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BRIDGE TO A BRIGHTER TOMORROW:

The Patani Malay-Thai Multilingual
Education Programme



Mahidol University
Research Institute for Languages
and Cultures of Asia

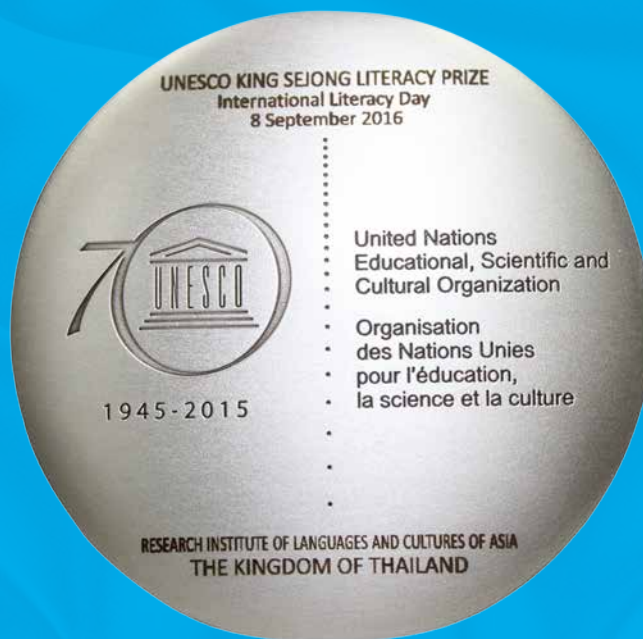
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การศึกษาที่นี่สำคัญมาก ให้พยายามจัดให้ดี
ให้พลเมืองสามารถพูดไทยได้

***Education in this place is very important.
Strive to manage it well.
Enable the people to speak the Thai language.***

*King Bhumibol Adulyadej (1927-2016)
On the occasion of His Majesty's visit to Yala Province
23 March 1959*

*Engraved in stone outside
Regional Education Office 8
Yala Province*



UNESCO King Sejong Literacy Prize

*Awarded to the Research Institute of Languages and Cultures of Asia,
Mahidol University
UNESCO Headquarters, Paris
8 September 2016
In Recognition of the Patani Malay-Thai Multilingual Education Programme*

© United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
Bangkok, Thailand 2018
ISBN: 978-974-680-426-4
ISBN (E-Book): 978-974-680-424-0
Published by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
UNICEF Thailand Country Office
19 Phra Atit Road, Phra Nakorn District, Bangkok 10200 Thailand
Telephone: 02 356 9400
Fax: 02 281 6032
Website: www.unicef.org/thailand



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Many children are being left behind by the education system in Thailand

Thailand has made considerable progress over the past two decades in increasing access to primary and secondary schooling through high levels of government investment in education. However, inequities in the system are evident, both in terms of access to education for disadvantaged groups of children and in terms of quality education and learning outcomes based on geography, language, and wealth.¹ Unless these disparities are well understood and addressed by evidence-informed policies, Thailand will not achieve its ambitious education and development goals.

Disparities in learning outcomes based on language

In Thailand, children who do not speak Thai as their mother tongue face specific difficulties in learning effectively and can be considered as a group in need of special attention and strategies. On average, they are more likely than the general population of children to be excluded from school; they do poorly in national exams and are more likely to drop out of school. New ways to address this language-related disparity must be implemented for Thailand to achieve Sustainable Development Goal #4 - Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

Global evidence supports the mother tongue approach

The evidence from research is clear that children learn best when they have the opportunity to study in their mother tongue in the early grades of primary, and that this strong learning foundation provides children with the skills to master other languages and subject areas. A national language-in-education policy which acknowledges this evidence and which promotes mother tongue-based multilingual education in different parts of the country where ethnic minority children have difficulties learning the Thai language will contribute greatly to enhancing the quality of education and learning outcomes in Thailand.

1 NSO and UNICEF, 2016

With the objective of generating domestic evidence for this approach as well as creating a template of how such education can be delivered, UNICEF partnered with Mahidol University's Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia (RILCA) to develop, run and measure the results of a pilot programme in schools in Thailand's Deep South, where Patani Malay-speaking children have long been the lowest achieving students in the nation.

This approach has shown how language can be a bridge to better learning for all

The Patani Malay-Thai Multilingual Education Programme (PMT-MLE) documented in this publication is an action research initiative begun in 2007 which, over the past decade, has demonstrated the effectiveness of multilingual education on learning outcomes for children. Pilot schools were paired with comparison schools. The pilot schools followed an adapted curriculum which uses Patani Malay as the main language of instruction in the early years plus a specially developed "Thai for Ethnic Children" course. The amount of Thai language used in the classroom increased each year. The comparison schools followed the normal "Thai language only" curriculum. Annual evaluations tracked student performance and community attitudes.

PMT-MLE achieves "Four Wins" for children

Based on learning assessments and evaluations conducted by Thai researchers over the course of eight years, the four wins for children associated with the programme are:

- **Better Thai faster:** Despite spending fewer hours in Thai medium classes, grade 1 students in PMT-MLE schools were 271 per cent more likely than comparison students to score perfectly on a Thai letter dictation test. They were 207 per cent more likely to pass a Thai sentence writing test. PMT-MLE grade 3 student essays contained on average twice as many words (104 vs 52), utilized more complex sentences and were 65 per cent more likely to use "difficult" Thai vocabulary.
- **Improved learning of other subjects:** From grades 1-6, 72.5 per cent of PMT-MLE students met basic educational criteria in Thai language, math, science, and reading comprehension—compared to only 44.5 per cent of comparison school students.
- **Improved O-NET scores:** PMT-MLE students scored above the Deep South average in Thai, math, and science on the nationwide grade 6 O-NET exams.
- **Strong community support:** Interviews conducted by the Thailand Research Fund in 2010 and 2015 with over 200 parents and teachers found strong support for PMT-MLE. Most parents cited "better Thai reading and writing abilities" and "improved self-confidence" as key benefits.

PMT-MLE succeeds because of partnership and cooperation

The programme has been driven by a steering committee drawn from the Ministry of Education, Southern Border Provinces Administrative Centre, National Security Council, UNICEF, Thailand Research Fund, Yala Rajabhat University, Royal Institute of Thailand, SIL International, local educators, and religious leaders.

PMT-MLE is internationally recognized

Mahidol University received the 2016 UNESCO King Sejong Literacy Prize for its work on the programme. Yala Rajabhat University received "honorable commendation" for the 2017 UNESCO Wenhui Award for Educational Innovation for its PMT-MLE teacher training scheme—the first of its kind in Asia. The programme has been featured in numerous United Nations forums, international conferences, and scholarly journals.

Recommendations for the Ministry of Education

As Thailand pursues education reform, policy makers need to have access to evidence of "what works" as well as tools to effect change so that all children in Thailand are included and learning. PMT-MLE is an innovative educational initiative—based on modern pedagogical "best practices" and evaluated by Thai and international scholars—with deep implications for Thailand. Key recommendations include the following IDEAS:

- **Integrating** mother tongue-based education into national education policies, in the areas of curriculum, teacher development and assessment;
- **Developing** mother tongue-based education programmes for ethnic minority children in the northern border regions based on the learning from this programme;

- **Expanding** the programme's approach to other schools in the Deep South, where the adapted curriculum, learning materials and proven approaches to teacher development are ready to be scaled up;
- **Adapting** the programme's "Thai for Ethnic Children" materials for migrant children from neighboring countries studying in formal and non-formal settings in Thailand;
- **Setting up** a system to recruit, train and deploy teachers from specific language groups to serve in their home areas, to support mother tongue programmes and improve teacher retention in remote locations.

How can this publication provide guidance?

Inclusive education recognizes the need to work towards 'schools for all' - institutions which include every child, celebrate differences, support learning for all students, and respond to individual needs. A commitment to this approach is central to UNICEF's work. Inclusive education should be viewed in terms of including traditionally excluded or marginalized groups with the guiding principle that schools should accommodate all children, regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, or linguistic situation.

As Thailand pursues education reform, policy makers need to have access to evidence of "what works" as well as tools to effect change so that all children in Thailand are included and learning. PMT-MLE is an innovative educational initiative—based on modern pedagogical "best practices" and evaluated by Thai and international scholars. This publication presents the "why" and the "how" of the programme, as well as its results and the implications for Thai education. Many of the "lessons learned" from PMT-MLE will also interest educators in other countries.

A call to action

As the UNICEF Thailand Representative, I am convinced that UNICEF's work with the many partners to this programme has benefitted thousands of children in the Deep South. But I am even more excited about the implications for the future.

The programme has created a relevant K1-G6 curriculum that meets Ministry of Education standards and improves student achievement. Yala Rajabhat University has institutionalized PMT-MLE into its teacher preparation process, training hundreds of students in multilingual teaching techniques. These incredible resources should not be neglected.

I therefore call on all stakeholders to take the steps needed to expand this innovation to other primary schools in the Deep South with Patani Malay speaking student bodies, and to extend the mother tongue based approach to other parts of Thailand.

Many thousands of children are depending on us to help them build a bridge to a brighter future. Please act now.

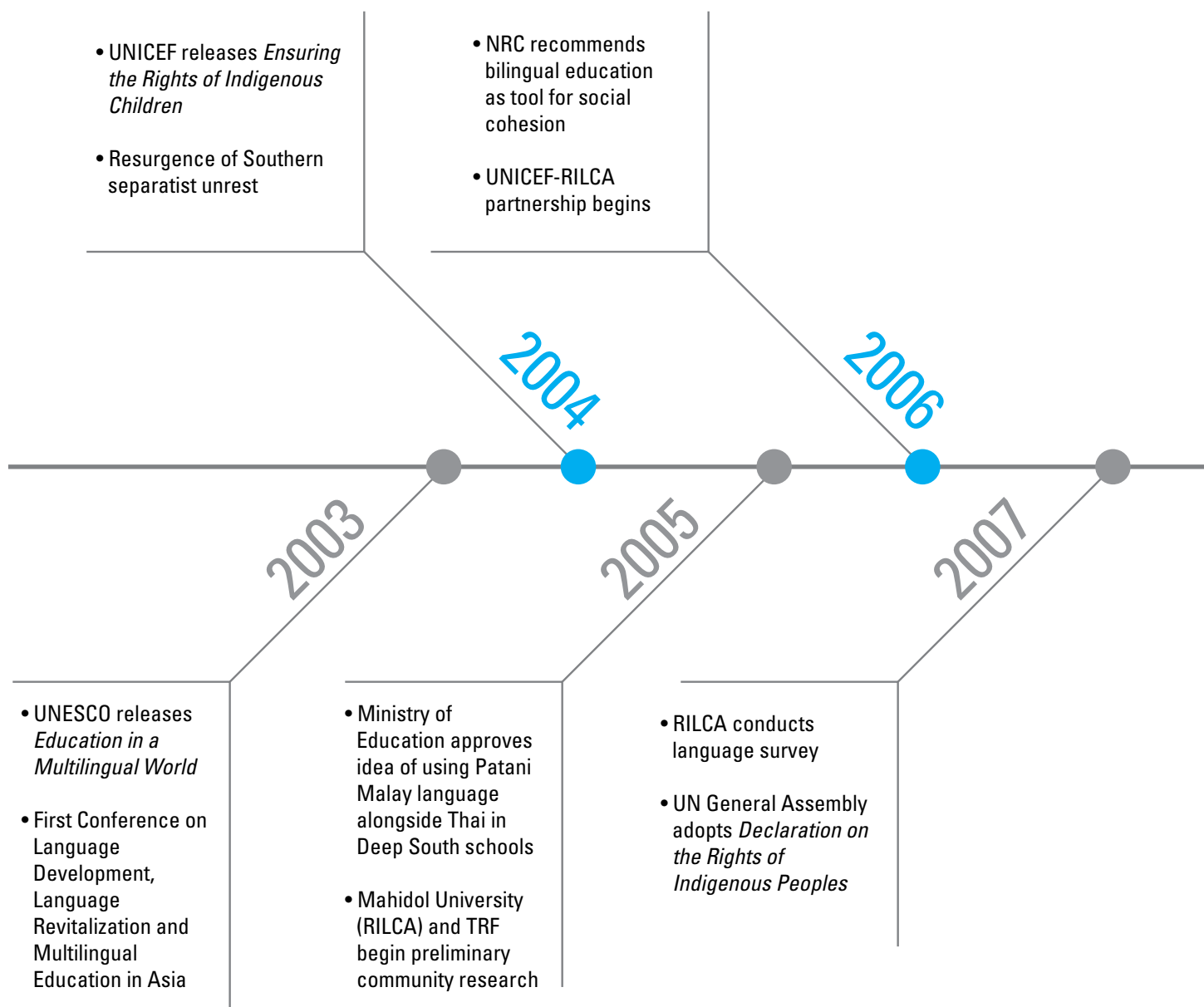
Thomas Davin
UNICEF Thailand Representative

UNICEF is focused on child rights and equity. That is why UNICEF supports PMT-MLE.

