. The case study includes information on student retention and learner achievement, and highlights the importance of broad community involvement to ensure that stakeholders understand and support the implementation of alternative learning approaches.

In the section on mother tongue-first multilingual education in **Thailand**, written by Wisanee Siltragool, Suchin Petcharugsa, and Anong Chouenon, a thorough overview of the Pwo Karen mother tongue-first programme in northern Thailand is given. The authors clearly describe the challenges involved, particularly that

of establishing an acceptable writing system for a non-dominant language. This paper includes excellent sections on the process of developing a writing system and producing appropriate teaching/learning materials. One advantage of the programme in Thailand is that it is well-embedded in the community, drawing on the strengths of adults and teachers from the Pwo Karen community to ensure that the curriculum reflects the rich culture of that ethnolinguistic group.

Finally, in the section on **Vietnam**, Hoang Thi Thu Huong describes the ways in which J'rai is used in early childhood education in Vietnam. This paper describes a rapid transition programme for five-year-old preschool children from their non-dominant mother tongue, J'rai, to the national language, Vietnamese. A mother tongue-first multilingual approach would advocate that the first language of the learner be maintained in the curriculum for as long as possible in order to promote bilingualism and biliteracy. Although there is a strong written language policy in Vietnam that advocates the use of non-dominant languages in education, it appears that the case study included in this compendium does not demonstrate the components of a strong model of first language-first MLE.



## Mandarin as mother tongue in Brunei Darussalam: a case study

Debbie G E Ho

### Introduction

The independent Sultanate of Brunei Darussalam (henceforth referred to as “*Brunei*”) has a land area of approximately 5,765 square kilometres. It is located on the northwestern part of Borneo and is surrounded by the East Malaysian states of Sarawak and Sabah and a 160-kilometre coastline facing the South China Sea. Brunei, a Muslim-majority country, is divided into four main districts: Brunei-Muara, Tutong, Temburong, and Belait. The smallest of the four districts, Brunei-Muara, is also the most densely populated, with more than 65% of the total population residing there. It is also the administrative centre of the country, and contains the capital, Bandar Seri Begawan.

### The linguistic and sociolinguistic environment of Brunei

The population of Brunei, recorded as 357,800 in 2004, constitutes a diverse linguistic and sociolinguistic environment. The dominant group is the Malay group, who make up some 66.9% of the total population of Brunei. This group comprises the seven indigenous communities in the country – Belait, Bisaya, Brunei, Dusun, Kedayan, Murut, and Tutong. These groups have their own languages, and not all are mutually intelligible. The ethnic Chinese in Brunei form roughly 15% of Brunei’s population. The remaining 18.1% of the country’s population consist of other non-indigenous groups – the Penans, the Ibans, and expatriate workers from the Philippines, Thailand, Nepal, India, the United Kingdom, and other countries. Martin (1998) categorizes the languages of Brunei under three groups – the indigenous languages, which include the Malay dialects (Brunei Malay, Kedayan, Bazaar Malay, and Palace Speech) and the non-Malay dialects (Tutong, Belait, Dusun, Bisaya, and Murut); the non-indigenous languages, which consist of the Chinese (Hakka, Hokkien, Hainanese, and Cantonese), Indian, and Native languages (Penan and Iban); and lastly the supraregional languages, which are English and *Bahasa Melayu*.

The Malay dialects have traditionally been the *lingua francae* for communication between ethnolinguistic communities. The official and national language of Brunei, however, is Standard Malay, as stated in the Brunei Constitution of 1959. English is also widely used as a business and working language, and is also the medium of instruction in secondary and tertiary education.

In this report, I will focus on the role of Mandarin as mother tongue for the Chinese ethnolinguistic communities in Brunei, and specifically as an additional, bridge language of instruction in a private Chinese-medium school situated in the capital. To appreciate the place of Mandarin in Bruneian society, it is necessary to trace the history of the Chinese in Brunei.

## The ethnic Chinese in Brunei

The Chinese have a long and established history in Brunei. The first Chinese settlers arrived here in the 1600s. Most were engaged in cultivating pepper and other local spices, and trading in spices and gold. Although they were asked to leave the country in the later part of that century, they returned around 1700 and resumed their former livelihood in the pepper and spice industries. By then, they were the main generators of revenue for the country, and Brunei relied largely on them financially to get through that century. When the first population census was taken in 1911, there were some 736 Chinese in Brunei. By the 1920s, this figure had grown to 1,423 settlers. The discovery of oil in 1929 saw a further and dramatic increase of Chinese migration into Brunei. The Chinese community increased by about 200% during that period. Most of them came from surrounding regions, such as Sarawak and Singapore, but many also came from Hong Kong. Many were technically qualified people who came in search of job opportunities in the oil industry. Between 1981 and 1991, Chinese migration into the country decelerated. Population censuses in 1981 and 1991 showed a mere 2% increase, compared to a rise of more than 80% observed in previous years. Many left for Australia and Canada, for various reasons.

A few important data concerning the ethnic Chinese in Brunei are shown in Figure. 5 below.

**Figure. 5: Ethnic Chinese in Brunei Darussalam** (adapted from Pan, 1999)

Ethnic Chinese in Brunei	
<b>Total population:</b>	56,000 (2006)
<b>Regions with significant populations:</b>	Bandar Seri Begawan
<b>Languages:</b>	Hokkien, Hakka, Teochew, Cantonese, Fuzhou
<b>Religions:</b>	Buddhism, Christianity

Chinese Bruneians today are no longer engaged in the businesses of gold trading and spice cultivation. While some of them are contractors, developing houses, roads, bridges, and highways, many younger Chinese are employed in the private commercial sector as bank officers, executives, and secretaries. A growing number are also employed in the public sector, such as the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The Chinese minorities in Brunei speak a variety of Chinese dialects and languages. These dialect communities are scattered over the four districts in the country. The most dominant community is the Hokkien clan in Brunei-Muara District, where the capital Bandar Seri Begawan is situated. This is where a significant portion of the Chinese population is located. The Hakkas, Cantonese, and Hainanese are found in Seria and Kuala Belait, areas in Belait District where the oil and gas industries are located. Each group is further supported by their respective ethnic associations, which look after their cultural and social interests. Examples of such associations are the Belait District Hainanese Association, the

Belait District Fuzhou Association, and the Belait Hakka Association. Members of these associations are mostly elderly Chinese who meet regularly for social activities. An additional place for social gatherings and worship among the non-Christian Chinese is the Buddhist Tengyun Temple, located in the centre of Bandar Seri Begawan, which was built in 1918 by the Quemoy Hokkiens.

Despite the variety of Chinese languages and dialects spoken among the different Chinese groups, Mandarin serves as the primary language of communication among the Chinese ethnolinguistic communities, as it is understood by most of the Chinese in Brunei. Mandarin is also often spoken at home between parents and children, and among siblings. While the term “mother tongue” is problematic and controversial in terms of definition and designation (Romaine, 2000), among the many ethnolinguistic groups, the Chinese appear to have least difficulty accepting Mandarin as their mother tongue, despite the existence of linguistically diverse and often mutually unintelligible dialects. In my interviews with Mandarin teachers in the school, the unanimous viewpoint was that the vernaculars learners speak at home are dialects, not their mother tongue. Mandarin is the mother tongue of all Chinese everywhere in the world. This viewpoint is supported in Penalosa (1981), where it is stated that the Chinese see Mandarin to be a unifying language (in the written mode), one that has been used for communication between the various dialectal groups for thousands of years.

It is also worth noting, however, that with increasing opportunities for higher education available to them, many young Chinese Bruneians are now graduates from Western universities, and so tend not to be concerned with maintaining their vernaculars. There is, instead, a tendency to use Mandarin for interaction between Chinese communities in Brunei, and either English or an amalgam of English and Brunei Malay – codeswitching between languages – for communication at work between different ethnolinguistic groups. The major concern among Chinese community members, however, is the increasing and real threat of English in the lives of their young children. Malay is the national and official language, and English is an important second language in the country. Many parents are concerned about their children maintaining their Chinese cultural identity. One way to ensure the continuation of the culture is through the medium of their mother tongue. This is one of the main reasons parents enrol their children in a Chinese-medium school.

## The education system in Brunei

Formal education in Brunei began during the British Residential period. In 1929, the School Attendance Enactment was passed, giving the Resident the power to make education compulsory for children in certain areas. During the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, there were three separate systems of education in the country – Malay-language schools, Chinese-medium schools, and mission schools. Today, education is universal and free for all citizens. Although education is no longer compulsory, parents feel that they are obliged to ensure a better future and career opportunities for their children through schooling. Since 1985, a year after independence from Britain, the system of schooling in Brunei has been based on the *Dwibahasa* (two languages) policy.

## The *Dwibahasa* education policy

The national education system encapsulates a bilingual education policy called *Dwibahasa*, meaning “two languages.” The specific objective of this policy is for learners to achieve competence in English while maintaining the first language, Malay: “a means of ensuring the sovereignty of the Malay language, while at the same time recognising the importance of the English language.” (Government of Brunei Darussalam, 1984:2) In the *Dwibahasa* system (Government of Brunei, 1985), emphasis is on the dominance of the Malay language. Table 9 shows the curriculum structure within the *Dwibahasa* System.

**Table 9: Compulsory and Examinable Subjects and their Medium of Instruction in Brunei Primary and Secondary Schools** (adapted from [www.moe.gov.bn.](http://www.moe.gov.bn.), 2004)

English-medium subjects	Malay-medium subjects
Lower primary (Primary 1-3)	
English language	Malay language, mathematics general studies, physical education Islamic religious knowledge arts and crafts civics
Upper primary (Primary 4-6)	
English language mathematics science history geography	Malay language Islamic religious knowledge physical education arts and crafts civics Malay Islamic Monarchy (MIB)
Lower secondary (Secondary 1-3)	
English language mathematics science history geography	Malay language Islamic religious knowledge MIB
Upper secondary (Secondary 4-5)	
English language mathematics science/art/technical/commercial	Malay language MIB

Brunei’s bilingual policy is based on what Swain (1983:41) calls “bilingualism through monolingualism,” in which two languages are taught separately, depending on the school subject, with one language taking a larger role as medium of instruction in the higher classes. Malay predominates in the earlier pre-primary and lower primary school stages, with increasingly more time allocated to English at the secondary school level, where all but Malay language



and MIB are taught in English. From 2008 onwards, however, certain subjects, such as maths and science in the lower primary classes, will be taught in English. As the education system prioritizes the use of standard Malay as the official national language and encourages the use of English as an important second language, these two form the languages of the school system. There is no written provision in Brunei's education policy with regard to the use of a mother tongue as either an additional or bridge language in the school, even though Bruneian children may start school without any knowledge of standard Malay or English.

## **Mother tongues within the Brunei education system**

There is no mother tongue-based (henceforth "MT-based") programme within the overall objectives of education policy in Brunei. This remains the case despite strong suggestions by writers that the government support the use of MT in Bruneian schools. In 1952, Barcroft, the then British Resident in Brunei, observed that a "great majority" of parents preferred that their children acquire their "first and early education" in their mother tongue, with English as a second language (Barcroft, 1952:33-4). James (1996), writing about MT use in bilingual education in Brunei, argues that the MT of Bruneian children, such as Brunei Malay, should be used at least in the primary school. His reasons, among others, were that MT education serves "to ensure academic progress in the content areas of the curriculum" (James, 1996:249) and "to promote Bruneian values and culture," (James, 1996:250). Indeed, the positive impact of the MT elsewhere in areas of comprehension (Swain, 1986), writing attitude (Garrett et al (1994), and mathematics (Ramirez et al, 1991) has been documented in current literature on the subject.

In government schools, teachers are required to use either standard Malay or English as the language of instruction, according to the subjects taught. The present report is based on a case study carried out in one Chinese-medium private school in the capital which employs MT Mandarin as an additional language. Mandarin is also used by teachers as a bridge language in the teaching of maths and science in the lower levels of education.

## **Chung Hwa Middle School – a case study**

### ***Background information***

Chung Hwa Middle School was established in 1922 by the Chinese community of Brunei. Until 1970, Mandarin was the medium of instruction for all subjects except Malay and English. Today, the school offers a trilingual Mandarin, English, and Malay learning environment while adhering to the education policy established by the Ministry of Education. There are about 3,400 students in Chung Hwa with a student composition of 74% Chinese, 17.9% Malays, and 8.1% others (including Filipinos and Indians). Located in the heart of the capital, Bandar Seri Begawan, this Chinese-medium school is the largest private school

in the area and caters to children from Brunei-Muara District. Strongly rooted in Chinese culture and tradition, the school has, among its objectives, the maintenance of the four Eastern values – prosperity, righteousness, modesty, and remorsefulness – among its students. In my interviews with the principal and teachers, the impression gathered is that, compared to students elsewhere, those in Chung Hwa School are more conscious of Chinese culture and values, such as being respectful towards their elders and being polite to their teachers and classmates.

### *The role of Mandarin in the school*

Mandarin is offered as a compulsory subject and is well incorporated into the overall school curriculum from kindergarten through to Secondary Grade 5. This applies to all students, both Chinese and non-Chinese. Mandarin in the school fulfils two roles. First, it serves as an additional language, albeit a compulsory one for every student enrolled, from kindergarten to the upper secondary levels. For Chinese students, it serves to maintain their MT and reinforce Chinese culture and values. For non-Chinese students, it satisfies their parents' wish to have their children learn another language, particularly one they see as having potential advantages for the future, given China's increasingly significant influence in the region. Second, Mandarin also functions as a bridge language for Chinese-speaking children in the lower primary classes, although it was originally not intended as one.