By working with 65 local artists, community leaders and teachers, PMT-MLE produced over 1400 educational materials in Patani Malay and Thai, creating a new primary school curriculum which meets Ministry of Education standards.

Since 2006, 145 teachers and 13 teacher assistants have served over 2500 PMT-MLE students in 15 primary schools, with outstanding results.

TIMELINE OF KEY EVENTS



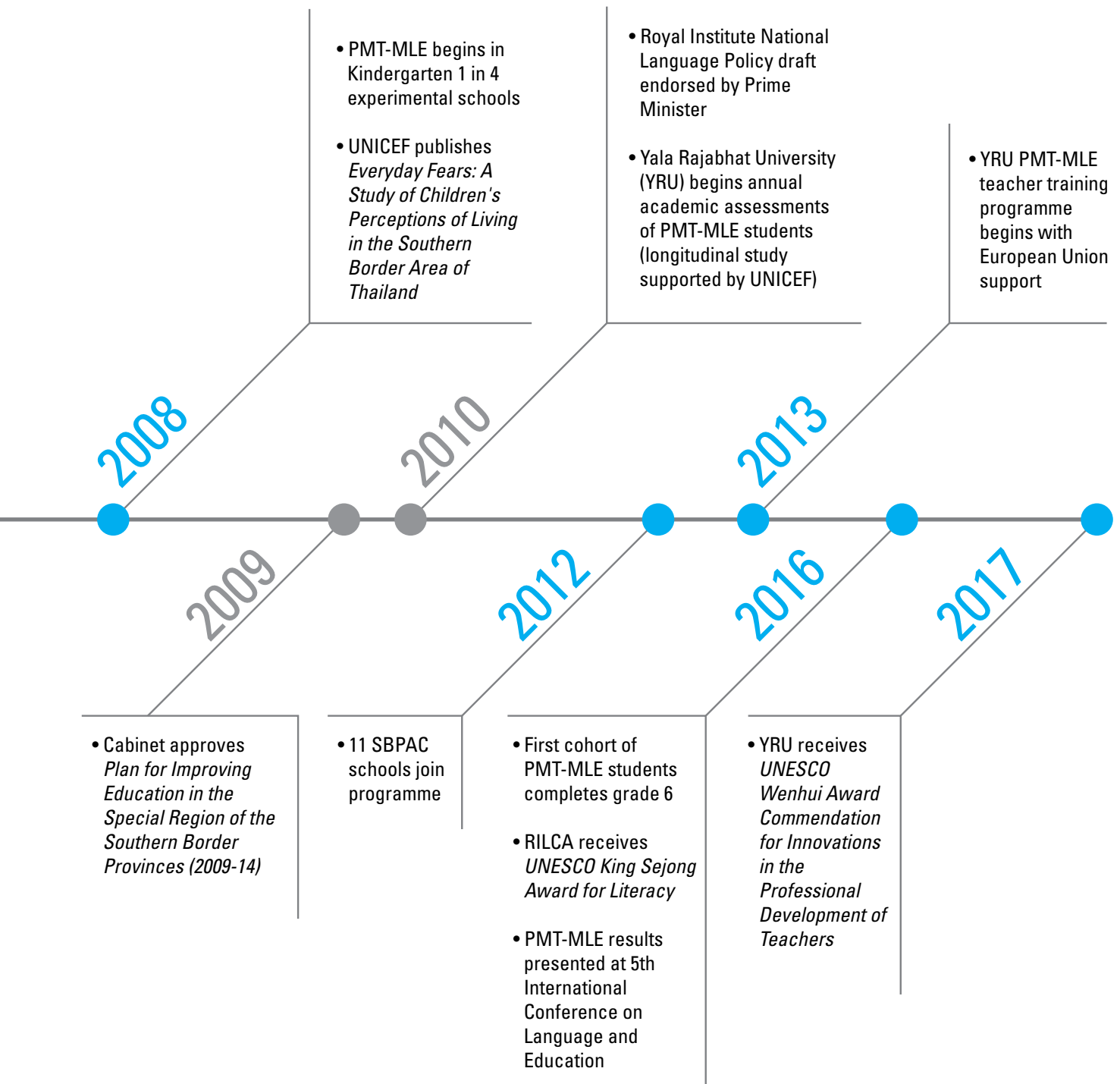




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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CUP	Common Underlying Proficiency
EFA	Education for All
EU	European Union
G1...G6	Grade 1...Grade 6
ISOC	Internal Security Operations Command (Thailand)
K1, K2	Kindergarten 1, Kindergarten 2
L1	First language (mother tongue)
L2	Second language
MLE	Multilingual Education
MLE-WG	Multilingual Education Working Group (UNESCO Bangkok)
MOE	Ministry of Education
MT	Mother tongue
MTB-MLE	Mother Tongue-based Multilingual Education
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
NLP	National Language Policy (Thailand)
NRC	National Reconciliation Commission (Thailand)
NSC	National Security Council (Thailand)
OBEC	Office of the Basic Education Commission (Thailand)
PM	Patani Malay
PMT-MLE	Patani Malay-Thai Multilingual Education Programme
RILCA	Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia, Mahidol University (Thailand)
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SEAMEO	Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization
SIL	SIL International
SLA	Second Language Acquisition
SM	Standard Malay
SBPAC	Southern Border Provinces Administration Center (Thailand)
TRF	Thailand Research Fund
YRU	Yala Rajabhat University

AUTHOR'S NOTE

When UNICEF Thailand contracted me to document the Patani Malay-Thai Multilingual Education (PMT-MLE) Programme, I was faced with a challenge. PMT-MLE is not a “typical” project which fits neatly into a development agency log frame, with clear objectives, indicators and outcomes. The stakeholders include not only teachers, parents and children, but also religious leaders, professors, security personnel, politicians and journalists. And although PMT-MLE addresses education, it has implications for social cohesion and peacebuilding.

Mother Tongue-based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) asserts that children are most successful when they begin their education in their mother tongue—the language they know best—before other languages are introduced in the classroom. In the MTB-MLE framework, the mother tongue is used as the main medium of instruction throughout the school day for all subjects in the pre-primary and early primary grades. As the students develop strong listening, speaking, reading and writing skills in their mother tongue, other languages are introduced in a systematic way that builds upon mother tongue skills.

The PMT-MLE programme is taking place in Thailand’s restive Deep South, where nearly 7000 people, including 180 teachers and school administrators, have been killed since 2004. Even prior to 2004, in

times of relative peace and stability, Patani Malay speaking children performed poorly in Thai government schools; many remained functionally illiterate in Thai despite years of Thai-only schooling. Both educational and political problems have their roots in the linguistic, cultural, and political history of this region. One cannot understand the development or impact of PMT-MLE without understanding this background.

UNICEF Thailand embraces an equity-based, child rights-based approach to learning. That is why the organization supported the PMT-MLE programme for more than a decade, facilitating a robust research component. That is also why this document profiles the programme holistically, not only presenting the kind of information one would find in a donor report, but portraying the programme in its wider context.

To do this, I have drawn on historical documents, newspaper articles, interviews (50+ parents, teachers, programme staff, education officials, etc.), annual reports prepared for partners (UNICEF Thailand, Thailand Research Fund, Delegation of the European Union to Thailand), annual external evaluations conducted for a longitudinal (7 year) study of the programme, journal articles, television documentaries, and my experiences as a linguist and observer of MTB-MLE projects in Southeast Asia over the past 20 years.

Phrased another way, this document presents quantitative and qualitative data from multiple sources and viewpoints. Lincoln and Guba's (1985) classic evaluative criteria for trustworthiness is thus met through prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation, peer debriefing, negative case analysis, and thick description.

Portions of this document read like a newspaper article. Others may sound like a statistical report, textbook, or a "how to" manual. Bulleted "highlights" are provided at the beginning of most chapters to help readers focus on areas of special interest. Shaded boxes contain interesting side information. This, I hope, will make the document engaging and useful.

Every successful educational innovation has its champions—people who took personal risks and expended enormous energy to bring their dreams to reality. PMT-MLE is largely a story of committed individuals who convinced their organizations to support the programme (as opposed to organizations dictating the actions of their staff). Several such individuals are mentioned by name in this document. Still, limitations of space mean that many other key people—teachers, school directors, local education

officials, parents, religious leaders, village headmen—are not mentioned by name. This in no way diminishes the importance of their contributions.

This is a local story that connects to global issues, as many countries seek to improve their educational systems to meet their United Nations Sustainable Development Goal #4 objectives, while also promoting economic growth, social stability, educational equity, and child rights. Decisions about the language or languages used in school can have a huge impact on the success or failure of children from vulnerable communities—whether they be refugees, ethnic minorities, or those living in extreme poverty. It is thus my hope that this report will be useful for educators, policy makers, and community members working in multilingual settings worldwide.

Kirk R. Person
Bangkok, 2018



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LANGUAGE AND EDUCATION IN THAILAND AND BEYOND

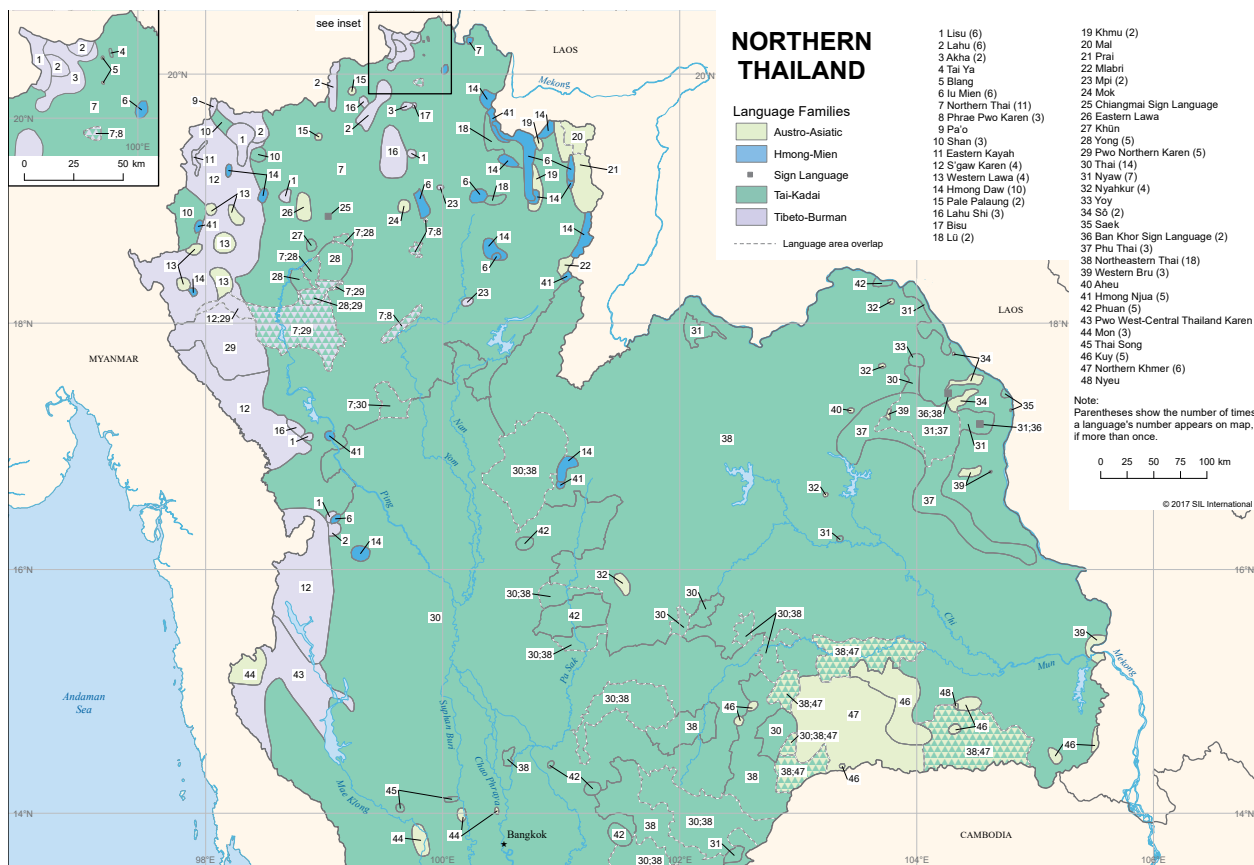
THAILAND AND ITS ETHNIC GROUPS: A CHALLENGE FOR EDUCATORS

“One reason that many linguistic and ethnic minority children perform poorly in school is that they are often taught in a language they struggle to understand. Around 221 million children speak a different language at home from the language of instruction in school...” *Education for All Global Monitoring Report* ²

Ours is a world of incredible linguistic, ethnic, cultural, and religious diversity. *The Ethnologue* (2017) contains information on the 7097 “known living languages” spoken in the world today. With 193 member states in the United Nations, we can conclude that multilingual countries must be the norm, and mono-lingual countries the exception. This is especially true of the Asia-Pacific region, home to over half of the world’s languages.