### *Mandarin within the structure of the school curriculum*

An examination of the curriculum structure of Chung Hwa Middle School reveals that Mandarin is an additional subject taught at every level in the school from lower primary through to upper secondary. For non-Chinese students, the Mandarin exam at the secondary level is optional. At the primary school level, there are seven 30-minute periods of Chinese per week, while students at the secondary level will have seven 35-minute periods of Chinese each week. Mandarin classes at the lower primary levels are devoted to learning the basic aspects of the language – word recognition, reading, and writing of Chinese characters. As students progress to the higher levels, they are taught and drilled in reading comprehension and composition writing.

### *Mandarin-English code-switching as a bridge language of instruction at the lower primary levels*

Although table 9 does not show the utilization of Mandarin as a bridge language of instruction for its children at any level, in reality teachers often find the need to incorporate Mandarin into their teaching of other subjects such as maths and science in the lower primary classes. They claim that if they do not use Mandarin many of the students are not able to understand the content areas of these subjects. More significantly, the actual language used for bridging is not pure Mandarin, but a “code-switching” mixture of Mandarin and English. Code-switching between Mandarin and English occurs mostly in the lower primary classes. Code-switching is a phenomenon described in Romaine (2000:57) as “mixed speech” and employed by conversational partners who “use both languages, together to the extent that they change from one language to the other in the course of a single utterance.” (Wardhaugh, 1986:103) Despite

conflicting attitudes towards the phenomenon, code-switching is not discouraged in the school, as it is felt that for subjects like maths and science priority should be placed on content knowledge by students. If the use of the MT helps children gain access to that knowledge, then teachers should use the learners' language accordingly. Many students do not actually come from homes which speak the school languages, and if instruction were given purely in these languages, those students would be at a clear disadvantage in their schooling.

### *Teaching Materials*

Teaching materials in Mandarin are available only for classes in which Mandarin is taught as a subject. Before 1970, Mandarin teaching materials in the school were all from Taiwan, and students then sat for the Taiwan national exams. Today, however, the school uses materials from Singapore's school curriculum because students now sit for Singapore-Cambridge GCE "O" level Mandarin. These materials are in the form of course books, textbooks, and worksheets.

While teachers found the materials to be generally helpful, they often have to develop and construct their own materials because the imported materials do not cater to the particular needs of local students. One complaint is that the activities and exercises might not be interesting enough for students in the lower primary classes. Mandarin learning by young children must be accompanied by action songs, dramas, and story-telling. There are not enough of such activities in the prescribed materials. As a result, teachers often devise their own teaching materials to maintain student interest.

Furthermore, the imported texts are normally accompanied by the Roman alphabet or Hànyǔ Pīnyīn to provide support for Chinese pronunciation. For the teachers, this appears to be more of a hindrance than a help, as these alphabets are frequently inaccurate and have led students to erroneous pronunciation. Also, students tend to rely too much on the Roman alphabet and not the Chinese characters in learning pronunciation. Consequently, some of the teachers have found it necessary to rewrite the texts, leaving out the Roman alphabetical accompaniment altogether so that students are forced to read from the Chinese characters directly.

### *Mother tongue teachers*

Apart from a few local teachers, the Mandarin teachers in the school come from Malaysia, China, and Taiwan, with the bulk of them from East and West Malaysia. These are all trained and experienced Mandarin teachers. They report to the head of the Chinese Language Department, who oversees the Mandarin programme in the school from primary to secondary levels. However, these teachers are not trained in using the MT as a bridge language in the classroom. They are teachers who teach Mandarin as an additional subject. As far as the other subject teachers are concerned, even though many are bilingual and trilingual in Mandarin, English, and Malay, none are trained in MT-based instruction, simply because there is at the moment no such programme provided by the school. The Mandarin-English code-switching phenomenon observed in the lower primary classes is a coping strategy adopted by teachers who must teach in a medium that many of their multilingual students have not mastered.

### *Community support*

The school actively promotes Mandarin through a variety of activities planned throughout the year. To promote Chinese culture, students perform in the annual Lunar New Year lion dances, and stage these dances at the homes of Chinese community members. The school also organizes annual Chinese Weeks featuring activities such as story-telling, drama, and singing, all of which promote Mandarin as the students' MT language. These activities are actively supported by community members and parents. Funding for all these activities comes from the generous sponsorship of local Chinese associations, businessmen, and community members. Sponsorships normally come in the form of cash donations, prize donations, and support in kind.

### *Assessment of MT Mandarin in the school*

In my interview with the school principal on the impact of Mandarin in the school, the response was that having Mandarin as an additional and bridge language of instruction in the school has brought about more positive than negative results. One proud observation made by staff is that students appear to respond positively to the teaching of Chinese cultural values, such as filial piety and respect for elders, through Mandarin. Mandarin is seen to help students maintain their Chinese culture.

Furthermore, both the principal and teachers felt that using the MT as a bridge language in the lower primary classes has more advantages than disadvantages. The support provided by the MT has helped children acquire knowledge of subject content, which is the main aim in classroom instruction. The idea is that if a child does not understand a concept in science or maths through the school language, then it should be explained in his/her mother tongue so that no child will lose out in terms of learning opportunities. Both the principal and teachers also do not feel that the use of code-switching in these classes has adversely affected students' proficiency in the school's languages as they progress through the system. This is demonstrated by Chung Hwa students' consistent, outstanding performance in the upper primary and lower secondary national exams and the GCE "O" Levels at the end of Secondary Grade 5.

According to the administrators, the outlook for Mandarin MT education in the school is positive. Mandarin will continue to flourish as an additional language, especially when parents are well aware of the potential influence of China in the region and worldwide. Moreover, stronger relations between Brunei and China can only mean a better future for Mandarin in the country.

### *Challenges facing MT Mandarin use in the school*

One of the main challenges impressed upon me through this case study is the appropriateness of the MT instructional and reading materials currently used in the school. The problems faced when using materials from an external source were obvious. The needs of Bruneian students may be quite different from those found elsewhere. As such, there is a real need for the school to engage local curriculum writers to produce the Mandarin learning materials best suited to the Bruneian Chinese child.

School subjects such as maths and science have no learning materials written in the MT. The learning materials for these subjects are all in English. As a result, students have to struggle through texts written in the school languages; this becomes more stressful for children who do not come from homes where these languages are spoken.

The other major challenge facing the school lies in setting up an MT-based programme where bilingual or trilingual teachers can be trained in the use of the MT as a bridge language in the multilingual classroom. Although the code-switching phenomenon appears to work quite well for teachers, it is at best an *ad hoc* strategy. Student learning could be maximized with an established MT-based programme in place. This may involve substantial financial and government support. While it may be possible to garner financial support from the affluent Chinese community, government support may take a longer time in coming. At present, the idea of having an MT-based programme has yet to be considered by the Ministry of Education here.

## Conclusion

Although, there has yet to be a MT-based programme in Brunei state schools, MT education is provided in varying degrees in some private and international schools. This report is based on a case study of a Chinese-medium school located in the capital of Brunei Darussalam, where MT Mandarin is incorporated into the school curriculum, officially as an additional subject and, unintentionally, as a bridge language of instruction in the lower primary classes. The impression I gathered from this study is that, as unplanned as it may be, the use of their MT as a bridge language in the teaching of subjects across the curriculum has been fundamental in helping students maintain their Chinese culture and gain access to knowledge which would otherwise not have been available to them.

## Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the principal and teachers of Chung Hwa Middle School in Bandar Seri Begawan, Brunei, for their very generous and enthusiastic support throughout the case study.

## The mother tongue as a bridge language of instruction in Cambodia

*Un Siren*

### Introduction

About twenty languages are spoken in Cambodia. The largest ethnic group, the Khmer, constitutes approximately 90% of the population, making this country and its people one of the least linguistically diverse nations in the region. The populations of most ethnolinguistic minorities are small, except for the speakers of Cham, Vietnamese, and Chinese languages.

In Cambodia, the medium of instruction at all levels is the national language, Khmer. Recently, several non-dominant languages have been included in education programmes by various NGOs, with the close co-operation of the education authorities.

The Special Education Office (SEO) was created in 2000 under the Primary Education Department (PED) of the Directorate-General of Education (DGE), Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sport (MoEYS), Kingdom of Cambodia. SEO is the office responsible for the education of various groups of children – the poor, ethnic minorities, the disabled, street children, girls, and all other disadvantaged children.

A Bilingual Education (BE) project was first piloted in 1997 by an INGO, International Cooperation for Cambodia (ICC), as literacy classes for adults, which were a part of the MoEYS Nonformal Education system. Soon other local NGOs began to collaborate with District Offices of Education (DOEs) and schools to provide literacy classes for ethnic minority groups in the evenings, after their farm work. The first programme targeting children began when Save the Children Norway (SCN) implemented a one-year “bridging” BE programme in state schools using MoEYS textbooks translated into their mother tongue. In 2002, CARE established a bilingual education project in community schools for children from ethnolinguistic minorities in Rattanakiri Province, located in the northeast of Cambodia, bordering the Lao PDR and Vietnam.

In 2004, SEO officers and UNICEF (Cambodia) staff visited the Bilingual Education project of ICC and CARE in Rattanakiri. During that visit, activities were discussed and planned that would give children from ethnolinguistic communities in the highland provinces access to education similar to the CARE model. In 2006-07, MoEYS, with technical support from CARE and funding from UNICEF, started implementing the project in five highland Provincial Offices for Education (POEs): Rattanakiri, Mondulakiri, Steung Treng, Kratie, and Preah Vihear.

There were a number of key factors that encouraged MoEYS to replicate the programme. Firstly, there was a growing awareness among the ethnolinguistic communities of Cambodia regarding the importance of education. Nonformal literacy evening classes conducted by other agencies in the community

contributed to this. The classes were conducted in the evening because of the need to be involved in farm work during the day.

After the trial period, MoEYS and the NGOs suggested that the community school could be used in the daytime for a combined approach to primary schooling, comprising both formal and nonformal systems. The community already understood the function of the school and often participated in the school's social activities. They overcame their reluctance to have their children attend school rather than farm, and permitted their children to attend school regularly.

The pilot programme was thus vital for MoEYS in considering the potential development of a sustainable programme for speakers of non-dominant languages.

Based on the success of its earlier efforts, MoEYS replicated the programme in both community schools and donated classrooms in state schools in 2005-06, with support from development partners (IOs, NGOs, and agencies). It relied on existing community resources to employ both government and community teachers.

Two specific goals were included in this effort: to strengthen the capabilities of MoEYS/POE staff; and to achieve Cambodia's EFA goal of all children having access to a basic education up to Grade 9 by 2015.

## Bilingual education situations

### 1. *Rattanakiri and Mondulhiri*

The Provincial Education Offices (POEs) in Rattanakiri and Mondulhiri have piloted a programme with technical support from CARE, funding from UNICEF, and co-ordination with the Special Education Office (SEO), using both community schools and borrowed space from state schools. The intention for the bilingual programme is that community schools would become state schools after the pilot project is completed.

Based on results from last year, the team is willing to continue providing educational services to the children of ethnolinguistic communities in the target areas. SEO's monitoring results identified an important question that was raised by the parents: How can we learn Khmer without losing our local language? The parents were concerned that their tribal culture might be threatened if children were forced to learn Khmer. Once they were shown that their mother tongue would be protected and their native traditions and culture would be included in the instructional programmes, parents were reassured.

The Provincial Implementation Teams (PITs) were composed of members of the Provincial Office of Education, the District Office of Education, and the community. Each PIT facilitated a programme by meeting with community

members to raise their awareness of education, set up a community school board, and establish schools for their children. Because of the lack of classrooms, they held classes in the village hall or a tent while the new schools were being constructed.

During 2007-08, it is anticipated that children will have been able to study in their new schools. In addition, the BE programme will be expanded to four community schools and six state schools. The capabilities of community teachers of the BE project in both literacy and methodology has been developed by Rattanakiri POE/CARE, which serves as a Teacher Training Unit.

The Mondulkiri PIT sends their community teachers to the Rattanakiri POE/CARE programme for informal training. There are three community schools in Mondulkiri; two are in the community and one is in a state schoolroom. In 2007-08, the community school in the state school will have been relocated to the village centre of the language community in response to concerns raised by parents. The parents felt that their children would continue to use their mother tongue and the community and local environment would be more effectively integrated with bilingual classrooms if the school was in the village. In the early stages of the programme, learners had not wanted to participate in lessons with their classmates from the dominant language community, even though the teachers knew the mother tongue. If the schools were in the village itself, it would be possible for students to help their parents before or after the lessons by doing farm work.

## **2. Steung Treng**

The BE programme in Steung Treng has not yet been started. The PIT faced two major problems in 2006-07. The target schools were far from the provincial town, in a jungle with few or no roads, and no transportation was available, especially in the rainy season. Key personnel in the POE insisted on beginning the programme, however, in order to help the children in the remote areas receive an education. The second problem was the language barrier. Orthography and other documentation processes for Kavet are still under way, and so it has been a challenge to deal with the development of teaching/learning materials.