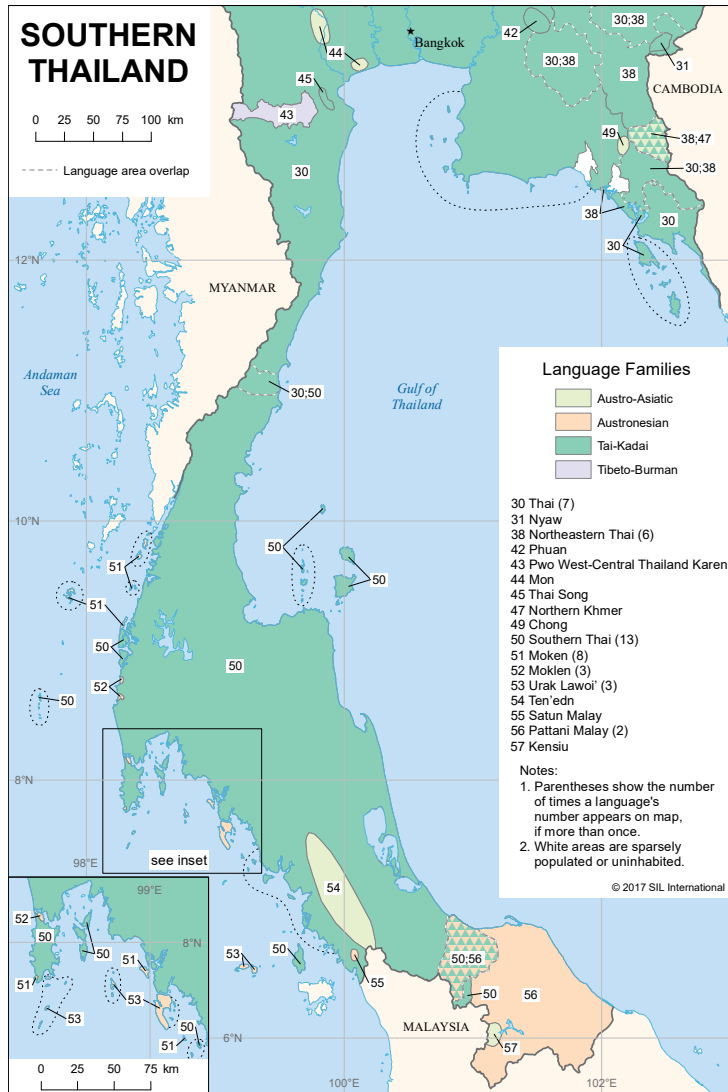
Thailand, in the words of linguist Suwilai Premrirat, is a multilingual country that “thinks of itself as being essentially monolingual.”³ *The Ethnologue*⁴ lists 72 languages from 5 language families for Thailand. Some of these, such as Patani Malay, Thai Khmer, Karen, and Hmong are large languages spoken by hundreds of thousands of people. Other, such as Bisu, Gong, and Chong, have fewer than 1000 speakers. As shown in the maps below, most minority languages are found in Thailand’s border regions.

Figure 1: Language map of Northern Thailand (*Ethnologue*, 2017. Used by permission)



2 UNESCO, 2010
 3 Premrirat, 2008
 4 Ethnologue.com, 2017

Figure 2: Language map of Southern Thailand (*Ethnologue*, 2017. Used by permission)



Thailand has been praised on the world stage for its strong social and economic development, achieving upper-middle income economy status in 2011. As the World Bank proclaimed:

Over the last four decades, Thailand has made remarkable progress in social and economic development, moving from a low-income country to an upper-middle income country in less than a generation. As such, Thailand has been one of the widely cited development success stories, with sustained strong growth and impressive poverty reduction.⁵

The country has made great strides in education. Pre-primary school gross enrollment rose from 52.6 per cent in 1993 to 73.82 per cent in 2015.⁶ Primary school gross enrollment has been close to the 100 per cent mark since 1981, with net enrollment at 91 per cent or higher since 2006. The literacy rate for Thai citizens aged 15 and older has stood at over 95 per cent since 1980. Spending on education since 2011 has usually exceeded 20 per cent of total government expenditures.⁷

Nonetheless, educational inequalities remain. This becomes particularly clear when data is disaggregated by region or language.

In 2007, at the start of the PMT-MLE programme, the grade 2 illiteracy rate for Bangkok stood at 1 per cent, mostly comprised of special needs children. By contrast, in 10 districts with large ethnic minority populations, 25-36 per cent of children were illiterate. This had a negative impact on national statistics, pushing the overall grade 2 illiteracy rate to 11 per cent—far above the 5 per cent target set by the Ministry of Education.⁸

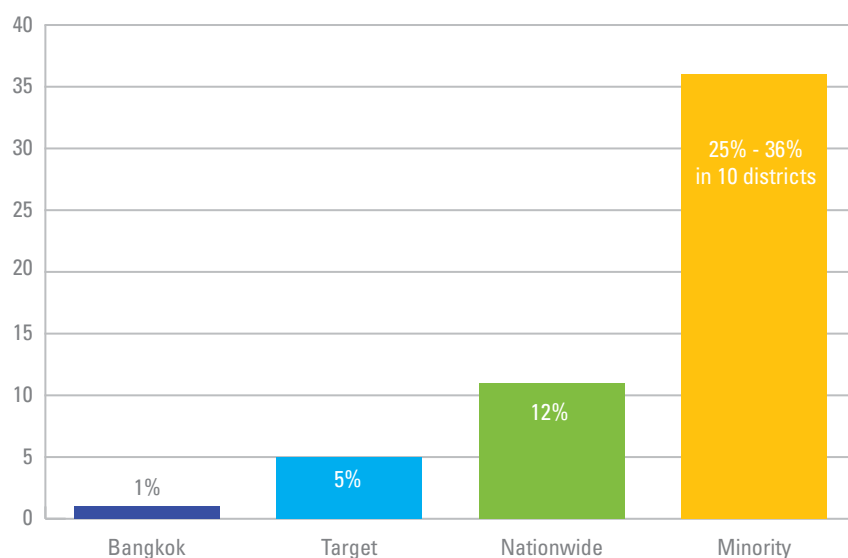
5 World Bank, 2016

6 Office of the Permanent Secretary, 2016

7 UNESCO/EduStat/World Bank, 2016

8 The Nation, 2007

Figure 3: Primary grade 2 illiteracy in Thailand (The Nation, 2007)



One year later, national literacy data (tables 1 and 2, below) revealed that 8 out of 10 lowest performing Education Service Areas for both reading and writing were in the South; the other 2 were in the north, in areas of Chiang Mai and Mae Hong Son populated by ethnic minorities.

Table 1: Education service areas with highest number of Grade 3 students with low reading performance (OBEC, 2008).

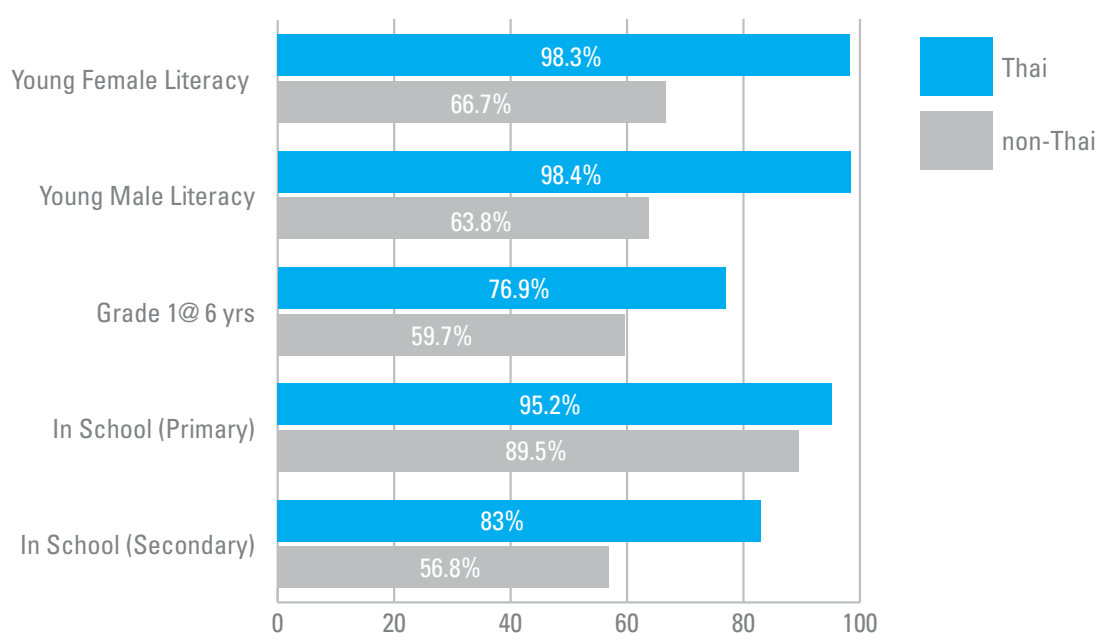
	% UNABLE TO READ	% NEEDING IMPROVEMENT	% UNDERPERFORMING STUDENTS
Narathiwat ESAO 3	25.5	17.09	42.59
Narathiwat ESAO 2	24.76	13.23	37.99
Pattani ESAO 1	24.75	12.76	37.51
Yala ESAO 2	24.45	14.47	38.92
Pattani ESAO 3	24.09	12.38	36.47
Pattani ESAO 2	18.82	9.96	28.78
Narathiwat ESAO 1	16.27	14.83	31.1
Yala ESAO 1	15.56	9.79	25.35
Chiang Mai ESAO 5	12.15	10.97	23.12
Mae Hong Son ESAO 2	12	9.49	21.49

Table 2: Education service areas with highest number of Grade 3 students with low writing performance (OBEC, 2008)

	% UNABLE TO WRITE	% NEEDING IMPROVEMENT	% UNDERPERFORMING STUDENTS
Yala ESAO 2	42.11	20.86	62.97
Pattani ESAO 1	37.5	19.62	57.12
Narathiwat ESAO 2	35.13	21.37	56.5
Yala ESAO 1	30.3	21.03	51.33
Pattani ESAO 2	24.83	25.57	50.4
Narathiwat ESAO 1	24.24	18.8	43.04
Narathiwat ESAO 3	23.84	22.04	45.88
Chiang Mai ESAO 6	23.29	17.2	40.49
Mae Hong Son ESAO 2	21.28	18.41	39.69
Yala ESAO 3	19.5	13.78	33.28

These inequalities can still be found today. The Thai National Statistical Office and UNICEF's Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (2015-16) disaggregates data on the basis of whether the head of the household speaks a non-Thai mother tongue. Figure 4 demonstrates the language-related gaps in education:

Figure 4: Educational disparities based on language of head of household (Thai or non-Thai)⁹



9 Data extracted from National Statistical Office & UNICEF, 2016

As shown above, while 98.3 per cent and 98.4 per cent of young women and men aged 15-24 in Thai-speaking households were literate, the figure drops to 66.7 per cent and 63.8 per cent when the head of the household speaks a non-Thai mother tongue. Similarly, 76.9 per cent of 6 year olds in households headed by Thai speakers have entered grade 1, compared to only 59.7 per cent of non-Thai speakers. While children from both groups attend primary school at similar levels, nearly half of all children from non-Thai speaking households did not continue into secondary school.