The POE of Steung Treng has replicated the CARE model in three community schools, and also sends its community teachers to Rattanakiri to be trained by Rattanakiri POE/CARE.

## **3. Preah Vihear and Kraties**

Preah Vihear and Kraties stopped implementing their programme after only one year. However, there is evidence to indicate that some children were able to begin learning the national language after only one year of using their mother tongue in a learning situation. The Preah Vihear POE collaborated with Save the Children Norway to implement a one-year bilingual education bridging programme for Kuoy children using a government teacher who knows both the mother tongue and the national language. The classes were held in state schools. After testing, Kuoy children demonstrated that they were able to study Grade 2 of the national language curriculum.



In Kratie province, the POE and DOEs have stated that they believe that a BE programme is necessary in the remote areas. They will try to identify the children who need such education in order to initiate services.

## Lessons learnt

### *Challenges*

Most adults in the local communities have not completed Grade 9 of lower secondary school. Thus, it is difficult to follow the MoEYS guidelines on selecting primary teachers from the community.

### *Positive observations*

The villagers are strongly in favour of establishing schools in their communities and realize the value of education. Community living patterns motivate people to share trees, land, and farm labour, and also work hard on school buildings. They have also begun to encourage those who are better educated or familiar with the national language to be involved in the programme as assistant teachers. Members of ethnolinguistic communities are realizing that there are advantages to be gained from children and teachers sharing the same language. Schools are becoming an integral part of communities. Parents are becoming more responsive and co-operative with the school, and many of the school's functions have become their social activities.

Parents are proud that they can learn from their children at home, on the farm, or in the community, and the pupils themselves are gradually gaining more understanding of the value of education. Teachers have become more resourceful and creative in their teaching. They are able to connect to the community, culture, and environment, and use the local language to develop more effective reading skills and improved comprehension.

With the collaboration of NGOs, the Provincial Office of Education, and the MoEYS, MoEYS textbooks have been developed into local languages using the Khmer script. Having these textbooks has made it easier for community teachers to use them for their lessons. Books have been translated and adapted into five languages, and additional reading books are being prepared to increase reading competence and literacy skills.

The Provincial Implementation Teams have noted areas in which the implementation of the project needs to be strengthened. In Grades 1-3, government teachers are needed in the community schools in order to support community teachers. Community teachers need more training in order to develop their skills for teaching literacy and other subject content. Co-ordination and collaboration between education partners to continue the BE project are vital to success.

## Conclusion

Initially, education programmes were managed by government teachers who did not know the language, the culture, or the traditions of the ethnic minority community. This led to a rise in the drop-out rate of pupils. Since the beginning of the bilingual education project, however, there is evidence that, when community teachers replaced or assisted the government teachers, this trend was reversed or minimized. Thus, it is critical that the number of teachers from ethnolinguistic communities be increased in order that they can work alongside the MoEYS and Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) to sustain the project.

There is evidence that the length of time that the mother tongue is used is critical to learners' success in school. It seems that the mother tongue should be used at least up to Grades 2-3 of primary school, depending on the pupils' understanding of the national language.

The community needs mother tongues to be used in classrooms, and the MoEYS and RGC want to achieve the EFA goal on time by including ethnic minority groups. Both of these goals are not exceptional. The BE should reduce the length of the bridge programme (from Grades 1 to 3 or less is preferable); otherwise the students continue to learn their own dialect more than the national language. Consequently, MoEYS cannot reach its EFA goal of all children having access to at least a basic education by 2015. The BE project is possibly the best way for ethnic minority children to participate in both the formal and nonformal education sectors. It is expected that bilingual education working groups will improve programme co-ordination and eventually take ownership from the NGOs.



## A case study on the use of Kadazandusun in Malaysia

*Sandra Logijin*

### Introduction

This paper discusses the teaching of Kadazandusun language, the mother tongue of the Kadazandusun community in Sabah, Malaysia. It also discusses the factors that influenced language shift among the Kadazandusuns. Emphasis is also given to the development and implementation of the Kadazandusun language syllabus, as well as steps taken to promote teaching and learning of the Kadazandusun language. In implementing the Kadazandusun syllabus, factors such as strategies, support programmes, community mobilization, challenges encountered, and their impact on the community are taken into account.

### Background

Malaysia subscribes to a centralized education system. All primary schools throughout Malaysia follow a standardized primary and secondary school curriculum. Primary school is from Year 1 to Year 6 and secondary school is from Form 1 to Form 5.

The curriculum is designed to be taught in a holistic and integrated manner, and to equip students with skills that are essential for the development of the nation of Malaysia. The curriculum aims to foster healthy attitudes and instil good values and loyalty towards the nation. The use of the national language, *Bahasa Malaysia*, as the medium of instruction in schools aims to foster unity among all ethnolinguistic communities in Malaysia. To keep up with developments in this era of science and technology, three subjects – science, mathematics, and technology – are taught in English. English is also taught as a subject, since it is an international language and has the status of a second language for many in Malaysia.

Mandarin and Tamil language are also offered in schools, and students are given the option of learning them. Three indigenous languages are included in the curriculum – Kadazandusun in Sabah, Iban in Sarawak, and Semai in Peninsular Malaysia. Children of these ethnolinguistic groups are encouraged to learn their mother tongue in order to preserve their language and culture.

### The land below the wind

Sabah, a state in Malaysia, is the home of the Kadazandusuns. It is located in the northeastern part of the island of Borneo, with Kota Kinabalu as the capital city. Sabah's economy relies mostly on agriculture, forestry, mining, and fishing. Sabah's main exports are palm oil, palm kernel oil, crude petroleum, and timber. The tourist industry is booming, due to its beautiful scenery, diverse culture, and wonderful seafood. Sabah is divided into five administrative divisions: the Interior, the West Coast, Kudat, Tawau, and Sandakan.

## The people

Sabah has a population of 3,387,880. There are twenty-eight recognized indigenous ethnolinguistic groups (17.8% of the population is Kadazandusun). Other ethnic groups that are prominent are the Bajau, comprising 13.4% of the population, and the Murut, 3.3%. Other indigenous ethnic groups constitute 14.6% of the population of Sabah. Apart from them, there are the Malays (11.5%), Chinese (9.6%), and Indians (4.8%), living mainly in cities such as Kota Kinabalu, Sandakan, and Tawau.

## The language

Malay and English are widely used, as well as the ethnic languages of the Kadazandusun, Bajau, and Murut. The Malay spoken in Sabah differs from that in Peninsular Malaysia in its intonation and inflection, influenced by the fact that Kalimantan, which is part of Indonesia, is Sabah's neighbour.

Kadazandusun is spoken by about 750,000 people. Currently, active speakers of Kadazandusun are from the pre-independence generation; those above fifty years of age. Kadazandusun is used in churches and in ceremonial events, such as the Kadazandusun Harvest Festival. The local newspapers reserve a section of their daily publication for Kadazandusun-language articles and there are also several Kadazandusun radio channels aired daily. A number of Kadazandusun literary works are found in bookstores and libraries in Sabah. Songs in the Kadazandusun language are popular. Kadazandusun children nowadays grow up knowing at least two languages – Kadazandusun as their mother tongue, and Malay as their second language.

## Responding to 'language shift'

A shift in the use of Kadazandusun language in the community occurred gradually and was realized in the late 1980s. Kadazandusun children had either become bilingual or were favouring the use of other languages, either Malay or English.

When Sabah joined the Malaysian Federation in 1963, Malay became the national language and Malay was the language of instruction in schools. It became the language of communication among the multi-ethnic groups of Sabah. At the same time, parents also encouraged their children to use Malay at home so that their children would master the language and secure jobs in government offices.

In urban areas, parents perceive that English is the language of academia and prestige. This trend plays a significant part in Sabah's language shift. Educated parents talk to their children in English rather than in their mother tongue. They also encourage their children to master English for the purpose of gaining access to tertiary education overseas. Recently, the use of English in the teaching and learning of science, mathematics, and technology in schools has strengthened parents' belief that English must be mastered. The fact that the private sector,

especially the tourism industry in Sabah, requires employees to be fluent in English enhances the view that English is more important than the mother tongue.

Efforts had to be made to revive the Kadazandusun language. One approach was to intentionally teach the language to Kadazandusun children. Furthermore, the Kadazandusun community also expressed their hope that the language would be taught in schools in Sabah. One challenge was to choose the preferred Kadazandusun dialect as the reference language for teaching and learning in schools. Hence, a symposium “Towards the Standardization of the Kadazan Dialects” was organized by the Kadazan Cultural Association and held in 1989. Through this symposium, the Kadazandusun reference language to be used in schools was identified. Following this, a spelling system for the Kadazandusun language was developed.

In April 1995, a memorandum of understanding (MOU) was established between the Kadazan Cultural Association and the United Sabah Dusun Association. In the memorandum, several matters were agreed upon:

- The reference language was to be called the Kadazandusun language.
- The dialect chosen to be the Kadazandusun language would be the Bundu-Liwan dialect (later rendered as the Bunduliwan dialect).
- The Kadazandusun language would be enriched by other dialects of the Dusunic family. The Bunduliwan dialect was chosen as the Kadazandusun reference language on the basis that it had the most number of speakers.

## Implementation of the Kadazandusun language syllabus

In 1994, a prominent Kadazandusun community leader proposed the teaching and learning of Kadazandusun language in schools in Sabah. According to the Education Act 1996, “...indigenous languages shall be made available if it is reasonable and practical ...” That year, the Curriculum Development Centre initiated the planning and development of a Kadazandusun language syllabus for the primary school. As part of the planning process, the Curriculum Development Centre invited stakeholders to give their ideas and opinions on a suitable Kadazandusun language syllabus. The stakeholders were the State Education Department, Kadazandusun teachers, NGOs such as the Kadazandusun Language Foundation (KLF) and the Kadazandusun Cultural Association (KDCA), and experts on the Kadazandusun culture and language.

The syllabus conforms to the requirements of the National Education Curriculum and aims to preserve and continue the Kadazandusun heritage. The syllabus was introduced to fifteen primary schools in 1997 on a trial basis. Since then, the teaching and learning of the Kadazandusun language in schools has progressed steadily as an additional subject.

In 2000, the primary school syllabus was revised and improved to suit the needs of the Kadazandusun community. The Kadazandusun Language Syllabus for primary schools aims to enable learners to communicate in their daily lives using

Kadazandusun and to continue the Kadazandusun heritage. At present, there are 279 primary schools offering Kadazandusun to 20,451 students in Years 4, 5, and 6 in Sabah. Orientation courses for master trainers in Kadazandusun language were held before implementation of the revised curriculum.

The aims of the Kadazandusun Secondary School Language Syllabus are to enable learners to use the language in their interaction with others, to understand ideas and information heard and read from various sources, to appreciate the language in different genres, and to continue the Kadazandusun heritage.

Currently, there are thirty-eight secondary schools offering the subject and the Kadazandusun syllabus was developed in-line with the needs of the Kadazandusun community.

### Support materials

Textbooks are produced by the Ministry of Education and these are distributed to students in all schools offering the Kadazandusun language in Sabah. Other supporting materials that are developed by the ministry includes activity books for primary schools, “off-air” listening pack, story books and a picture dictionary.

Various support materials have been produced by different divisions of the Ministry of Education. The Curriculum Development Centre, for example, has produced a Kadazandusun language reference book called “Puralan Boros Kadazandusun Id Sikul”. It is a reference book on the Kadazandusun language system - the first of its kind. In this book, a section is reserved for Kadazandusun quantifiers and idioms. This reference book is intended not only for teachers and students but for whoever is interested in the development and vitality of the Kadazandusun language. It is hoped that this reference book will be the starting point for the production of more books on the Kadazandusun language system by other interested parties.

The Kadazandusun Language Foundation (KLF), an NGO, produced the Kadazandusun Language Dictionary and a CD-ROM language learning kit for the benefit of students in schools.

### Teacher training

For successful implementation of the Kadazandusun language curriculum, teachers have to undergo courses to enable them to understand the syllabus. Training is given by the Curriculum Development Centre using the cascade model. First, selected teachers, who are master trainers, receive training. They in turn train other Kadazandusun teachers at the district level.

## Monitoring implementation of the syllabus

Implementation of the Kadazandusun language syllabus is monitored by the Curriculum Development Centre, the State Education Department, and District Education Officers. At the school level, principals are responsible for ensuring the smooth running of the Kadazandusun language curriculum.

## Community support

Committed individuals who are well versed in the Kadazandusun language voluntarily assist the Curriculum Development Centre in developing teaching materials to be used in schools.

The Kadazandusun Language Foundation conducts writers' workshops so that literary works would be produced in the Kadazandusun language. In addition, the Kadazandusun Cultural Association (KDCA), another NGO, promotes the use of the language through cultural programmes and activities, such as the Kadazandusun Harvest Festival celebration.

## Funding

The development and implementation of the Kadazandusun language curriculum is fully funded by the Ministry of Education, Malaysia, including training given to Kadazandusun teachers every year. Workshops by the Kadazandusun Language Foundation are sponsored by the Foundation.

## Challenges

In schools, the Kadazandusun language is taught outside the actual timetable. Creativity from the schools' administrators is needed to attract students to attend the classes when they are held after school hours. Parents need to be encouraged to allow students to be in school for longer hours.

Another challenge to schools is the lack of Kadazandusun language teachers. More teachers are needed to teach the language as more classes begin. More short courses for the teachers need to be carried out to make them more confident, proficient, and creative. However, some Kadazandusun parents do not encourage their children to learn the language by not using the language at home.

There is also a significant lack of supplementary Kadazandusun literature suitable for students and the ministry as well as KLF are trying very hard to overcome this.

## Impact

The language and culture of the Kadazandusun have been given recognition and importance by the Ministry of Education. Oral traditions that are part of the Kadazandusun heritage, such as the Sunddait (Riddles), Tudodoi (Lullabies), Hius (Songs), Taalaala (Tongue Twisters), and Rinait (Bobohizan chants) are now kept alive by having them taught in schools. Teaching the Kadazandusun language as a subject in schools has created awareness of the rich linguistic and cultural heritage of the Kadazandusun and the need to preserve non-dominant languages.

More importantly, the Kadazandusun language now plays a role in unifying the different Kadazandusun groups within the Kadazandusun community.

## Conclusion

No language should be allowed to perish, resulting in a great loss not only to a particular ethnolinguistic community but also to the human race in general. With it, all knowledge concerning that ethnolinguistic group will be lost forever. The Kadazandusuns, for their part, have to work hand in hand with the Ministry of Education to preserve their language, because to lose their language is to lose their culture and identity.





## The mother tongue as a bridge language of instruction in two schools in La Paz, Agusan del Sur, the Philippines: a case study

*Yolanda S Quijano and Ofelia Eustaquio*

### Background Information

The municipality of La Paz is an interior town of Agusan del Sur, one of the provinces in Mindanao. It lies south of Prosperidad, the provincial capital, and of San Francisco, a major transportation and trading hub of the province. A third-class municipality, La Paz has an annual income of Php850,000 derived from logging and farming (chiefly corn and rice). Based on ethnolinguistic grouping, 90% of the population is Manobo while the remaining 10% is either Cebuano and/or a mix of Cebuano and Manobo.

According to the 2000 Census, the municipality has a total population of 20,880, with fifteen barangays and 3,754 households. It consists of one school district boasting twenty-three public elementary schools and two high schools. Current elementary enrolment (2007-2008) in La Paz District shows that 73% (3,192) of the pupils are Manobos (Southern Mindanao) and the rest (27%) are Cebuano (Cebu), Ilonggo (Iloilo), Boholano (Bohol), Ilokano (Northern Luzon), and Surigaonon (Southern Mindanao) – groups from elsewhere in Mindanao and the central Visayas. Two public elementary schools in La Paz District are the subjects of this case study. These are Logpond 3 IP Experimental School and Langasian Elementary School.

The people of the community where the two schools are located have only three livelihoods: farming, fishing, and providing motorcycle transport. In most cases, a man engages in two or even all of these economic activities.

Due to road conditions, driving a habal-habal (single motorcycle) to transport people to town is a means of livelihood. Men and their wives, who sell freshwater fish and agricultural products, ride the motorcycle. Schoolteachers also take the motorcycle when they need to go home on weekends or pursue official business on weekdays.

### Linguistic Information

The national language of the Philippines is Filipino, as established in the 1987 Constitution of the Philippines. The Constitution provides the legal basis for the various language policies that are being implemented in the country.

According to Gonzales (2003), of McFarland's estimated 120 languages in the Philippines, ten are considered major languages based on the criterion of having at least one million speakers (as of the last census of 1995). These languages are Tagalog, Cebuano Bisayan, Hiligaynon Bisayan, Waray (Eastern Bisayan), Ilokano, Kapampangan, Bicol, Pangasinense, Maranao, and Maguindanao. The

latter two are really varieties of the same language, but are considered separate by their native speakers for reasons of history and political rivalry.

Though Minanubu is not included as one of the major languages in the Philippines (only 0.33% in the entire nation), the 2000 population census shows that in the province of Agusan del Sur, Manobo accounts for the second highest population by ethnicity, and therefore Minanubu may be considered a language of wider communication.

**Table 10: Household Population by Ethnicity, Agusan del Sur 2000**

<b>Household Population by Ethnicity, Agusan Del Sur, 2000</b>	
<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Both Sexes</b>
<b>Agusan del Sur</b>	<b>558,414</b>
Cebuano	171,276
Manobo	87,543
Hiligaynon	50,707
Boholano	39,765
Butuanon	23,865
Other	182,730
Other Foreign Ethnicity	102
Not Reported	2,426

Children in the three schools of the pilot programme use Minanubu as their first language at home. Inter-marriage and the prevalence of other settlers, mostly Cebuanos, makes Cebuano-Bisayan the second language used in communicating, especially when learners go out of their locality. Filipino and English are considered their third and fourth languages, respectively. While in school, the traditional media of instruction in the classroom are Filipino and English, both foreign to the students. According to the traditional approach, students are expected to read, write, and master curriculum content and objectives in Filipino and English while acquiring and learning these two new languages.

Philippine experience reveals that various first languages or mother tongues are actually used informally in teaching young children, especially during the first two grades in public schools. But the use of these first languages is not supported with instructional materials. From Grade 1, traditionally all materials and much classroom instruction are in the two official languages, Filipino and English, even for children who speak neither language at home. Some teachers initially use the prescribed language for particular subjects (Filipino or English) and then translate into Manobo or Cebuano Visayan, if the teachers do not know Manobo, in order that the students can understand the lesson. Since the students do not understand Filipino or English, they often wait for the teacher to translate it for them before they try to respond or follow the teacher's instructions.

## National Educational System

The Philippine educational system is anchored on fundamental legal documents, the most important of which are the Philippine Constitution of 1987 and the Education Act of 1982. The provisions mandated in the Constitution have been articulated in the Education Act of 1982, which provides that:

The State shall promote the right of every individual to relevant quality education regardless of sex, age, creed, socio-economic status, physical and mental condition, racial as well as ethnic origin, political or other affiliation. . . . The State shall promote equality of access to education as well as the enjoyment of the benefits by all its citizens.

The State shall promote the right of the nation's cultural communities in the exercise of their rights to develop themselves within the context of their cultures, traditions, interests and beliefs, and recognize education as an instrument for the maximum participation in national development and in ensuring their involvement in achieving the national unity.

Free public basic education is ten years: six years for elementary school and four years for secondary school with preschool education offered at most schools.

Consistent with the Philippines' 1987 constitutional mandate is the Department of Education's language policy under Department Order No. 52, s. 1987, entitled 'The 1987 Policy of Bilingual Education.' This Order reiterates the basic provisions of Department Order No. 25, s. 1974 (Implementing Guidelines for the Policy on Bilingual Education) by stating that the "policy on bilingual education aims at the achievement of competence in both Filipino and English."

The policy statement also emphasizes that

the aspiration of the Filipino nation is to have citizens possess skills in Filipino to enable them to perform their duties and responsibilities as Filipino citizens and in English in order to meet the needs of the country in the community of nations.

The specific subjects in which each language should be used are the same as those indicated in Department Order No. 25, s. 1974, namely English and Filipino as media of instruction in Grades 1 and 2 in all schools. Regional languages are to be used as auxiliary media of instruction and as supplementary languages for achieving literacy, when needed.

In addition, English and Filipino are to be taught as subjects in all grades in elementary and secondary schools. Filipino is to be the medium of instruction in social studies/social science, character education, work education, health education, and physical education. English is to be the medium of instruction in all other subjects.

## Methodology and implementation

### *Implementation of the Culture Responsive Curriculum for Indigenous People (CCIP): preparatory work*

In response to the recommendations of a study conducted on curriculum indigenization by the University of the Philippines' School of Economics in 2002 for the Third Elementary Education Project (TEEP) of the Department of Education, local initiatives to support ethnolinguistic communities and address specific concerns of pupils in indigenous communities were proposed. With the aim of improving academic performance, the programme was called a Culture-Responsive Curriculum for Indigenous People (CCIP). The basic components of the programme included:

- the use of the mother tongue in teaching and learning concepts and skills.
- teacher training.
- preparation of culturally appropriate instructional materials in local languages.
- community participation.

CCIP Programme implementation in Agusan del Sur started in 2002 under the leadership of the Schools Division Superintendent at the time, Dr Beatriz Omay. A survey to gather data on the number of indigenous people in the area was conducted, and its findings served as the basis for decisions on the location of the programme. The programme was handed over to the District Supervisor and co-ordinator for CCIP in the Division, Mrs. Elena Acacio. Being new in the Division, with a limited knowledge of the program, and coming from a different ethnolinguistic background (Leytena), she admitted she had second thoughts about whether she could successfully lead the programme. Knowing its urgency and importance, however, she had to find ways to make it work. She visited the Schools of Indigenous Knowledge and Tradition (SIKAT) Office in Tagum, Davao Oriental, for orientation on IP programmes and to identify ways in which the Office could help her. She was also sent by the Division to attend training events relevant to the education of children from ethnolinguistic communities. With support from colleagues and funding from TEEP, the programme began. The CCIP Programme covered nine schools, but this case study focuses only on two schools in La Paz. Below is a general profile of these schools.

**Table 11: Profiles of Logpond 3 Experimental School and Langasian Elementary School**

School	Year CCIP Started	Total Enrolment School Year			Number of Teachers	Grades Handled	Classification
		04-05	05-06	06-07			
Logpond 3 IP Experimental School	2002	68	51	65	1 <u>1</u> 2	1,2 3-5	Incomplete, multigrade
Langasian Elementary School	2004	172	178	170	2 1 1 <u>1</u> 5	1A,1B 2 3,4 5,6	Complete, with combination classes

Logpond 3 IP Experimental School and Langasian Elementary School are both multigrade (MG) schools. The former is an incomplete MG school while the latter is a complete MG school. The teacher-pupil ratio is approximately 1:33.

The CCIP programme in these schools had the following objectives:

- to use the mother tongue in teaching pupils from ethnolinguistic communities who cannot cope with the Filipino and/or English language as the initial language of instruction.
- to develop and inculcate spiritual and civic values among pupils from ethnolinguistic communities and encourage them to take pride in their culture, traditions, and values.
- to provide teachers with skills, strategies, and teaching aids and materials in the integration of culturally appropriate education with the Basic Education Curriculum.
- to write and preserve local folklore, poems, songs, riddles, proverbs, and other reading materials and artefacts.

### Community mobilization and support

During the height of the implementation of the Third Elementary Education Project in 2002, a series of consultations and meetings with community stakeholders was conducted to discuss the possibility of a programme wherein the Minanubu language would be used as a medium of instruction in teaching Grades 1 and 2 and Manobo culture would be integrated into appropriate subject material. Most of the community members were pleased with and excited about the potential of such a programme, knowing that their community would benefit from it. However, a few were apprehensive, especially about the use of Minanubu language in teaching. They were concerned that since their children already knew Minanubu, they wanted them to learn new languages like English and Filipino, since these were the languages used in urban areas.

With continuous dialogue, consultations, and the presence of Manobo teachers who were both local residents and advocates of the programme, the community was finally convinced. The importance and benefit of using the mother tongue in teaching the early grades was explained to them. In 2002-2003, the programme was finally accepted and initiated at Logpond 3 IP Experimental School in La Paz. Logpond 3 was a newly opened school then (since 2001-2002) and the funds for the school building, including teachers' salaries, came from the local government, the municipality, and the province.

Community stakeholders provided support to the programme by sharing local knowledge about Minanubu language and culture and attending important activities at school. Some of them acted as resource speakers during the series of trainings conducted for teachers. They also helped in the preparation of instructional and reading materials in Minanubu. In recognition of their help to the school, the division gave them certificates of appreciation.

These activities were replicated at Langasian Elementary School in 2004-2005.



Aside from the community support that the schools were getting, Datu Manggosawon, also known by his Christian name of Teofilo Gelacio, the tribal leader of the Manobo in Agusan, provided constant help in the implementation of the programme. He often visited the schools to discuss the progress of the programme with local people and teachers, as well as their problems, and offered them his advice. Experts from the Asian Council for People's Culture were also involved during the training. They discussed the important components of the culture that should be integrated into the lessons.

School staff, together with the elders, parents, and other stakeholders from these ethnolinguistic communities, participated in the preparation of School Improvement Plans to ensure that CCIP activities would be included.

Their participation can be seen as confirming that the community is taking ownership of the programme.

## Funding

The funding for this programme came from a number of sources. Initially, it was received from the Third Elementary Education Project (TEEP) of the Department of Education, which received funding assistance from the World Bank and Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC). Funding for school materials and supplies came from the Division of Agusan, Department of Education, and the local government units of the Province of Agusan and the Municipality of La Paz gave funds for the honoraria of some teachers. Starting in 2006-2007, funding requirements for the programme are to be addressed by the Department of Education.

## Teacher training

Division and local training for teachers and school heads was conducted by the Division Office, with experts on education in ethnolinguistic communities coming from local organizations and teacher training institutions. Local people who spoke the language were also invited to attend appropriate training events. The teachers who attended these events did not have any training in the use of the mother tongue for teaching in their pre-service education. They were either native speakers of the Minanubu language or non-native speakers of the language who had Manobo pupils in their classes. They also attended national training sessions conducted by the central office of the Department of Education, in which national experts on IP education gave lectures or acted as facilitators in workshops. The series of training events focused on the following:

- Orientation to the programme.
- Status of Indigenous Peoples education in the Philippines.
- Making indigenous instructional materials with input from experts and community members serving as resource persons, speakers, evaluators, and editors.
- Construction of teaching aids and devices, including ‘Big Books,’ for instruction in the first language, and proper utilization of these materials in different subject areas.
- Integration of indigenous education with the Basic Education Curriculum through demonstration teaching, workshops, and lectures (e.g. teaching beginners’ reading in Manobo).