The Ministry of Education has observed similar trends from their in-house data. In 2013, national testing found that 8 per cent of grade 3 and 4 per cent of grade 6 children in Thai schools were illiterate. Most of the illiterate children were from ethnic minority groups, as Secretary General of the Office of the Basic Education Commission Chinnapat Bhumirat explained:

Students of peripheral and ethnic backgrounds who suffer difficulty in communicating in Thai are also the main group that we must follow closely.¹⁰

Similarly, at a meeting in early 2015, high level Ministry of Education officials were told:

Results from literacy testing show that many grade 3 students cannot read or write. Most of them are from the aforementioned [ethnic minority] groups.¹¹

The Ministry of Education knows that ethnic minority children are performing poorly in Thai schools. How can this longstanding problem be solved?

“Both men and women living in households headed by a non-Thai speaker are the least likely to be literate.”¹²

10 Khaosod English, 2013

11 Matichon, 2015

12 National Statistical Office & UNICEF, 2016

THE GLOBAL CONTEXT

“It is axiomatic that the best medium for teaching a child is [his or her] mother tongue.”

UNESCO, 1953

Chapter Highlights

- **Many countries have struggled with language-in-education issues**
- **Evidence for including mother tongues in the school curriculum was known to educators more than 70 years ago**
- **Some countries responded to mother tongue education initiatives; most emphasized national or international languages at the expense of mother tongues**
- **The Asia-Pacific Multilingual Education movement began through the cooperation of international development agencies, domestic NGOs, university researchers, and (some) government agencies.**
- **PMT-MLE has benefitted from, and contributed to, this larger movement**

Thailand is not the only country that has struggled with how to best educate ethnic minority children. Decades ago, a handful of scholars and educators began experimenting with mother tongue based education in their local settings. Experiences in Peru, Guatemala, and Mexico in the 1930s and 40s revealed that minority children already literate in their mother tongues did much better in the national, Spanish-medium schools than their peers who were “submerged” in Spanish through the “direct method.” In the Philippines, a carefully controlled experiment begun in 1947 among Hiligaynon speaking children in mother-tongue and English-only schools found that use of the mother tongue in grades 1 and 2 improved test scores by 10-50 per cent in all subject areas, even English! The place of mother tongues in education was debated at the 1950 UNESCO General Conference, and in 1951 UNESCO convened a meeting of experts in Paris to study “Vernacular Languages in Education.” After examining evidence from many countries, the experts concluded:

... every effort should be made to provide education in the mother tongue...On educational grounds, we recommend that the use of the mother tongue be extended to as late a stage in education as possible. In particular, pupils should begin their schooling through the medium of the mother tongue, because they understand it best and to begin their school life in the mother tongue will make the break between home and school as small as possible.¹³

13 UNESCO, 1953

The experts conceded that many countries might not accept their findings, and suggested answers to the political, economic, and practical objections that governments might make—including a lack of alphabets, lack of teachers, and concerns about national unity. All of these obstacles could be surmounted, they said.

Sadly, the UNESCO recommendations were ignored by most countries—and even many UN agencies. Missionaries and other development actors would continue carrying out small scale mother tongue literacy programs, but, with the exception of Peru, Guatemala, Bolivia, Mexico, India, Papua New Guinea, and a few others, formal education systems in the developing world were reluctant to embrace local mother tongues. Many countries in Africa and Asia adopted English or French as the official school language, hoping for high educational achievement and prosperity; they would be disappointed. As delegates to a 2013 British Council-sponsored education conference in Africa heard:

Many African countries are not satisfied with the results of their education systems....high drop-out rates, low throughput rates, low achievement rates, low adult literacy rates. Research on the quality of education indicates...a lack of relevant curricula, under-qualified teachers and education inequality, for example on the grounds of language competence, gender, socioeconomic status, ethnicity and geographical location. *The key challenge is that the inherited formal education systems have remained culturally and linguistically alien to the majority of the populations in Africa.*¹⁴

Dawn of the MTB-MLE Movement in Asia

The evidence for mother tongue based education was strong. Nonetheless, questions remained. How much mother tongue study was needed before transitioning to the national language? What is the optimal age at which children can acquire a new language? Many different models of bilingual education exist in the West; what elements of those approaches would be most appropriate for minority children in a developing country? How can countries develop national education policies supportive of the needs of ethnic children and, crucially, implement those policies with the support of local officials and minority communities?

Such questions motivated Dennis and Susan Malone's doctoral studies in the 1990s. This husband and wife team had been among the literacy specialists that SIL International (a non-governmental organization specializing in minority languages) assigned to assist the Papua New Guinea Ministry of Education's *Tokples* mother tongue programme in the late 1980s. In 1998, the Malones moved to Thailand, to teach in Mahidol University's Institute of Language and Culture for Rural Development—later renamed the Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia (RILCA)—and serve as literacy consultants to projects throughout Asia. The Malones arrived at an opportune time for two countries in particular: the Philippines and Cambodia.

In the early 1990s, researchers in the Philippines were investigating the high dropout rate of primary school children in Lubuagan Province. Language was found to be a major factor, as many of the children were unable to comprehend the official languages of instruction, Filipino and English. Those children were not alone; native speakers of Filipino comprise only 30 per cent of the nation's total population, so the education system was unintentionally marginalizing 70 per cent of its "customers." In response, the Department of Education authorized a pilot MTB-MLE programme among Kalinga speaking children.¹⁵

Political changes in Cambodia in the 1990s led to the "NGO era," as dozens of foreign aid agencies entered the country to help repair the incredible destruction of the Khmer Rouge. In cooperation with UNESCO, World Concern started non-formal literacy programmes in five minority languages in Ratanakiri Province. In 2002, CARE International brought ethnic languages into formal schools, starting MTB-MLE programmes in schools serving Kreung speaking children.¹⁶

From their base at RILCA, Susan and Dennis Malone made consultant visits to literacy projects and nascent MTB-MLE programmes in Cambodia, the Philippines, and several other Asia-Pacific countries. They worked closely with Thai linguist Dr. Suwilai Premsirat, who had extensive experience in researching minority

14 Glanz, 2013

15 Dekker, 2013

16 Nowaczyk, 2015

languages. In 2000, Dr. Suwilai¹⁷ and her colleagues launched a language revitalization project with the Chong minority community in eastern Thailand. The Chong responded very positively to efforts to develop a Thai-based script and literacy materials for their language and introduce a Chong language/culture subject in local government primary schools. Teachers, administrators, and parents noticed a dramatic improvement in student performance in the project schools which, for the first time, achieved passing marks in the Ministry of Education's national testing program.¹⁸

The Chong success prompted Dr. Suwilai to establish the "Center for the Revitalization of Endangered Languages" which, in cooperation with the Thailand Research Fund, would eventually conduct language revitalization projects in 23 languages, and MTB-MLE pilots in 2 others—a massive accomplishment for a small team of professors, graduate students and staff.

Meanwhile, in the northern province of Chiang Mai, the Department of Non-Formal Education began in 2003 to cooperate with UNESCO, Payap University and SIL International on a non-formal MTB-MLE programme for children in a handful of Northern Pwo Karen speaking villages.¹⁹ This was the first time in history that the Thai Ministry of Education allowed an ethnic minority language to be used as a medium of instruction in a government educational setting.²⁰

The First Conference on Language Development, Language Revitalization and Multilingual Education in Minority Communities in Asia (2003)

In 2003, UNESCO, SIL International and Mahidol University organized the First Conference on Language Development, Language Revitalization and Multilingual Education in Minority Communities in Asia. Over 300 participants from 30 countries attended, presenting papers related to language survey, orthography development, language revitalization, and community-based literacy programmes.

One unique feature of this conference was an emphasis on attracting practitioners—ethnic minority people directly involved in grass roots language activism—in addition to UN agencies, NGO representatives, government officials and academics.

The timing of the conference was perfect. Several months earlier, UNESCO had released its pro-mother tongue position paper *Education in a Multilingual World*. The conference examined how those principles could be operationalized.

Susan Malone's plenary presentation provided an overview of the state of minority language education in Asia, shared lessons learned from bilingual programmes in other countries (including the United States, Australia, and Papua New Guinea), and outlined a vision for the future.

Two of Dr. Malone's slides would become key themes of the MLE dialogue in Asia, deeply influencing the movement. These slides, translated into many languages, would be reproduced in presentations, academic publications, and advocacy brochures.

The first slide came from the United States. Various models of bilingual education for children from non-English speaking homes had been used in America since the 1960s. In the late 1980s and 1990s the "English First" movement argued that English immersion was a more effective method for immigrant and other non-English speaking children, urging state governments to reject bilingual education.²¹ Dr. Wayne P. Thomas agreed with "English First"; Dr. Virginia Collier, his wife, did not. To solve their disagreement, these professors examined the school records of 42,000 non-English speaking children, to investigate the effectiveness of different models of bilingual education.²²

17 Thai academics prefer to be known by first name, a practice that will be followed in the text of this document. Citations and bibliographic references for Thai and international scholars will be by surname.

18 Preamsrit, 2002

19 Person & Siltragool, 2007

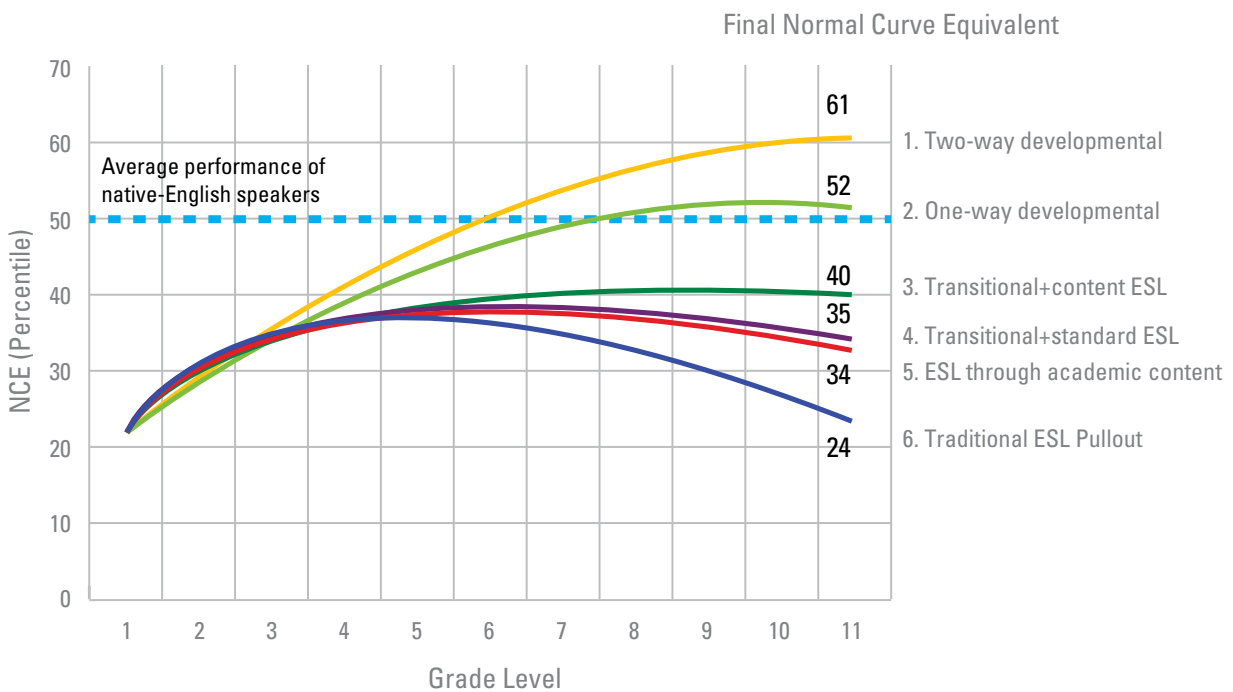
20 Kosonen & Person, 2014

21 In 1998, "English First" was very involved in convincing the people of California to vote for Proposition 227, also called the "English Language in Public Schools Statute," which eliminated most bilingual programmes in that state. In 2016, Californians passed Proposition 58, restoring bilingual education.