Supervision and monitoring of the implementation of the programme was done by the Division, District supervisors, and school heads. The Division of Agusan del Sur developed a support system to monitor schools’ activities and provide technical assistance as needed.

## Curriculum development

The curriculum of these two schools conformed to the Department of Education’s Basic Education Curriculum. Like any other school, all subject areas indicated for each grade level were taught with the same time allotment. The Philippine Elementary Learning Competencies (PELC) was the main resource for identifying the content and skills to be taught. The medium of instruction differed, of course, since the mother tongue (Minanubu) was used in Grades 1 and 2 in teaching the various learning areas. The native speakers of the language handled these classes.

The medium of instruction in Grades 3 to 6 was either Filipino or English, depending on the subject to be taught. But when pupils found it difficult to understand the concepts in Filipino or English, the teacher used the mother tongue. Furthermore, the teachers were integrating local culture, values, and traditions in their lessons to make the teaching/learning process more relevant and participatory. The instructional materials used and reading books translated into Minanubu were all geared toward the promotion of the learners’ own culture, values, and beliefs, and were based on real-life situations in the community. These were also enriched through the use of local artefacts. A special feature in the curriculum was the inclusion in the class programme of a weekly 30-45-minute lesson on Manobo culture. Local resource speakers were also invited to share their culture with the pupils.

### *Reading and other instructional materials*

The programme started with a few reading materials (“Ogsugug Kito Pagbasa” and “Ogbasa Ki”) purchased from SIL Philippines. Funding from TEEP paved the way for providing schools with enough instructional materials and books. The funding helped to buy supplies and materials to make reading materials in the mother tongue (e.g. folktales, legends, songs, riddles, poems, and proverbs) including ‘Big Books,’ teaching aids and Manobo dictionaries, reading books, and comics from SIL Philippines.

Also, in support of the programme, the TEEP Central Office provided schools with Lesson Guides for English, Math, Science, Filipino, and Makabayan. These lesson guides had been reviewed by education and culture experts from the field, academic institutions, and other organizations. The lesson guides enabled the teachers to enrich the students' learning experience.

The reading materials were used by children in Grades 1 and 2 and non-readers in the higher grades. It helped teach reading and writing skills to speakers of Minanubu. The dictionary was also useful to students and teachers who were non-speakers. Most of all, the pupils loved the colourful 'Big Books,' which were originally written by teachers themselves with the help of community members who attended the training workshops.

## Methodology

The development of reading skills in the mother tongue started with the pupils' exposure to sounds, words, songs, poems, and short stories with pictures. Minanubu words with pictures were written down on charts, and pupils practised reading them. Formal reading was taught through Minanubu books, following the pattern for introduction of reading skills in Filipino as outlined in the Philippine Elementary Learning Competencies.

Teachers observed that the pupils easily understood the stories because the situations and vocabulary used were familiar to them. They were comfortable in answering and asking questions, describing and retelling important events, and writing words and sentences called for in the classroom activities. There were positive interactions between the teacher and pupils, between pupils and pupils, and between pupils and the reading materials. The teachers realized that the existing Minanubu reading materials lacked sufficient structure to develop reading skills required for Grade 1, and so they had to make their own stories. Teachers used strategies such as the phonics approach, the sight word approach, experience charts, and the basal reader approach.

For Filipino subjects in Grade 1, the same strategies were used for the teaching of reading, because Filipino vocabulary and grammar are closely related to Minanubu. Other specific strategies were taken from the Teacher's Manual accompanying the Filipino textbooks that were provided by the Department of Education.

Pupils' skills in phonics and in phonemic awareness facilitated learning English sounds and sight words. Modelling the pronunciation of the different sounds and words was emphasized. The 'Big Books' and picture stories in English were narrated by the pupils in their mother tongue. The teachers later read the stories to the pupils, and the pupils checked to see whether their interpretations were correct. For pupils to practise reading the basic sight words for the three languages, teachers displayed a chart of the basic words in Minanubu with pictures and their translations into Filipino and English.



Reading skills acquired by the pupils in their mother tongue motivated them to look at books written in Filipino and English. To sustain their interest, teachers allotted a specific time when children could choose the books they might like to read and share what they read to their classmates. Textbooks in other learning areas (math and science written in English and Makabayan or social studies written in Filipino) were given to them as reference materials for learning concepts and developing skills.

## Assessments

Pupils' learning achievement was assessed through the National and Division Achievement Tests (NAT & DAT). The NAT was administered to Grade 6 pupils by the National Educational Testing and Research Centre, DepED Central Office, while the DAT was given to all pupils from Grades 1 to 6 by the Division of Agusan del Sur. Assessment results from the NAT and DAT show that the schools performed better than in the tests given in the previous two or three years.

**Table 12: National Achievement Test Results**

Schools	National Achievement Test Results		Gain
	2004-2005	2005-2006	
Logpond 3 IP Experimental School	Not Tested	Not Tested	
Langasian Elementary School	65.72	75.86	10.14

Langasian Elementary School had a 10.14-point gain from its previous year's NAT result. Logpond 3 IP Experimental School was not tested in the two school years because it did not have enrollees for Grade 6.

**Table 13: Division Achievement Test Results**

Schools	Division Achievement Test Results			Gain
	2003-2004	2004-2005	2006-2007	
Logpond 3 IP Experimental School	42.24	72.71	77.21	34.97/4.5
Langasian Elementary School	49.40	64.13	Not tested	14.73

In the Division Achievement Test, Logpond 3 IP Experimental School was among the top (5<sup>th</sup> place) performing schools in 2004-2005 DAT results, and it sustained its gain in 2006-2007. Langasian Elementary School showed a 14.73-point increase in 2004-2005.

Considering the relevant performance indicators below, the schools also showed other improvements over three years.

**Table 14: Logpond 3 IP Experimental School Performance Indicators**

Performance Indicators	Logpond 3 IP Experimental School		
	2003-2004	2004-2005	2005-2006
Number of Enrolees		68	51
Drop-Out Rate	0.01%	0.24%	0%
Repetition Rate	0.09%	0.4%	0%

Logpond 3 IP Experimental School registered zero drop-out and repetition rates in 2005-2006, although its enrolment decreased by 17 pupils. These pupils opted to help their parents earn money to sustain their family rather than go to school. The decrease could be considered temporary, however, since enrolment increased in 2006-2007.

**Table 15: Langasian Elementary School Performance Indicators**

Performance Indicators	Langasian Elementary School		
	2003-2004	2004-2005	2005-2006
Enrolment	192	172	178
Drop-Out Rate	1.25%	2.67%	0%
Repetition Rate	12.45%	0%	0%
Completion Rate, Grade 6	83.3%	89.60%	90%

Similarly, Langasian Elementary School had zero drop-out and repetition rates in 2005-2006. The decrease in enrolment was due to poverty. Some pupils decided to stop schooling so as to help their parents earn a living. Completion rates in the last three school years increased, however.

A teacher of Logpond was asked whether she liked what she was doing and she said, "It is my Christian duty to teach these children. I also believe in indigenizing the curriculum, primarily to preserve the local culture and to promote more and better use of the first language."

When a group of pupils was interviewed, they all said they wanted to be good at reading, writing, and mathematics in both English and Filipino. They were able to achieve these when teachers helped them understand those two languages through the use of their mother tongue.

## Challenges

### *Mobilization and community awareness*

It took time for programme implementers at the La Paz schools to convince community stakeholders to support the programme. Their hesitation and unwillingness to participate was due primarily to the importance they gave to having their children learning new languages like English and Filipino rather than preserving their own culture and learning to read and write in their mother tongue. They were excited to have their children acquiring new languages because their notion was that new languages would put them at par with those who were living in urban areas. Continuous advocacy is required at the local level to change such attitudes so that they will wholeheartedly support the programme.

### *Staffing*

Newly hired teachers are usually assigned to remote areas, handling multigrade classes where IP children are enrolled. These teachers are usually not residents of the place and therefore non-speakers of the language, nor do they have knowledge of Manobo culture. To make the situation worse, these teachers usually apply for a transfer to a more urban setting, and there is no time to train their replacements. While this is considered to be one of the biggest challenges in the educational arena, opportunities and alternatives remain. Through the Inter-agency Committee Working for Indigenous Peoples, the Department of Education is committed to hiring IP teachers who are also residents of the place. Only very few are qualified, however, as passing the Teachers Licensing Examination is a prerequisite.

### *Curriculum development*

There is a need to review and revise the content and skills to be taught for acquiring Filipino and English (Grades 1 to 6) when the first language is used in the first two grades. Oral fluency, reading, and writing in the first language should be developed from preschool to Grade 2, while building oral skills in the second and third languages (Filipino and English) in Grades 1 and 2. Likewise, the content of the curriculum will vary from one cultural community to another. These tasks necessitate the participation of experts in the Department of Education.

### *Development of instructional materials and reading materials*

Whether or not pupils learn in the classroom depends not on teacher performance alone but also on the availability, quality, and appropriateness of instructional materials to support the teaching/learning process. The adequacy of appropriate materials is a constraint often identified in the development of a localized curriculum. There is a need to supplement the textbooks written in English and Filipino. This requires co-ordination with experts on education in ethnolinguistic communities at the national and local level to help develop materials. Likewise, funding is needed not only in the development process but most importantly in the production of such materials. The schools have to be prepared to ensure these needs are met.

## Conclusion

Neither Filipino nor English is the mother tongue of most of the pupils in the country, and yet these are the media of instruction used in education. Evidence indicates a gap that needs to be filled in order to deliver expected results in education. The effectiveness of the mother tongue as a medium of instruction continues to be explored and studied. The use of the mother tongue enjoyed greater acceptance than Filipino as an informal or auxiliary medium of instruction, and provided promising results, as shown in the two schools of La Paz District. It is important, therefore, that the use of the mother tongue as a medium of instruction in the first two grades be sustained. As attested by the students themselves, it promoted spontaneous expression among them and served as an effective bridge of understanding between the school and the home – clearly an indication of the beneficial effect of the programme. The use of the mother tongue not only lightened the burden experienced by pupils in coping with the lessons but promoted better understanding and co-operation between the home and school. It is not unusual to see a child entering school who finds it almost completely different from home – the atmosphere, the people, and the activities – and therefore he/she finds it difficult to adjust. The burden of adjustment is made even heavier when the language used is different from his/her mother tongue. To make a child deal with new ideas and information presented in an unfamiliar language is a double burden that slows down his/her progress. Through the use of a mother tongue, pupils and teachers exchanged ideas more freely in the classroom, thereby facilitating optimum learning.



## Bilingual literacy for the Pwo Karen community in Omkoi District, Chiangmai Province: a case study from Thailand

*Wisanee Siltragool, Suchin Petcharugsa, and Anong Chouenon*

### Background information

In 2003, the Office of the Non-Formal Education Commission (ONFEC) initiated an action research project, “Research Study and Materials Development for Ethnic Group Literacy in Omkoi District, Chiangmai Province.” The project was the first formal investigation of bilingual education in the country, receiving technical and financial support from UNESCO/APPEAL as well as the assistance and co-operation of SIL International: Thailand.

The first activity of the project involved conducting a community survey in the Omkoi area. The survey was done in two villages: Pa Kha and Nong Ung Tai. The survey was performed as a field visit conducted during a planning workshop by the project team, comprising about ten people from the NFE Main Office in Bangkok, the NFE Northern Regional Centre, Lampang Province, the Chiangmai NFE Centre, the Omkoi District NFE Centre, and CLC teachers from the two villages. Their assignment was to visit the villages, talk to people informally, and gather information about languages, religion, culture, and other conditions of the people.

The survey revealed that the people of Pa Kha were Christian, used the local Sgaw Karen language, and already had a writing system. In Nong Ung Tai, most of the people were either animist or Buddhist. They spoke the Pwo Karen language, which did not have a writing system. The research team decided to select Nong Ung Tai as the pilot site, and later another village of the same sub-district, Huey Kwang.

Nong Ung Tai, the seventh village of Nakian Sub-district, Omkoi District, is about 214 kilometres from the centre of Chiangmai, and 37 kilometres from the centre of Omkoi District. It takes about two hours to drive to the CLC (Community Learning Centre). There are 66 households, 70 families, and 295 villagers – 150 men and 145 women. The village is located in a small valley in the Omkoi highlands. The villagers earn their living by growing rice and corn and collecting forest products. Their average income is approximately 2,700 baht per head per year. The mother tongue of the villagers is Pwo Karen. The majority of the youth and adults can also speak northern Thai. The Maefaluang Hilltribe Community Learning Centre – Nong Ung Tai CLC – is the only education provider in the area.

**Table 16: Students at Each Level in 2006**

<b>Level</b>	<b>male</b>	<b>female</b>	<b>total</b>
Preschool level 1	27	15	42
Preschool level 2	8	4	12
Elementary level (Grades 1-6)	13	27	40
<b>Total</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>94</b>

Currently, there are two teachers at this CLC, one Thai teacher and a mother tongue Pwo Karen-speaking teacher.

Huey Kwang is also located at Nakian Sub-District. It is 212 kilometres from central Chiangmai, and thirty-five kilometres from central Omkoi District. The majority of the villagers earn their living by growing rice. In the past, due to epidemics, the village was divided into two sub-villages, i.e. Ban Huey Kwang and Ban Huey Kwang Mai. The sub-villages are five kilometres apart, and comprise 24 households and 24 families. There are 129 villagers – 65 men and 64 women. The majority of them practise Buddhism or Christianity. The average income is about 2,700 baht/head/year. Their mother tongue is also Pwo Karen, and the majority of youth and adults can also speak northern Thai. The Maefaluang Hilltribe Community Learning Centre (or Huey Kwang CLC) is located in this community.

**Table 17: Number of Students in 2006**

<b>Level</b>	<b>male</b>	<b>female</b>	<b>total</b>
Preschool levels 1-2	8	4	12
Elementary level (Grades 1-6)	17	26	43
<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>55</b>

Currently, there are two teachers at this CLC, one Thai teacher and a mother tongue Pwo Karen-speaking teacher.

Bilingual education was designed and first introduced in 2005 at the preschool level (for children of 3-5 years of age) in both villages. The emphasis has been on the introduction of songs and games for children. The languages used have been both Thai and Pwo Karen. Informal learning of Thai was introduced for adult learners, according to ONFEC policy.

## Linguistic Information

Standard Thai is the official and national language of Thailand, possessing undeniable status and prestige. With more than seventy languages spoken within its borders, Thailand is linguistically more diverse than the wide use of Standard Thai would indicate. Many Thai people living in the central region, including government officials, see all Thai languages as dialects of Standard Thai. The populations of some language groups are in the millions, including Isan, Kammeuang, Pak Tai, Pattani Malay, Northern Khmer, and Minnan Chinese. In addition, there are at least one hundred thousand speakers of Sgaw Karen, Kui, Phuthai, and possibly some Chinese languages. Many ethnolinguistic minorities are active participants in Thai society, and the situation has been described as unity in diversity.

Standard Thai is the medium of instruction at all levels of education. Until recently, the use of languages other than Thai was prohibited in Thai schools, although teachers have widely used local languages orally in early grades to help children who are speakers of non-dominant languages understand the curriculum. The Thai Constitution of 1997, and the more open society of the 1990s, however, have provided new opportunities for ethnolinguistic communities to use their languages.

The new Thai school curriculum, which started in 2002, allows the teaching of non-dominant languages in areas where ethnolinguistic communities live. 30% of the curriculum is allocated to non-dominant language study or other local content. In some areas, local language classes are taught in the slot of “local curriculum.” Available data shows that Bisu, Mon, Lahu Shi, and Chong are being taught as subjects in Thai government schools. Kui and Northern Khmer are, moreover, taught as subjects in some northern secondary schools. None of these activities can be considered true bilingual education, however, since mother tongue-first bilingual education approaches indicate that the local language should not be taught only as a subject, but also used as the media of instruction for all subjects in the curriculum. The use of local languages as the media of instruction is, therefore, limited, as teachers are restricted to the curriculum that employs Thai as the medium of instruction. Teachers in Thailand have never been adequately informed about multilingual education approaches.

## Methodology and implementation

### *Programme staff*

ONFEC is the organization chiefly responsible for this pilot project. It formed a programme staff team from the Non-Formal Education Development Division (Bangkok Central Office), the Northern Regional NFE Centre (Lampang Province), the Chiangmai NFE Provincial Centre, and the Omkoi District NFE Service Centre (Chiangmai Province).

### *Community mobilization and support*

Even though the pilot project was initiated by NFE staff, involvement by Pwo Karen teachers, students, and villagers increased tremendously during the period of project implementation. Community members were informed about workshops by CLC teachers and the Pwo Karen Supervisor, and these activities were conducted at the village site. Community participation was a practical key feature of the project.

Implementation of the project involved development of bilingual reading materials and the application of a bilingual methodology within the existing education system.

### *Phase 1: Developing bilingual literacy materials (2003-2005)*

In the initial stage, the project team surveyed the target community and conducted a needs assessment.

The development of a new writing system was a complex task that was completed with the contribution of linguists and educators of SIL International: Thailand and the involvement of Pwo Karen teachers from the pilot sites. The development of a writing system involved three main activities.

A workshop was held to examine and analyse the Pwo Karen sound system. This included collecting and transcribing Pwo Karen words, pairing words to analyse the Pwo Karen sound system, examination and analysis of the consonants, vowels, and tones of Pwo Karen, and recording Pwo Karen tones and vowels for further computer-assisted analysis. The word lists were checked in Nong Ung Tai so as to validate the findings of the first orthography workshop. This also involved the collection, transcription, and translation into Thai of a short folktale, "The Rabbit and the Snail." The folktale was compiled for use as an illustration of the sound system.

### Omkoï Pwo Karen alphabet design workshop

29 participants attended an alphabet design workshop to determine the letters needed for the writing system of the language of the Omkoï Pwo Karen community. In this workshop, the Pwo Karen villagers discussed why they needed a written language and what a writing system could do. The characteristics of a good alphabet were presented, and participants were asked to write stories in Pwo Karen using Thai script. This helped ensure that the symbols needed to represent the Pwo Karen sounds were identified in the stories. Options for the representation of Pwo Karen sounds not found in the current Thai writing system were presented and discussed. The Pwo Karen participants made decisions as to how best represent their special sounds.

The mother tongue speakers then tested their new writing system by writing lists of words for each consonant and vowel. These lists were checked and problems discussed as they arose. Changes to the writing system were made as necessary. Throughout the workshop, participants were reminded that the new writing system was provisional and would likely be adjusted further as problems



were discovered and addressed. Participants continued to test the writing system by producing materials, including a draft alphabet chart, picture dictionary, spelling guide, posters, and “The Rabbit and the Snail” booklet.

### Curriculum and teaching/learning materials development

After the alphabet design workshop, the Pwo Karen-speaking teachers were assigned to develop cultural themes and a cultural calendar of the Pwo Karen community at the pilot site. This was necessary for development of materials, since they were to be used as guidelines for writing content and ensuring that the materials would be used at the appropriate time, in accordance with the community’s annual work and life cycle. ‘Big Books’ and ‘Small Books’ were developed collaboratively by the teachers and learners.

A ‘Big Book’ is a large book with large print and large, interesting pictures. The stories are designed to be interesting and easy to follow. Words and phrases are repeated throughout the book, and the story is written so that learners can predict what might happen next. Pwo Karen teachers in the project developed ‘Big Books’ from their own experiences and local stories. Twenty ‘Big Book’ titles were developed by Pwo Karen teachers.

‘Small Books’ are small-sized booklets that aim to develop reading skills among learners. They can also be used to motivate learners to write stories using the recently developed Pwo Karen script. Thirty-four titles were generated by the learners and used at Nong Ung Tai CLC.

Games were also devised for the classes at the pilot site.

A Pwo Karen level 1 primer was developed and used for beginners to start to practise using the Pwo Karen writing system. It starts with consonants widely used in Pwo Karen. Learners practise all 24 consonants, together with vowels and tones. This primer was developed by Pwo Karen mother tongue teachers. It was initially used at the pilot site of Nong Ung Tai and checked and revised by SIL linguists and NFE material development experts.

The Pwo Karen level 2 primer was also developed by Pwo Karen mother tongue teachers for bridging from Pwo Karen to Thai. Phonemes which are unique to Thai were identified so that emphasis could be placed on practising the new phonemes rather than the Pwo Karen phonemes. Then the learners practised Thai consonants, vowels, and tones that do not exist in the Pwo Karen writing system, while practising some common phonemes and unique Pwo Karen phonemes.

CLC teachers and the people of the Pwo Karen community were the main actors in this project. They actively participated in every step of the project, gained new knowledge, and gradually developed experience in bilingual education. They generated teaching/learning materials and also gathered and maintained the project’s documentation. Participation in the workshop series increased the skills and knowledge of the teachers. ONFEC, with the cooperation of SIL International, organized training for four groups of teachers – Pwo Karen, Bisu, Mon, and Thai – in bilingual teaching methodology, based on a previously

developed teacher's guide, at a three-day training workshop held in Bangkok. The teachers learned teaching methodologies, observed demonstration teaching from resource persons, and practised teaching. They were observed and advised by the resource persons.

### The positive effects of bilingual education

Preschool children at the pilot sites started using their mother tongue in school and participated in activities according to the bilingual lesson plans created by the community teachers. Children gained more self-confidence and experienced a safe, comfortable environment in school. The children enjoyed coming to the CLC because they could communicate well with the teachers.

### ***Phase 2: Integration of the bilingual methodology with the existing education system (2006-2007)***

Positive effects occurred and could be observed during the first phase. The pilot site of Nong Ung Tai CLC was often visited and observed by educators and other visitors, from both Thailand and other countries. On 6 January 2006, the pilot site was visited by the Education Minister (Mr Jaturon Chaisaeng), the Permanent Secretary (Dr Kasama Varavan Na Ayudhaya), and other high-level officials of the Ministry of Education. The Minister commented during his visit, *"It's a miracle to see such a class."* Immediately after, he called for a meeting in Chiangmai Province and proclaimed a policy to develop appropriate education for ethnolinguistic communities.

In response to the Ministry's policy, and together with support from the Chiangmai Provincial NFE Centre, the NFE bilingual education project was extended to another twenty CLCs in Chiangmai Province serving ethnolinguistic communities. Project materials such as alphabet charts, Pwo Karen primers, manuals for writing practice, Pwo Karen dictionaries, and manuals for organizing a bilingual class were revised and published for wider use. A project VCD, entitled "Introducing Bilingual Education: A Case Study of the Omkoi Bilingual Project," was produced with a budget from the Chiangmai Provincial NFE Centre to disseminate information about this innovative approach, and televised nationwide.

The project team worked hard to prepare for the project expansion. They organized workshops in order to identify standards and indicators, prepared lesson plans at the preschool level, and developed a training curriculum for assistant teachers at the extension sites. A teacher training curriculum was developed to help teacher assistants gain understanding of teaching approaches for preschool students. Most of the teacher assistants recruited by teachers of the target hilltribe CLCs were still young themselves, and had low qualifications, i.e. they had only elementary education certificates or were studying at the lower secondary education level. They had very little experience or knowledge of the teaching/learning processes associated with bilingual education. The curriculum content for training included the following topics:

- Listening and speaking in Pwo Karen as used in the CLC.
- Reading and writing Pwo Karen.
- Singing educational songs and using educational games.

- Teaching processes according to lesson plans, designed for students of Preschool Level 1.
- Materials development, mainly for listening and speaking practices, for students of Preschool Level 1.

Training for assistant teachers was conducted soon after at Omkoi Resort, and training of CLC teachers in the Total Physical Response (TPR) method for teaching Thai was conducted in Chiangmai City. TPR is a teaching approach emphasizing physical movement, i.e. a student listens to the teacher and acts accordingly. This method can be used when students are ready to start learning a second language.

In addition, the project team explored existing mathematical concepts used in the Pwo Karen community. It was found that their “cultural mathematics” was a rich and significant addition to the bilingual education project. A cultural mathematics curriculum for Preschool, Grade 1, and Grade 2 was thus developed and used as a framework for developing lesson plans for preschool students. Pwo Karen mother tongue-speaking teachers were actively involved in this and took responsibility for organizing learning activities.

As its reputation rapidly spread, the project was strongly criticized by some people. Among those criticizing the project were other Karen groups who wanted to use their own script instead of a Thai script for representing the new writing system. Some Thais were concerned about potential “damage” to the Thai writing system, since a few Pwo sounds differ from those in the Thai language. For example, there is no tone in Pwo Karen, whereas there are five tones in Thai. This affects the Pwo Karen writing system, which borrows Thai symbols. In order to end these conflicts, in early 2007, the Chiangmai NFE Provincial Centre moved the Pwo Karen teachers from the pilot sites to other CLCs and halted all bilingual activities in the Omkoi area for reasons of “national security”. The pilot project on bilingual education for the Pwo Karen community was thus officially stopped.

## Impact and challenges of the project

### *Policy development*

The bilingual education project for the Pwo Karen community influenced policy development in Thailand in a number of ways.

- On 6 January 2006, the Education Minister visited Nong Ung Tai CLC and announced a concrete education policy for learners in ethnolinguistic communities.
- On 5 September 2005, the Ministry of Education issued an official regulation allowing all people access to any form of education. The government also provided an education budget for ethnolinguistic communities from the elementary up to the upper secondary level at the same rate as the budget for Thai children.
- On 2 June 2005, the Cabinet passed a resolution on education for children who lack Thai nationality or official household records.

### *Thai language learning*

Experiences from this pilot project made Thai educators and nonformal education specialists aware of alternative principles and methods of teaching Thai to children who are speakers of non-dominant languages. Currently, within ONFEC, lessons learned from the Pwo Karen bilingual education programme are informing the development of Thai language materials for ethnolinguistic communities in other areas. This will help NFE teachers develop greater understanding of learners' languages and cultures. It is hoped that mutual understanding among teachers, students, and ethnic communities can be achieved, and Thai language teaching can be effectively improved.