22 Kamenetz, 2016

As shown in figure 5, Thomas and Collier found that the **more** time students spent in their mother tongue, the **better** their long term academic success. Students in English-only classrooms, and students who received very little mother tongue before being “mainstreamed” into all-English classrooms, had poor long term results.²³ Often, the difference in models did not become clear until after grade 4, when the children were exposed to larger amounts of academic content and technical vocabulary.

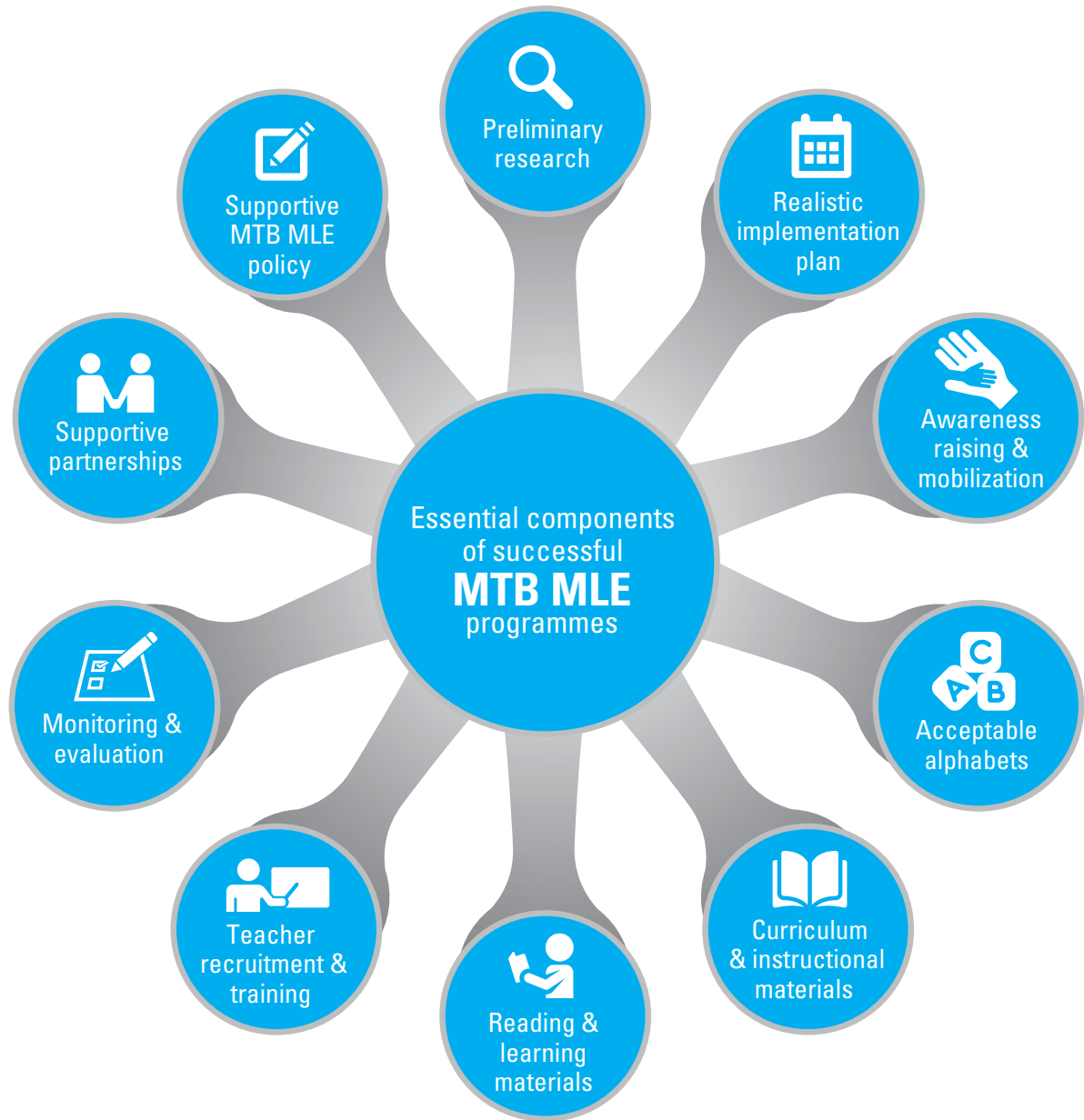
Figure 5: Patterns of K-12 English learners’ long-term achievement compared across six programme models (adapted from Thomas & Collier, 1997)



The second slide contained Susan Malone's list of key factors necessary for building strong MTB-MLE programs, based on research and experience in many countries. This later developed into the "MLE Spider Web" shown in figure 6 below.

²³ Since 1997, Collier and Thomas have expanded their research to 8 million student records in the USA. They remain convinced of the value of mother tongue-based education (Kamenetz, 2016).

Figure 6: Components of strong mother tongue-based MLE programmes (UNESCO, 2016)



This “Spider Web” would serve as the roadmap for MLE programmes in dozens of countries in Africa, Asia, and the Pacific. Indeed, the remainder of this book will detail how each of the factors in this diagram impacted planning, implementation, and evaluation of the PMT-MLE programme.

THE BIRTH OF PMT-MLE

"We understand that the students in the South are not doing well. Many times the blame was put on the people, or on the children, but I believe that it is our fault—meaning the educators and teachers." Minister of Education Chaturon Chaisang, 2007²⁴

Chapter Highlights

- **How RILCA linguists' language revitalization work in other parts of Thailand led them to the Deep South**
- **How social unrest drew attention to educational disparities in the Deep South**
- **How discussions within the Ministry of Education created a policy opening for PMT-MLE**

From Language Revival to Multilingual Education

In 2003, when the "Multilingual Education Spider Web" was first presented in Bangkok, no one thought of its implications for Thailand's Deep South. Dr. Suwilai and her RILCA colleagues were focused on language revitalization projects among minority groups in Thailand's Northeast. Some of those projects had a school-based component, with the minority language being taught as a subject for a few hours a week. But none used the mother tongue as a main language of instruction across the curriculum.

In early 2005, the Thailand Research Fund (TRF)—which had supported RILCA's Chong language revitalization project—brought researchers from the Deep South to hear about RILCA's work. The Southerners felt that their language, Patani Malay, was likewise in need of revitalization. Dr. Suwilai agreed to form a research team.

The RILCA team visited several TRF projects in Patani Malay speaking villages. This was Dr. Suwilai's first trip to the South, and she was intrigued. Patani Malay was definitely the most used language in daily life. Many villagers could speak very little Thai. How could they interact meaningfully with Thai government officials? How could their children survive in Thai language schools?

Other scholars, government officials, and community leaders were asking similar questions. Many felt that the combination of low educational achievement and economic stagnation were contributing to the violence sweeping through the area. Some began speaking of "bilingual education" (which Patani Malay leaders first suggested in 1946) as a tool for building social cohesion as well as improving education. Prominent among these was former Prime Minister Anand Panyarachun, chair of the National Reconciliation Commission (NRC), charged with finding solutions to the Southern strife.

But what did "bilingual education" mean? Most Thai people were familiar with "bilingual" schools offering education in Thai and a foreign language such as English or Chinese, but the idea of using a minority language in government schools was completely new. And even as the Ministry of Education and the National Security Council began in 2005 to include "bilingual education" in their policy plans for the Deep South, no one was sure what it meant or how to begin.

²⁴ UNESCO, 2007

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Many of the educational challenges in the Deep South have their roots in the region's unique history and culture.

In centuries past, the Patani Sultanate had been one of the greatest of the Malay city-states, famous as a center of trade and Islamic scholarship. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the area came increasingly under Siamese influence. Britain, the colonial masters of Malaya, acknowledged Siamese authority over the "Northern Malay States," including Patani, through the Anglo-Siamese Treaty of 1909.²⁵

An uneasy status quo, punctuated by occasional protests and some violent incidents, descended on the South for most of the 20th century.

Everything changed on the morning of 4 January 2004, when insurgents attacked Thai police and military posts in 9 districts and set fire to 18 government schools, launching a period of unrest that continues to the present.²⁶

SCHOOLS AS TARGETS

The insurgency perceived the government education system as a threat to the Patani Malay language and Islam. Schools became targets; hundreds were bombed or burned. Teachers were also attacked. Some were killed while traveling to school, others in front of their classrooms. By the end of 2016, over 180 teachers and education officials would die.

THE NRC ON EDUCATION

"The state must develop a policy of language for education beginning from kindergarten, including a policy of using the mother tongue as a medium of instruction, the effective teaching of spoken and written languages, i.e., Thai, Patani Malay and English, the preparation of teachers and the production of teaching materials."²⁷

25 The treaty also required Siam to renounce its territorial claims to Kalantan, Trengganu, Kedah and Perlis in what is today Malaysia.

26 Gunaratna, 2005

27 National Reconciliation Commission, 2006

What is “Bilingual Education”?

Insurgent attacks on schools in 2004-05 demoralized educators; as teachers became targets, 2700 requested transfer to other parts of the country.²⁸ And while many continued to bravely serve their students, it became clear that Patani Malay children were doing very poorly in Thai schools.

In November 2005, the Ministry of Education convened a large meeting in Bangkok to discuss language and education in the Deep South. MOE officials and Thai academics offered suggestions. Dr. Suwilai introduced the concept of “Mother Tongue Based Multilingual Education,” with Dr. Susan Malone and Dr. Dennis Malone presenting the international evidence supporting it.

Jehusen Jeh-ubong, a prominent Southern educator, was among the attendees. During the meeting he came to an important realization, one which would transform him from MLE skeptic to strong MLE advocate:

In the past, we were very worried that the children would not be able to speak or write Thai, so we stressed learning Thai from an early age. Sometimes it seemed to work, but then the children still had academic problems in grades 4 and up. I realized that we had been so focused on the Thai language that we had ignored the bigger picture. We had not taught the children critical or creative thinking, or encouraged their self-confidence. I began to see MLE as a holistic way to help the child’s complete development. And I realized that MLE would not destroy our Patani Malay language.²⁹

As an outgrowth of this meeting, the MOE initiated the “Two Language School” pilot programme, in which Patani Malay and Thai were to be used together in 12 schools beginning in May 2006. This was a reversal of longstanding Thai-only classroom policies—although many local teachers confessed that they regularly used Patani Malay in class as they would otherwise not be able to communicate with the students at all. A delegation of Southern educators were sent to visit the Om Koi Northern Pwo Karen MLE project for

inspiration, and shortly thereafter organized workshops to develop Patani Malay language songs and games. However, the “Two Language School” approach was to be limited to kindergarten students, and would not teach mother tongue reading or writing.

The “Two Language Schools” experienced initial success, reported enthusiastically at the MOE in a meeting chaired by the Minister of Education on 21 July 2006. Teachers cited better class attendance and greater overall enjoyment. The children loved singing songs and playing games in their mother tongue. And because the “Two Language” approach was simple to implement and warmly welcomed by parents, it quickly spread to other schools.

However, the shortcomings were pronounced. In the same meeting, Dr. Susan Malone warned the MOE that the “Two Language School” oral-only model was pedagogically weak; it had been tried in other countries, and failed to impact academic performance. She predicted that the “Two Language School” approach would result in lower test scores than monolingual Thai submersion, and could lead policy makers to conclude that mother tongue based education was ineffective. The lack of an external assessment system was also problematic.³⁰

Dr. Suwilai recognized that if the Patani Malay language was to be used in Southern schools in a way that would truly benefit children, a “strong model MLE” programme was needed. And, guided by the “Spider Web” roadmap and a growing number of partners, she decided to start one.

A TEACHER’S SORROW

“Many years ago I received the ‘Outstanding Teacher of the Nation’ award for teaching Thai to Patani Malay students. But I was not worthy of it. The truth is that I had no idea how to teach them. I was honored, but many of my students failed. Now I am old, and I can say with certainty that PMT-MLE is the solution we have been waiting for. It is the only hope for the South.” Waeyusoh Sama-alee, 2006.