### *Capacity-building*

The project contained a strong capacity-building dimension. NFE teachers and staff had opportunities to exchange information and develop skills in bilingual education. This was a new experience for all participants, as training in curriculum and materials development, teaching/learning processes, and educational evaluation methods were established. Community members became involved in activities of the local language committee, and in story-telling activities that contributed to the development of Pwo Karen reading materials.

Pre-primary students gained direct benefits from the bilingual education programme. The process of developing a unique writing system, along with learning materials, a dictionary, and educational activities, contributed to the preservation of Pwo Karen language and culture. The participants in the bilingual education programme also had the same opportunities to continue their education as children whose mother tongue is Thai. This was an effective way to establish positive attitudes towards the Thai language while preserving the local language and the identities of the learners.

### *Curriculum and materials development*

Because the curriculum was developed with the participation of members of the ethnolinguistic community and CLC teachers, the curriculum was sensitive to local conditions, and the children could learn from their familiar local environment.

The success of the pilot project became the basis for national policy formulation and the desire to offer equal education to all people in Thailand. Ethnolinguistic communities now have increased opportunities to gain access to education and improve their quality of life. This development also contributes to social justice. Even though the pilot project was quite small, and was implemented in a remote ethnolinguistic community, it has still contributed significantly to development of education in Thailand.

## Challenges

The dissemination of knowledge about bilingual education is still limited in Thailand. It is important that awareness-raising should be done more widely, therefore, in order to make sure that the public has adequate and correct information about bilingual education.

It was evident that some parents of Pwo Karen students felt the need to see their children study Thai from the first day of school at the CLC, and did not feel it was necessary to begin gradually by using the mother tongue of the learner. Parents wanted their children to study Thai, which is the national language of education, so that they could communicate with Thais when they come to the city. Changing this attitude will not be easy.

Because the spelling of some words changed to respond to the Pwo Karen sound system, and because some obsolete Thai characters were used, there were those who came to the conclusion that this development was not acceptable and would violate Thai language principles. Actually, though, using Thai characters to represent Pwo Karen sounds has had an extremely positive effect on Thai language learning. The transfer of literacy skills from Pwo Karen to Thai has been supported by the use of Thai script for the Pwo Karen writing system. It is important to dispel the misunderstandings that arose in this regard among the dominant language community.

Bilingual education delivery at the pilot school sites was different from that at other elementary schools. If a student wanted to move to a school outside the pilot project, he/she would not be able to catch up with other students initially. Learning Thai and use of Thai as a medium of instruction should be fully upgraded so that bilingual students can effectively proceed to higher levels of education. Community members could help prepare learning materials, but the stories would be told in Thai, and difficult words could be explained in Pwo Karen. This may be helpful in strengthening the Thai language ability of ethnolinguistic minority children.



## A mother tongue-based preschool programme for ethnic minority children in Gia Lai, Vietnam

*Hoang Thi Thu Huong*

### General information

Located in the Western Highlands of Vietnam, Gia Lai is a mountainous province with 13 urban districts/cities, 171 communes/wards, and 1,405 villages (1,200 of which are ethnic minority villages). The population of Gia Lai is 970,000, 45.4% of whom are from ethnolinguistic communities (J'Rai: 30.2%; Bahnar: 13.5%; others: 1.7%).

Like other groups in mountainous or rural, thinly-populated areas, the J'Rai people of Gia Lai live mainly by agriculture. As a result, their living conditions are difficult, with little or no electricity, televisions, radios, newspapers, or books. Gia Lai Province (one of whose urban districts is A Yunpa) is home to three main peoples, namely the J'Rai, the Bahnar, and the Kinh. The J'Rai and Bahnar live there as officially recognized ethnic groups, and have their own culture and customs. In order to develop appropriate early childhood education in areas where learners from non-dominant languages live, it is important to not only build new classrooms and schools and mobilize children to attend school but also to plan programmes suitable for the physical and cognitive characteristics of preschool children that reflect their local ethnic history, culture, and circumstances.

During 2000-2001, there were 109 preschools in Gia Lai, comprising 1,934 classrooms, with 47,050 children enrolled (97% of all preschool-age children), including 35,420 five-year-old preschool children and 13,911 ethnic children (29.56%). These numbers show that ethnic preschool children account for one third of all children enrolled in preschools in the region. It is clearly impractical to apply the national educational programme to all children in the province, for two reasons. First, the national educational programme relies on mainstream Vietnamese, which ethnic children cannot understand well. Second, ethnic children have less school experience than Kinh children. There is, therefore, a real need for the development of materials suitable for five-year-old preschool children in minority areas, for use in mother tongue-based programmes.

Vietnam has fifty-four ethnic groups; the Kinh or Vietnamese comprise nearly 86% of the total population. Vietnamese is used as the national language. Up to now, only twenty-eight ethnic groups have their own written languages. This presents some challenges in the preservation, development, and teaching of ethnic languages in schools in general and in early childhood education in particular.

Children's language competence can only be gained after a period of time practising in that language environment. Children's oral language development plays an important role in education. Poor attention to the processes of teaching and learning can lead to delays in the development of children's oral ability, their education, and their future opportunities.



Ethnic children are exposed to a multilingual environment as soon as they go to preschool. In the classroom, teachers have opportunities to talk to ethnic minority children in their mother tongue, as well as in Vietnamese. This helps develop both the mother tongue and Vietnamese for children, thus encouraging the acquisition and development of vocabulary and grammatically correct speaking skills. There is a strong link between a child's language development and their maturity, and this can be seen in the ways in which memory skills, classification, imagination, analysis, synthesis, and other skills are exhibited. Thus, it is clear that the ways in which children learn and use language affects and is affected by their mental development. The child's mother tongue can be considered as a strong foundation to help them more effectively learn Vietnamese as a second language. Children can understand Vietnamese better and more quickly if they continue to learn their mother tongue well. From this point of view, Vietnamese should be taught to children from non-dominant language communities using the mother tongue as a starting point. The curriculum and its content should also be adjusted to respond to children's needs as second language learners.

From 1998-2000, the Early Childhood Education Department of the Ministry of Education and Training cooperated with the Gia Lai Education and Training Service to carry out a pilot project for J'Rai five-year-old preschool children in Gia Lai. As this project achieved good results, Gia Lai Education and Training Service is extending this programme to other parts of the region.

## The Vietnamese education system and language policy

The Vietnamese government's goal is the creation of the best conditions for ethnolinguistic communities to learn both their spoken and written language and develop their traditional cultural identity, and to help ethnic pupils perform well at schools and other education centres. Concerning preschool children, the Education Law of 2005 states, "at ethnic preschool classes, the teaching and learning process will be implemented mainly by the ethnic minority languages." (MOET Circular 01/GD-DT 1997)

Challenges in the implementation of mother tongue-based education for children are unavoidable in Vietnam, as well as in other multilingual countries. A number of significant problems in teaching children using the mother tongue can be identified. Firstly, there is a lack of both mother tongue materials and professional teachers who can use the local language fluently. Second, there is clearly a need for a common language that can be used by all fifty-four ethnic groups in Vietnam – in other words, the official language, Vietnamese. Finally, it is important to respond to the desires of parents who, to varying degrees, want their children to learn the official national language so as to acquire more opportunities to gain knowledge of the world.

It is important for teachers engaged in mother tongue-based teaching to be proficient in the mother tongue of the learners and to have specific training in teaching. The Early Childhood Education Department of MOET offers training for local teachers. One project, running from 1994 to 1999 and funded by UNICEF, trained about 410 local teachers from twenty-three ethnic groups in provinces such as Ha Giang, Gia Lai, Soc Trang, Cao Bang, Quang Ngai, Lam Dong, Hoa Binh, Bac Kan, and Thai Nguyen. The teachers were from the following ethnolinguistic communities: Tay, Nung, H'mong, Thai, J'Rai, Khmer, Dao, K'ho, Muong, San Diu, San Chi, Ma, Cao Lan. A number of teachers were Kinh, however, and so were unable to communicate well in the children's mother tongue. In order to communicate with their students and their students' parents, they had to learn the ethnic children's language. According to Decision No 3893/QD-BGD&DT dated 21 July 2005, all teachers and officers who live and work in areas where non-dominant languages are spoken are obliged to learn those languages, which the teachers did. However, the teachers were not as competent as the children in using the local language, and so they were limited in the degree to which they could develop the children's mother tongue. The availability of teachers who are fluent speakers of non-dominant languages is the biggest challenge for the Early Childhood Education Department of MOET in the implementation of bilingual education programmes for children from ethnolinguistic communities.

In Vietnam, ethnic groups live together in communities where there may be more than one non-dominant language in use. There may be three or four languages spoken in one class. Teachers, therefore, face significant challenges in their effort to use the children's mother tongues to communicate with them. In some cases, teachers have to identify one language, which many children may speak, and use that as a language of instruction. As a result, children who speak other languages cannot understand the lessons well.



When entering the first grade, ethnic children have to learn Vietnamese instead of being able to use their mother tongue. Vietnamese is used orally at the preschool level. Children can learn and discover the world not only through their mother tongue but also by using Vietnamese. Both these languages help promote the children's cognitive development, and their integration into the Vietnamese community.

## The pilot project

### *Objectives*

- To use the minority language and culture to improve the learning of both J'Rai and Vietnamese.
- To motivate children to attend school regularly, in order to help them become more confident, courageous, and active participants in their own learning.

### *Implementation plan*

The 26-week Educational Caring Programme established by MOET for five-year-old children who have not attended early childhood classes for 3-4-year-olds is being adjusted to better serve children from ethnolinguistic communities. Content which relates to the life and traditional culture of the learners should be identified, in order to be more responsive to their learning needs.

The programme aims to teach both J'Rai and Vietnamese to children, and focus on helping with vocabulary, grammatically correct speaking skills, and accurate Vietnamese pronunciation.

### *Pilot project guiding principles*

The programme endeavours to take full advantage of the culture and language of the ethnolinguistic community, as these will serve as foundational resources to ensure the child's development of both his/her mother tongue and additional languages, keeping in mind that the mother tongue is the main vehicle through which learners discover and make sense of the world around them.

In school, children should be encouraged to respect and promote the culture and values of their community, and be confident, courageous, and active participants in their own learning.

**Table 18: Chart of School Sites, Teachers, Enrollment, and Ethnolinguistic Community served**

No	Site	Teachers			Children	
		Name	Language group	Training level	Enrollment	Language group
1	Preschool class at Khuon Village, Tra Ba Commune, Pleiku City	H'Thanh	J'Rai	Pedagogical secondary	34	J'Rai
2	Preschool class at Pleikuro Village, Yen Do Commune, Pleiku City	Puih Hamuih	J'Rai	Pedagogical secondary	31	J'Rai
3	Preschool class at Ia Trok Commune, Ayunpa District, Gia Lai Province	Nay H'Krem	J'Rai	Pedagogical secondary	25	J'Rai
4	Bonchoma Preschool class at Patrok Commune, Ayunpa District, Gia Lai Province	Siu H'Do	J'Rai	Pedagogical secondary	23	J'Rai

### ***Material development and project implementation***

The Pilot Project Steering Board encourages community members to collect pictures, folk songs, rhymes, verses, and information about local festivals, etc. Teachers, artists, researchers, and academics have also begun to compose original poems, songs, games, and stories for use in the preschools. Students enjoy these because they are familiar to them, reflecting their culture and identity.

Since 1998, preschool classes for five-year-olds have begun to implement a curriculum focused on three major themes. This curriculum is based on the 26-week national curriculum for five-year-old children who have not yet participated in other pre-primary classes. About 30% of the curriculum designed by the local educators includes contents related to the children's traditional culture. As they begin school, the mother tongue is the initial language of instruction. Eventually, the mother tongue is used less and less and is gradually replaced by Vietnamese.

The programme content focuses on three main activities: playing, learning, and hygiene/life skills. There are seven major learning domains that guide curriculum development in preschools. These are:

- Getting to know the surrounding environment.
- Getting to know the world of literature (poems, stories).
- Getting to know the alphabet.

- Maths.
- Creative arts (drawing, cutting, and pasting).
- Singing and dancing.
- Physical exercise.

The pilot programme also prioritizes play in preschool classes. The preschool curriculum is designed for twenty-six weeks, and children attend school for two hours, forty-five minutes each day.

**Table 19: Time Allocation per School Day at One Pilot Programme School**

<b>Activities</b>	<b>Time (minutes)</b>
Arrival, hygiene check, free play	30
Morning physical exercises	15
Main activities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Group activity (whole class)</li> <li>• Group activity in play corners</li> <li>• Individual activity</li> </ul>	60
<i>Note:</i> free play between activities	15
Guided play related to themes	30
Hygiene review	15
Home	

### **Training teachers for the pilot programme**

Teachers for the pilot project in the J'Rai community are experienced preschool teachers who have majored in preschool education at a pedagogical high school. Before participating as teachers in the pilot programme, these preschool teachers attended a short-term training course on mother tongue-based education methods and teaching Vietnamese as a second language. These preschool teachers had no previous training or experience in teaching Vietnamese as a second language. Strategies for teaching and learning Vietnamese as a second language for children who are speakers of non-dominant languages should be designed to be responsive to and build on the child's prior language experience.

As yet, however, there are no clear and effective models of teaching Vietnamese as a second language.