28 BBC News, 2005

29 Jeh-ubong, 2016

30 Dr. Malone’s prediction came true. In late 2016, officials in Pattani Education District 1 confirmed that grade 3 national test scores from the “Two Language Schools” are below the provincial average, and far below the national average (Prachan, 2016).



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IMPLEMENTING MOTHER TONGUE-BASED MULTILINGUAL EDUCATION

PRELIMINARY RESEARCH: UNDERSTANDING THE SITUATION

“Preliminary research provides information about (1) the language situation in schools; (2) resources that can be mobilized for the program; (3) factors that might hinder program implementation & sustainability...” Susan Malone, 2010

Chapter Highlights

- **The type of research that is needed for successful MLE programmes**
- **How cooperative research involving academics and local people can produce important insights**
- **How preliminary research for PMT-MLE was conducted, providing a view into the daily language usage as well as reading abilities in the various languages and scripts found in this multilingual region.**

Preliminary Research for MLE: How is it different?

Most governments regularly amass large amounts of data about their people. Information about age, income, education level, gender, rural/urban residence, occupation, etc., is collected in the national census and other research projects. Ideally, this data is used to guide policies and improve outcomes.

To plan an MLE programme, information not found in typical census or Ministry of Education data is needed. Key questions include:

- What language(s) do people understand and use in different places (home, work, school, market, government offices, religious institutions, etc.)?
- What language(s) are spoken by teachers?
- Does the minority language have a suitable alphabet?
- What attitudes do people have to the different languages around them?
- What specific problems do students have in school? Are some related to language?
- Are there other factors (social, geographical, religious, etc.) that could impact the MLE programme?
- What local resources (cultural experts, retired teachers, existing literacy materials, religious leaders, local NGOs, supportive government agencies) are available to help programme planners?

To answer such questions, field visits are necessary. Researchers must be careful to base their findings on data obtained from the local people themselves, as the opinions of cultural outsiders (including government officials, educational administrators, and academics) may not always be accurate. In Vietnam, for example, some officials initially believed that MLE would be impossible in a certain area, claiming that *all* the classrooms contained students from many different ethnic groups and *none* of the teachers spoke ethnic languages. Closer investigation, however, showed that 51 per cent of schools contained students from a single ethnic group only, and that *many* teachers in the area were ethnic minority people who shared the same mother tongue as their students.³¹

31 UNICEF Vietnam, 2012

Researchers must also be cautious about language names. One language may go by several names. In many Southeast Asian countries, for example, “Lahu” and “Muser” are sometimes listed in government documents as if they were separate languages; in fact, those are two names for the same language. Other times, different languages are called by one name.³² In northern Thailand, seven separate minority groups are popularly called “Lua,” even though their languages, cultures, and traditional dress are very different.³³

Ideally, preliminary research should include educational statistics that can be used to form a baseline for later student testing and project evaluation. In addition, it should look for potential local partners and cross-cutting issues.

Preliminary Research for PMT-MLE

RILCA linguists have had a longstanding interest in Thailand’s ethnic minority peoples. Since the late 1970s, RILCA professors have taken students to minority villages for linguistic and cultural research. Graduate students completed masters and doctoral theses on the phonology, grammar, discourse features, and sociolinguistic situation of most of Thailand’s ethnic languages.

In the mid 1990s, RILCA and SIL collaborated on a language mapping project, sending questionnaires to over ten thousand village headmen, health officials, and teachers to collect language information on the provincial, district and village levels. The questionnaires were generally followed up by site visits to verify data. This resulted in the Thai-language book *Ethnolinguistic Maps of Thailand*.³⁴

The mapping project motivated RILCA’s work on revitalizing endangered languages, which gave the RILCA team experience in the language development skills that would be needed for PMT-MLE. Indeed, as will be described in a later chapter, the first conversation between RILCA and UNICEF about PMT-MLE was the result of UNICEF’s interest in the language maps!

Since 2001, the Community Research Project of the Thailand Research Fund (TRF) had been giving small grants to “community researchers”—often ordinary villagers—to document aspects of local culture, history, traditional knowledge, etc. RILCA was commissioned to assist in the coordination of projects related to the revival of ethnic minority languages and cultures. Thus RILCA developed a great deal of experience and expertise in cooperating with communities to fulfill their language development aspirations.

In November 2005 the Thailand Research Fund (TRF) commissioned RILCA to coordinate over a dozen language-related projects in the Deep South. Some were carried out by RILCA staff, others by researchers from local universities under RILCA’s guidance. Although not directly connected to PMT-MLE, these projects provided valuable insight into the language and culture which would later influence the programme. The first six projects were:

- Patani Malay-Thai-Standard Malay Trilingual Dictionary
- Developing the Jawi Script as a Means for Preserving and Revitalizing the Local Language and Culture
- Developing Glossaries of Various Languages for Students in Private Islamic Schools
- The Patani Malay Language and Herbal Medicine
- Traditional Songs Celebrating the Life of the Prophet Mohammed
- Traditional Songs of Blessing for Infants in the Satun Dialect

All these projects touched on an important issue: how should the Patani Malay language be written? It was clear that the traditional Arabic-based Jawi script used in ancient Malay religious materials did not match modern spoken pronunciation. Many times, there was no written Jawi equivalent for a local word. If written according to Jawi spelling rules, local oral poems would not rhyme. Using either the Roman-based Rumi (Standard Malay) script or International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) would limit the number of potential readers. A Thai-based script would make the materials more accessible to both Thai people and Patani Malay readers educated in Thai schools—and numerous researchers and government agencies had already used various Thai-based systems for transcribing Patani Malay. Still, these informal transcription

32 Numkaew, 1987

33 Ethnologue.com lists all the different names by which single language might be known, and the authoritative three-letter ISO 639-3 code used to identify specific languages.

34 Preamsirat et al., 2004

SAMPLE LANGUAGE SURVEY QUESTIONS

- Which language do you use most often in daily life with your family?
- Which language do you use most often in daily life outside the home?
- Which language are you most skilled at using?
- How would you rank your Thai listening/speaking skills when you entered school?
- How would you rank your Thai listening/speaking/reading writing skills now?
- How many years of study did it take you to become a fluent Thai listener/speaker/reader/writer?
- How would you rank your Patani Malay speaking abilities?
- Have you ever written the Patani Malay language?
- Do you use Standard Malay on a daily basis?
- How would you rank your Standard Malay, Jawi script reading/writing abilities?
- How would you rank your Standard Malay, Rumi script reading/writing abilities?
- What language is most important for your children to speak?
- What language is most embarrassing for you to use?
- Should Patani Malay be used in local media?
- Should Patani Malay written in the Thai script be used for educational purposes?³⁶

systems were not based on detailed linguistic analysis, and some Patani Malay speakers were strongly opposed to the idea of writing their language in the script of what they perceived to be an imperial power.

RILCA thus conducted a survey aimed at understanding the language situation in the Deep South. Key objectives included assessing the domains of language use (where and by whom each language was used), as well as self-reported proficiency in speaking and writing each language and attitudes toward the Thai, Rumi, and Jawi scripts.³⁵ Funding for the language survey was provided by the Mahidol University Research Center for Peacebuilding.

Language Situation Survey 1: Language Use and Attitudes

The Language Situation Survey was a large scale questionnaire-based quantitative study carried out February-August 2006. Trained Patani Malay speakers from the local area conducted interviews with 1,255 Patani Malay people of various ages, occupations, education levels, and genders, from 37 sub-districts spread throughout the three Southernmost provinces. The majority (82.9 per cent) still lived near their birthplace, having never left the region for an extended period of time. Only 20 per cent had completed secondary school; fewer still had completed university. Up to one-third of respondents (generally elderly) in some districts had no formal education. Thus, the sample was representative of the Southern population as a whole.

As shown in figure 7 below, 75.20 per cent of respondents said that Patani Malay was the language they used most in daily life. A “mixed” language, combining elements of Patani Malay and Thai ranked second at 13.20 per cent, while those who primarily spoke Thai in their daily lives accounted for only 8 per cent of the respondents. Few answered “other,” “Southern Thai Dialect” or “Standard Malay.”

In addition, as shown in figure 8, nearly 95 per cent ranked their Patani Malay language abilities as “good,” compared to 45.40 per cent for Thai and 11.80 per cent for Standard Malay. This is very interesting, in that Patani Malay and Standard Malay are linguistically similar; people from Southern Thailand often migrate to Malaysia for employment opportunities. Still, most respondents felt that their Thai language abilities were superior to their Standard Malay abilities. In addition, respondents had a much more positive view toward the Patani Malay language than other languages.

Of special interest is how people responded to the question of using a Thai-based script to write Patani Malay for educational purposes. Figure 9 shows that two-thirds agreed with the idea, while the remaining third disagreed or had no opinion. This crucial finding would deeply impact the course of the PMT-MLE programme.

³⁵ Preamsirat & Samoh, 2012

³⁶ Preamsirat et al., 2009

Figure 7: Language used most in daily life.⁵¹

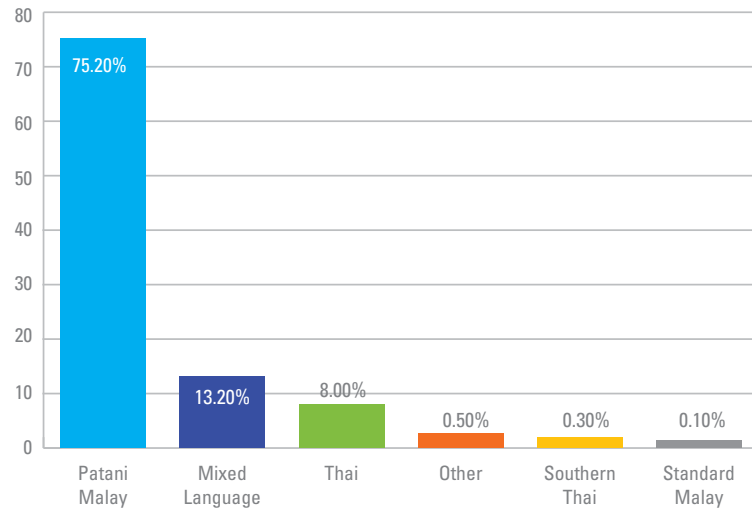


Figure 8: Languages respondents claimed to speak well

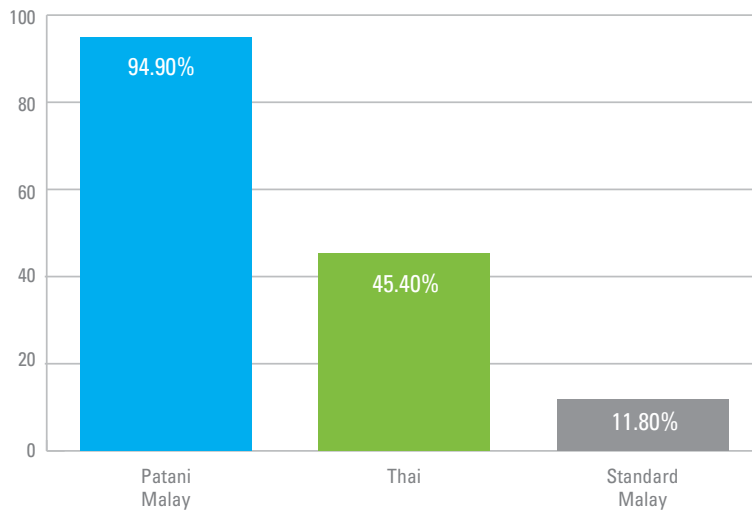
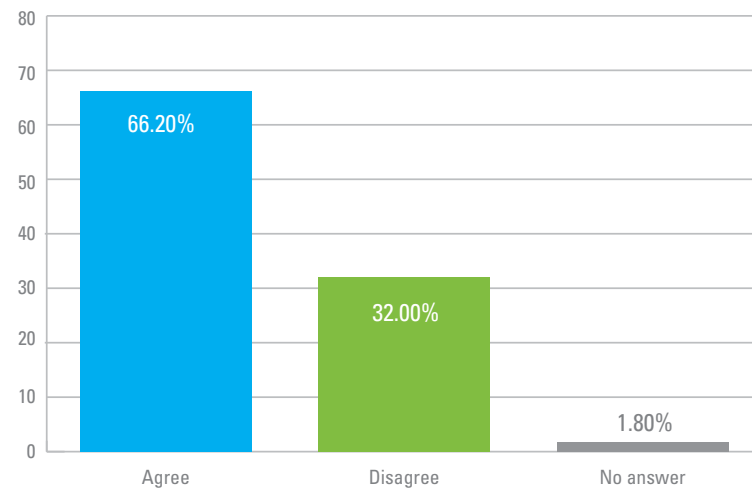


Figure 9: Support for use of Thai-Based Patani Malay orthography in schools



37 Adapted from Premsrirat & Samoh, 2012

Language Situation Survey 2: Media and Literacy

The first survey examined people’s *reported* language abilities. However, it did not contain language ability tests. And while some of the questions from the first survey found that people wanted the Patani Malay language to be used more in the media, the first survey did not examine specific cases. That was left to a second RILCA research project, proposed in late 2007, likewise funded by the Mahidol University Peace Studies Center, and conducted in early 2008. The second project had two objectives:

- To document how the Patani Malay language was being used in public media (radio, newspapers, signs, etc.)
- To assess patterns of literacy by checking accuracy (pronunciation) and understanding (comprehension) of a series of words, sentences, and paragraphs written in various languages and scripts.

Survey participants included 387 people from 4 age groups, with equal numbers of males and females.

The researchers found that isolated Patani Malay words or phrases occasionally appeared in local Thai language newspapers, magazines, and other published material. In these situations, the Patani Malay word was transcribed in either Thai or Jawi script. Actual articles written mostly in Patani Malay in any script were very rare. Isolated Patani Malay words were also seen on some signs, business cards, etc. Religious documents featured continuous use of the Jawi script, but popular media did not.

The first reading test compared accuracy of pronunciation and understanding of content for basic vocabulary words, sentences, and paragraphs consisting of the Thai language written in the Thai script, Standard Malay written in the Jawi script, and Standard Malay written in the Rumi (Romanized) script. The subjects posted higher scores for Thai in Thai script than any other language on the word and sentence levels. This is reflected in figures 10 and 11, which show accuracy of pronunciation and comprehension on the word level, respectively:

Figure 10: Word level pronunciation skills in three languages/scripts (adapted from Samoh, 2010)

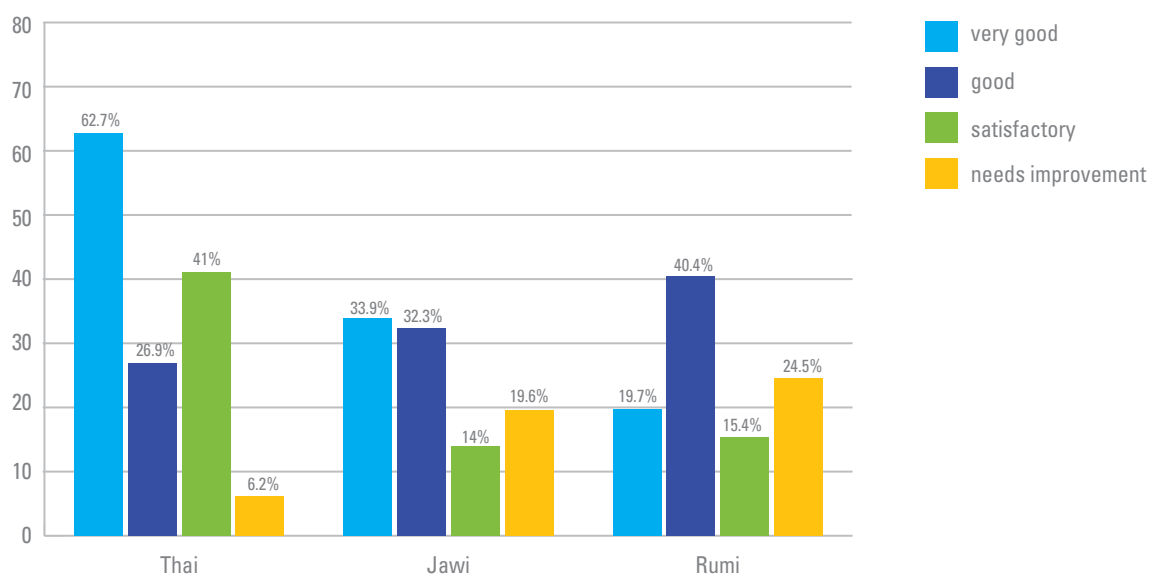
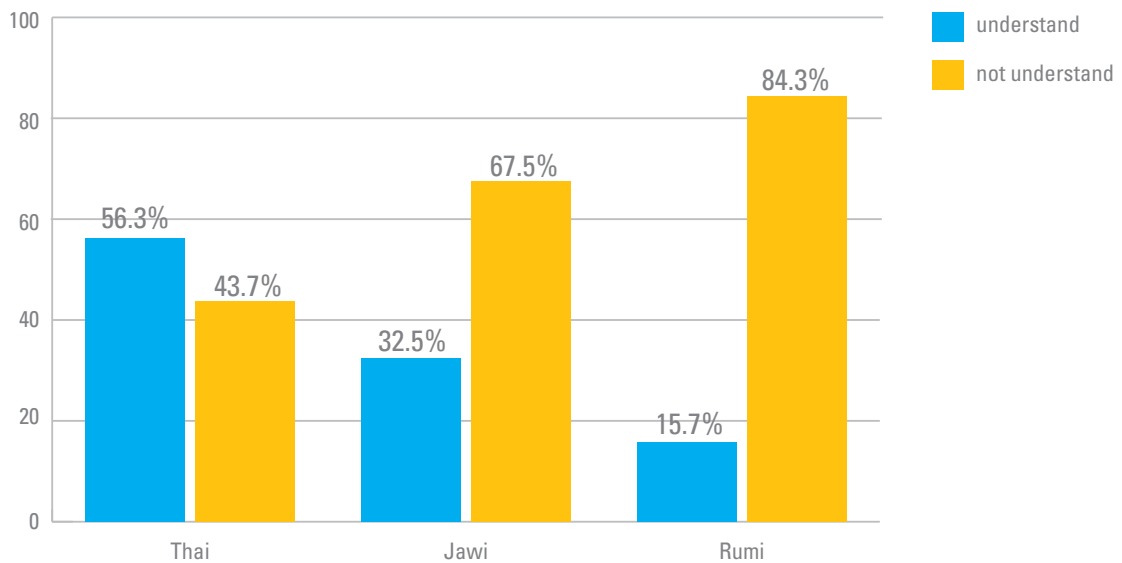


Figure 11: Word level comprehension skills in three languages/scripts (adapted from Samoh, 2010)



Participants aged 25-35 posted the highest overall scores, followed by those aged 15-24. This reflected the impact of the Thai education system, as well as the real life experiences of career aged adults, for whom Thai literacy was important for employment.

However, an interesting anomaly emerged related to paragraph level comprehension. As show in figure 10, 93.8 per cent of respondents were able to read the Thai words out loud at a “good” or “very good” level, compared to 86.7 per cent for Jawi and 84.4 per cent for Rumi. Furthermore, as shown in figure 11, most participants understood the meaning of the Thai words better than the Jawi or Rumi words. However, as shown in figure 12 (below), the number scoring “very good” on text comprehension was much higher for Jawi (79.6 per cent) and Rumi (60.2 per cent) than Thai (50 per cent).

GUIDE TO SOUTHERN SCHOOLS

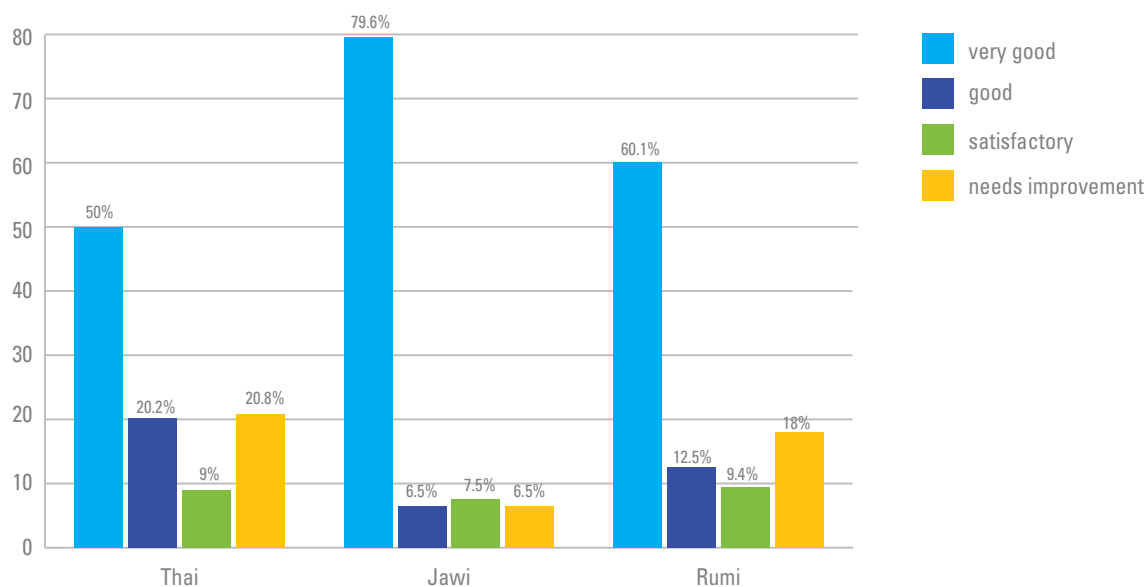
Tadika: A place of Islamic learning for children aged 5-12. Tadikas can be found in most villages, usually close to the mosque. Classes are taught in the evenings and weekends, and include instruction in the Jawi script and the Arabic language.

Pondok: Traditional Islamic boarding schools for teens and young adults with an exclusively religious curriculum, focused on the reading and interpretation of the Qur'an as written in the Arabic language. The Thai government suspects some Pondok promote separatist ideology.

Private Islamic Schools: An outgrowth of the Pondok, these schools offer primary and secondary education. Secondary students may choose a religious track or an academic track (which includes subjects like math and science, in addition to Islamic subjects). While private, these school receive government stipends based on enrollment, and sometimes compete with government schools for students.

Government Schools: Thai government primary schools are found in most villages, with secondary schools in larger villages and towns. The curriculum is identical to schools elsewhere in Thailand, with an added component of Islamic Studies. In most rural areas in the Deep South, government schools serve a 100 per cent Patani Malay student body, while urban schools may serve a mixture of Patani Malay Muslim and Thai Buddhist students.

Figure 12: Paragraph level comprehension (adapted from Samoh, 2010)



This may be due to the fact that the Jawi passage was a religious text containing information that was familiar to the audience. Still, the low comprehension of Thai may indicate that people are able to read and understand Thai words, *but lack the higher level skills needed to decode and understand Thai language texts.*

CONFUSING RELIGION AND LANGUAGE

The Ministry of Education keeps records of a student’s religion, but not his or her language. This can become problematic in the Deep South, where some urban Muslim children use Thai as their mother tongue. Statements such as “Muslim children have difficulties learning Thai” confuse a religious identity with an ethnolinguistic identity.

Key Findings of PMT-MLE Preliminary Research

Key findings from RILCA’s two language situation research projects include:

- The Patani Malay language is the most used language in the family and the workplace in the Deep South, playing an important role in society
- Patani Malay parents desire for their children to have strong skills in both the Patani Malay and Thai languages
- Although the Jawi script is much revered and used extensively in religious documents, people are not accustomed to using it for non-religious purposes
- Patani Malay people have stronger literacy skills in Thai than any other language/script combination, but their *reading comprehension* of Thai texts is low
- Most Patani Malay people interviewed supported the use of a Thai-based script for educational purposes

KEY FACTS ON LANGUAGE AND EDUCATION IN THE DEEP SOUTH

POSITIVE VIEW OF THE THAI LANGUAGE

Most of the 1255 rural Patani Malay speakers surveyed say Thai is an important language, and hope their children learn it well so they can have a good future.

MONOLINGUAL AND MIXED CLASSROOMS

More than 700 government primary schools in the Deep South serve 100 per cent Patani Malay speaking student bodies; fewer than 150 government primary schools are mixed.