### **Children's language development**

Teachers receive training in both direct and indirect methods of teaching Vietnamese as a second language. Some of these methods involve children mimicking the teacher when learning new words and phrases in Vietnamese. Sometimes real objects are used to clarify the meaning of new Vietnamese words introduced, and often the mother tongue is used to explain the meaning of Vietnamese words. Teachers are also encouraged to use the mother tongue to help children understand lessons more clearly. Towards the end of pre-primary school, the mother tongue is used less and less, and indirect methods of promoting understanding of Vietnamese take on more important roles.

Teachers are encouraged to build the children's confidence by structuring learning carefully and beginning with information and experiences that are familiar to the child. Teachers are encouraged to introduce new information first in the mother tongue, and then repeat the experience again using the new language, Vietnamese.

### *Appropriate classroom environments*

In teacher training programmes, teachers are taught the importance of creating an environment that supports optimal learning. Teachers are encouraged to use artefacts and visual aids that affirm the J'Rai children's traditional culture. Materials that can be used to build and decorate the learning environment include natural materials such as leaves, rice, flowers, grass, corn, hair, and stones, as well as products made by the J'Rai people, such as clothes, hats, masks, and house models.

### *Finance*

The pilot programme receives funding from different sources. The teacher training component is funded by UNICEF, and Gia Lai Technology and Science Service provides 55,000,000 VND for programme implementation.

### *Pilot project results*

After implementing the pilot programme for two years, preschool units noted that the locally based curriculum, reflecting the ethnolinguistic communities' traditional culture and identity, has become easy for teachers to implement. The integrated, child-centred approach, with multiple groupings involving individual work, pair work, group work, and whole-class activity, supports effective development.

Children in preschools where the mother tongue is used are more attentive and participative. Using both the mother tongue and Vietnamese in the classroom has helped children understand better and become more confident and willing to interact with the teacher and their classmates. At the end of the pilot programme, there is evidence that children could speak their mother tongue more fluently, and that about 80% of the children could recognize Vietnamese letters and use Vietnamese to communicate with other children in the classroom.

Because both teachers and learners are J'Rai, the teachers related well to the lives of the children and the locally based curriculum content. As a result, the teachers taught more effectively, and the children could understand their lessons more quickly. The development of locally authored materials was a significant benefit in helping teachers work in more flexible, creative, and effective ways. Some parents, village elders, and other leaders indicated that they would like the programme to be expanded and replicated at all J'Rai preschools in the area.

### **Challenges**

The implementation of this programme has shown that, in order to make the teaching/learning process in preschool classes for children from non-dominant language communities more effective, the bilingual classes need to be well organized and focus on the preservation and promotion of the language and culture of the ethnolinguistic community. This can only be done as preschool teachers receive training in the use of both the mother tongue and Vietnamese and professionally apply bilingual teaching methods designed specifically for teaching preschool children.

### **Conclusion**

The current focus on effective early childhood education has resulted in attempts to develop appropriate preschool education systems for learners from non-dominant language communities. Initial results of the programme indicate that there has been a positive impact on both children's language skills and overall development. Community participation in the education process has increased with the use of the community culture and language in the classroom. Children are attending school more regularly because school has become more interesting and relevant to their lives. Many challenges, however, still need to be addressed.





# Chapter 6

The way forward in Southeast Asia: Regional recommendations



## Chapter 6

# The way forward in Southeast Asia: Regional recommendations<sup>1</sup>

*Kimmo Kosonen & Catherine Young*

The aim of this final chapter is to make some recommendation on the way forward in Southeast Asia in terms of using non-dominant languages (NDLs) as the bridge language of instruction. The chapter provides general region-wide recommendations and does not make country-specific recommendations.

The original idea of specific recommendations for each of the SEAMEO member countries was impossible to accomplish, as only two of the 11 countries submitted their country-specific plans of action. Therefore, the chapter is mostly based on the discussions recorded at the February 2008 consultative workshop (SEAMEO, 2008). The recommendations are mostly the editors' summaries and interpretations of the issues recommended by the workshop participants as well as recommendations of their own based on the analysis of the regional situation.

### Policy, data and research

Each SEAMEO member country should:

1. Draft a national follow-up plan about its intended activities towards using ethnolinguistic minority learners' mother tongues as the bridge language of instruction.

Within the plan, stakeholders should be identified who could serve as potential actors for the implementation of the action plan. Collaborative planning should be undertaken with these stakeholders, not only Ministries of Education, but other international, national, and local actors who could support various initiatives. Strategies for multi-level advocacy and awareness-raising should be incorporated into these action plans.

2. Conduct a national-level review of its current national language and education policy, including its possible revision, with the goal of establishing a clear, legal status and support for ethnic minority languages.

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The Singapore section in Chapter Three thoroughly discusses the outcomes of government reviews of teaching and learning its four official languages. Such reviews of the pros and cons of using various languages of instruction would be useful in all Southeast Asian countries.

Learning achievement surveys – like those recently conducted in Thailand and reported in Chapter Three – should be conducted in all Southeast Asian countries in order to compare the results of learners who are proficient in the language of instruction and those from minority backgrounds whose predominant home language is not the main language of instruction.

Good quality data are needed in most countries on the disparities of educational access and achievement. It will be important for these data to be disaggregated on the basis of the mother tongue of the learners in order that language-related educational issues can be understood more easily and responses to these issues developed.

3. Carry out the following recommendations which can contribute to the planning of appropriate learning systems for ethnolinguistic communities:
  - Ethnolinguistic classification should be based on the actual languages which members of the ethnolinguistic group speak. Educational planners should collaborate with linguistic researchers and conduct national language surveys and language mapping, if these are not yet available.
  - On the basis of these initiatives, the existing and official ethnic/linguistic classification should be revised if it no longer reflects the current realities. Such classification should distinguish between ethnicity and language, if possible, and identify people's true first language(s), not only the expected one according to their ethnicity. The home language(s)/mother tongue(s) should be included in all national censuses as well as educational surveys and statistics.
  - All ethnolinguistic minority groups and the use of their languages in education should be treated equally within a nation. Currently, some nations favour larger and more visible minorities over the less prestigious ones, whereas other nations favour smaller minority groups over the larger and more prestigious ones.
  - SEAMEO should take the lead in the publication of relevant disaggregated data on ethnicity and language and their impact on educational participation and achievement. Naturally, SEAMEO should partner in this activity with its international and regional partners.
  - Language assessments should be conducted of ethnolinguistic minority children – either through nationwide sampling or through more local full baseline studies of possible mother tongue-based multilingual education (MLE) project areas. The goal of this activity is to determine learners' actual language competence in their mother tongue – as identified above – in order that the main language of instruction can be determined.

- Research on the contribution of literacy in the learner's mother tongue(s) to literacy practices in additional languages and learning achievement in national and international languages should be conducted throughout the region. Such research results are essential in order to produce more evidence on the benefits of learners' mother tongue to be provided to those who do not yet fully agree with the use of learners' mother tongue as a bridge language of education.

## **Paving the way towards strong programmes of mother tongue-based education**

Gradual process towards strong forms of mother tongue-based multilingual education can be started by initiating small changes, initially, in the use of non-dominant languages in education. These changes can help create openness about the use of NDLs in general and demonstrate ways to overcome some alleged challenges in the use of non-dominant languages (see the list in Chapter 1).

It is extremely important, however, to understand that such activities should not be ends in their own right, but rather small steps in the right direction. The ultimate goal should be strong forms of mother tongue-based multilingual education, where the mother tongue is used as long as possible in as many ethnolinguistic minority/non-dominant languages as possible.

There are a number of strategies and activities that can begin change in classroom practice in terms of language use – on the way toward full use of mother tongue as a bridge language to mastery of the national and international languages. Such strategies include, but are not limited to the following (some of which are currently used in some SEAMEO countries):

- the authorised use of oral mother tongue in classrooms,
- the use of the learners' mother tongue at the pre-primary level,
- short-cut (early-exit) transitional mother tongue-based bilingual education,
- the minority learners' mother tongue as a school subject,
- NFE and adult literacy programmes in the learners' mother tongue,
- further development of non-dominant languages, including orthography development in particular,
- intentional efforts to attract more teachers from ethnolinguistic minority backgrounds for training in MLE approaches, and
- continuing participatory development of reading materials in non-dominant languages.

## Innovations and pilot projects

Innovations and pilot projects in the use of the learner's mother tongue as a language of instruction should be started in as many SEAMEO countries as possible, and the already existing pilots should be strengthened and expanded. The following recommendations apply mainly to Ministries of Education in SEAMEO member countries, but also to SEAMEO and its partner agencies.

- Pilot projects incorporating systematic, theoretically grounded practices of mother tongue-based multilingual education should be established within every SEAMEO member country as action research projects, with clear processes for monitoring, evaluation and documentation of the context, input, processes and results of the pilot projects.
- Agencies, such as UNICEF, that are committed to be financial partners in such efforts, should work together with SEAMEO and member states in order that funding is directed towards pilot programmes that are committed to documentation in order to support further application and expansion of good practices in the use of learners' mother tongue as a language of instruction.
- Infrastructures for the implementation and support of MLE programmes at national and regional level should be established. These would include advanced degree programmes within linguistic and educational institutions, support for low-cost materials development and media support for documentation.
- Clear processes for "scaling up" good practices while maintaining the integrity of the strong models of mother tongue-based multilingual education should be established in the early stages of the implementation of pilot projects.
- Information to ensure collective and clear understanding of the rationale for implementation of MLE should be shared between countries in the region.
- Documentation, monitoring and evaluation should be implemented within each action research programme in order that adaptable and flexible approaches to MLE can be shared, adopted and adapted between nations in the SEAMEO region and beyond.
- In order to fully benefit from the research on multilingual education in the region, longitudinal studies and cyclical evaluations of programme impact should be emphasised and built into as many programmes as possible.
- Training programmes – both initial and on-going – are required at multiple levels – for community leaders, teachers, administrators, curriculum developers, government officials and NGO programme implementers.
- Each programme should develop clear guidelines for the production of classroom materials in non-dominant languages for both learners and teachers.

- In all initiatives, the critical roles of community members should be described early in the programme in order to integrate educational initiatives with other activities that the community may have identified, highlighting the role of language and culture in development.
- Workshops should be conducted on the role of mother tongue-based ECCE/D in promoting effective language education for learners from non-dominant language communities. However, the inclusion of the mother tongue as language of instruction for ECCD should not be used as an “excuse” to reduce the time for MT instruction at the primary level.
- Furthermore, pilot programmes in early childhood education using ethnolinguistic minority children’s mother tongues should be started in all SEAMEO member countries.

## Horizontal collaboration at the national level

Ministries of Education (MoE) should use already existing national institutions to conduct surveys and assessments on language issues, if they do not have a department or an agency to do this on their own.

These institutions may already exist, but may be under the jurisdiction of other Ministries than the MoE. For example, in Vietnam, the Institute of Linguistics of Vietnam and, in Thailand, Mahidol University, have been involved in such surveys and/or language mapping. Thus,



- Linguistic surveys/language mapping/identification and classification of ethnolinguistic groups should involve professional linguists with training in language surveys.
- MoEs should collaborate with aforementioned and similar national institutions. In some countries, certain universities may have the capacity to collaborate on this task.
- In countries with no national stakeholders capable of conducting research on this domain, MoEs should partner with institutions in other SEAMEO member countries or elsewhere.
- Capacity building at the national level on research, particularly language surveys and learning assessment should also be reinforced.

## Partnerships, collaboration and networking at the regional level

The following recommendations apply mostly to SEAMEO, its regional centres as well as SEAMEO's regional and international partners. Some of the recommendations are also related directly to SEAMEO countries' Ministries of Education.

- An Asia-Pacific (or Southeast Asian) network on language-in-education policies and mother tongue-based education and multilingual education should be formed. The Bangkok MLE working group – in which many of the agencies listed above as SEAMEO's partners are members – could be the starting point and could try to assist interested SEAMEO countries to form similar networks at the national level.
- National workshops or other meetings on language-in-education policy and MLE issues could begin national level dialogues within institutions and organisations to identify issues associated with language education of good quality for speakers of NDLS. These workshops should lead to sequential and well-coordinated meetings (at various levels) and other collaboration on mother tongue-based education at the regional as well as national level.
- Information sharing and coordination of activities on mother tongue-based education by SEAMEO, the World Bank, other UN agencies (such as UNESCO and UNICEF), INGOs, and Ministries of Education of SEAMEO member countries should be improved.
- Key people in the SEAMEO countries' Ministries of Education who can keep language-in-education policies and mother tongue-based education issues on the agenda and move them forward should be identified by SEAMEO and its regional partners, such as the MLE networks.
- The role of SEAMEO INNOTECH, SEAMEO RELC, SEAMEO SPAFA and possibly other relevant SEAMEO centres should be identified. Their involvement should be more active than currently and their role increased in relation to various aspects of mother tongue-based MLE (e.g. surveys, situation analysis, curriculum development, teacher training, development of teaching-learning materials in non-dominant languages etc.).
- The aforementioned and other relevant SEAMEO centres should make supporting mother tongue-based education an integral and sustainable part of their operations, and they should play a coordinating role on further activities related to language and education issues in the SEAMEO countries.
- If the SEAMEO centers have no professional staff on language and education issues, further training and professional development in relevant domains should be provided and/or new staff focusing on mother tongue-based education should be recruited.

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