EDUCATION AND SOCIAL UNREST

Government statistics show that Patani Malay children have done poorly even in times of peace, so low test scores are not only the result of current violence (although lost class time due to school closings has been a factor in some places)

SUBMERSION HAS NOT BEEN EFFECTIVE

After 70 years of Thai-only education, Patani Malay students are still weak in Thai, and many teens are illiterate. Worldwide research has found that the best way for ethnic minority language speaking students to learn the national language well is to include their mother tongue in the formal education system.

SECULAR + RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

“Thai Muslim students in the three southern border provinces spend more time studying than Thai Buddhist students in general, because their parents wish them to study religion along with general subjects, and the Islamic studies courses taught in the private Islamic schools are much more intensive than those taught in public schools. The result is that 2 in 3 Thai Muslim students are sent by their parents to private Islamic schools and have a total of 35 study hours per week, compared to 25 hours per week in public schools.”³⁸

³⁸ National Reconciliation Commission, 2006



มุหัมมัด อาดำ

ผอ. โรงเรียนนурลอิสลามภูมิวิทยา

AWARENESS RAISING: MEETING PEOPLE, DISCOVERING PARTNERS

คนเดียวหัวหาย สองคนเพื่อนตาย

“One alone loses his head; two together are friends to death.”

Thai Proverb

Chapter Highlights

- **Why awareness raising and partnership are crucial to MLE programmes**
- **How the PMT-MLE programme developed and managed a network of parents, educators, academics, government officials (including security authorities), journalists, and international agencies, both informally and through a multi-agency steering committee**

Why partner?

Successful MLE programmes involve multiple stakeholders at all levels. Parents need to understand why MLE could be helpful to their children. Community members, including teachers, local musicians, storytellers, and artists, need to be mobilized to help create locally relevant content for the MLE curriculum. Education officials need to give permission for MLE, and may be reassured if some of the MLE programme’s budget comes from external donors. Local and national media should be kept informed about the programme, to prevent the spread of false information. Academics can research key elements of the local culture and language, as well as evaluate the programme’s progress and suggest course corrections.

Developing Relationships

As mentioned earlier, some of the partnerships that made PMT-MLE possible were in place before the programme was ever envisioned. Others came about quite quickly during the preliminary research phase.

As part of a major Thai research university, RILCA linguists had long-standing ties to Thai government funding agencies, including the Thailand Research Fund (TRF). This relationship would become even more important as PMT-MLE was born.

Through its involvement in the First Conference on Language Development, Language Revitalization and Multilingual Education in Minority Communities in Asia (2003), RILCA had become acquainted with UN agencies, particularly UNESCO and UNICEF. RILCA was thus happy to welcome UNICEF Thailand staff to the campus in 2006, to learn about the *Ethnolinguistic Maps of Thailand* project. As described in a later chapter, that meeting was the first step toward a long term partnership.

Even prior to 2003, RILCA had had strong connections to international scholars. SIL linguists had collaborated with RILCA staff since the 1970s, initially on linguistic research and later on language survey and language revitalization projects. The revitalization projects included aspects of orthography creation, educational materials development, and community empowerment—learning experiences which RILCA staff would build upon for PMT-MLE. SIL International Multilingual Education Consultants Dr. Susan Malone and Dr. Dennis Malone served as technical advisors throughout the programme, and other SIL staff with specializations such as ethnomusicology and English as a Foreign Language assisted in training workshops.

An additional resource was RILCA alumni. Key among these was linguist Waemaji Paramal of the Prince of Songkhla University, Pattani Campus. Professor Waemaji assisted with preliminary research while introducing the RILCA team to other Southern academics, including his colleagues Sahe Abdullah Alyufri and linguist-turned-Senator Worravit Baru. These professors recommended their top students for RILCA's MA and PhD programmes—where they would both study and serve as PMT-MLE research staff.

As is the case in most networks, one node connects to others. As mentioned earlier, Jehusen Jeh-ubong was a regional education official who initially opposed PMT-MLE but later became a strong supporter. His connections through the government education system helped identify potential pilot schools. But his influence did not stop there. Jehusen had made the Hajj to Mecca many times and, as a member of the Pattani Islamic Council, had relationships with many religious leaders.

Jehusen Jeh-ubong and Waeyusoh Sama-alee (the “Outstanding Teacher of the Nation” who felt like a failure) identified potential partner schools with which they had professional connections. Key selection criteria included:

- being located in a rural area where Patani Malay was the main language of everyday life
- having a 100 per cent Patani Malay-speaking student body
- having at least some Patani Malay speaking teachers and a supportive school director
- willingness to commit to participate in the longitudinal study

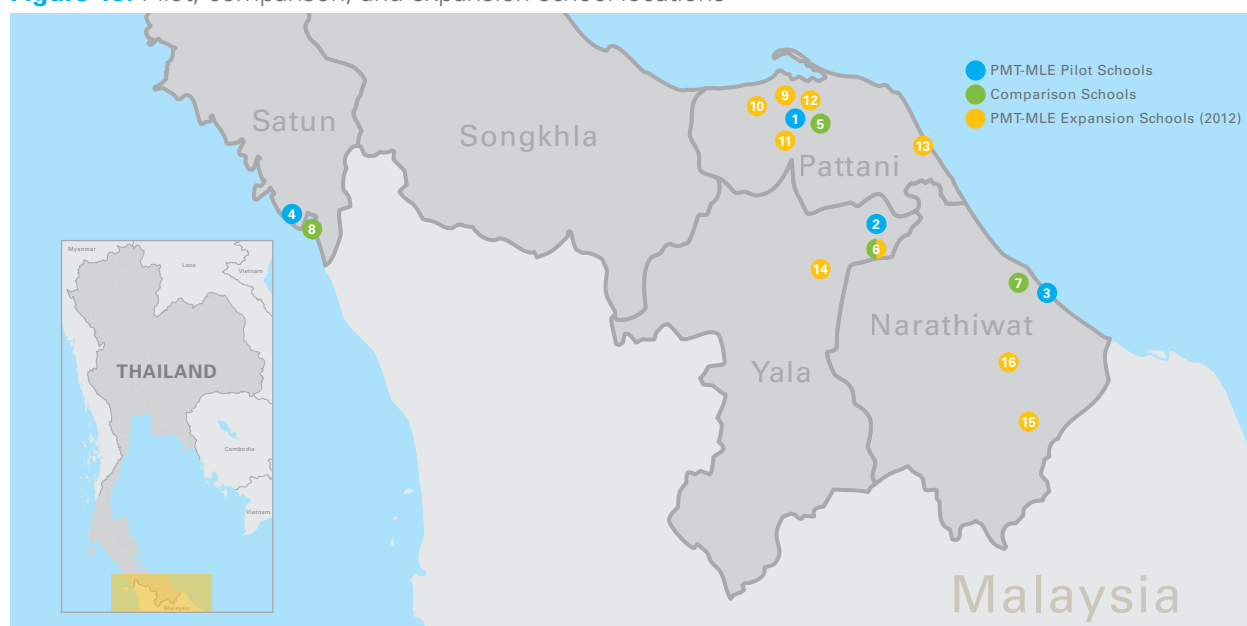
Jehusen and Waeyusoh organized community meetings at village mosques, as well as discussions with school directors, teachers, and local education officers. Over several months, eight schools (two in each of the four Southernmost Provinces) in very similar situations committed to participate. Four would serve as the “pilot” or “experimental” schools, following a “strong model MLE” approach for eight years,³⁹ while the other four would be “comparison” or “control” schools—following the normal Thai-only curriculum. This represented a huge commitment on the part of the school directors and teachers involved. The experimental and corresponding comparison schools in each province were:

- Thairathwittaya 10 and Baan Koksaya Schools (Narathiwat Province)
- Baan Prachan and Chumchon Baan Sanaw Schools (Pattani Province)
- Bann Bueng Num Sai and Baan Talohalaw Schools⁴⁰ (Yala Province)
- Baan Tammalang Nua and Baan Tammalang Tai Schools (Satun Province)

The school partnerships were informal. There were no MOUs or contracts with the schools; merely promises from school directors acting on the limited autonomy they enjoyed under new MOE regulations. The MOE was informed of these partnerships and MOE representatives were invited to programme Steering Committee meetings. While the MOE did not formally sign a contract or MOU with the programme, frequent meetings and personal relationships ensured that PMT-MLE was allowed to continue and, in time, expand.

39 Thai government schools offer two years of pre-primary (Kindergarten 1 and 2) plus six years of primary (Grades 1-6).

40 After seeing the positive impact of PMT-MLE, Baan Talohalaw School asked to become a PMT-MLE expansion school. Their K1 students thus began using the PMT-MLE curriculum in 2012. The older students continued to use the “normal” Thai only curriculum, undergoing the same annual assessments used for programme evaluation. Thus this school was both a comparison and an expansion school.

Figure 13: Pilot, comparison, and expansion school locations


1. Baan Prachan
2. Bann Bueng Num Sai
3. Thairathwittaya 10
4. Baan Tammalang Nua

5. Chumchon Baan Sanaw
6. Baan Talohalaw
7. Baan Koksaya
8. Baan Tammalang Tai

9. Baan Lada
10. Baan Mai Pattana Witaya
11. Baan Krue Se
12. Baan Bu Ko

13. Baan Bon
14. Baan Bong Ta
15. Baan Ku Wa
16. Baan Bu Ke Ta Mongmitphap 128

Media relations were challenging. Both sides in the conflict had a huge stake in the creation and control of information. Initially, the programme partners limited their media exposure. Later, the programme established connections with a number of Thai and foreign journalists, and worked with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Yala Rajabhat University, and the Internal Security Operations Command (ISOC) to organize media and embassy visits to programme schools. UNICEF also organized media visits. Of special note was the Thai Public Broadcasting Service's documentary series on Thai ethnic groups, *Pan Saeng Rung* "A Thousand Colors of the Rainbow." Two episodes first broadcast in 2011 focused on PMT-MLE and featured interviews with teachers, parents, and project personnel.⁴¹ RILCA developed brochures and DVDs in Thai and English for use with the press, government officials, parents, academics and others.

Some partnerships developed organically, through an expanding network of relationships. Others were born out of necessity. Both the programme planners and donors valued assessment, and as a result RILCA approached the president of Yala Rajabhat University with a request to form an evaluation team. This made sense; YRU is one of the largest universities in the Deep South, has many Patani Malay-speaking faculty and staff members, and produces more teachers than any other Southern institution. The president agreed, assigning YRU Southern Border Research and Development Institute Director Dr. Suppaluk Sintana to organize an evaluation team. From this role as project evaluator, YRU evolved into a key partner and advisor, particularly in relation to teacher training.

The difficult situation in the Deep South necessitated clear communication with Thai government agencies responsible for security and regional development. The National Security Council became a key partner early on; its subsequent five year plans for the South would mention bilingual education, and the NSC sent a representative to key programme meetings. Contacts were also initiated with the Southern Border Provinces Administrative Centre (SBPAC), the Thai government agency established to coordinate development efforts in the region. Over the ensuing years, different SBPAC Secretary Generals offered varying levels of support, ranging from tolerance to encouragement for project expansion to budgetary assistance.⁴² Programme personnel also visited high ranking officers in the Fourth Army (responsible for the Southern region) and the Internal Security Operations Command (ISOC, under the Office of the Prime Minister).

41 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QUNdL66hiw>

42 Utairat, 2017



Dr. Suwilai greeting community members



Parents' meeting at a programme school



Programme staff discuss PMT-MLE with a village elder

As mentioned earlier, news of the Royal Institute’s language policy work, as well as RILCA’s Ethnolinguistic mapping project, were of great interest to UNICEF. In late 2006, the idea of a RILCA-UNICEF Thailand Research Fund partnership emerged. This would lead to a decade of close cooperation which will be described in greater detail in a later chapter.

As the programme expanded beyond the original four pilot schools, the Delegation of the European Union to Thailand became involved in teacher training. An EU grant in 2013 enabled Yala Rajabhat University (YRU) to carry out faculty development activities (including a study tour of bilingual programs in Basque Country and Wales), create an undergraduate MLE curriculum for YRU students, design in-service modules for teachers and school directors, begin a PMT-MLE internship programme, and establish the “MLE Centre” as a library of materials accessible to teachers throughout the region.

To coordinate the work and ensure clear communication between all the partners, two committees were established. The “Working Committee” consisted of RILCA’s Bangkok-based team, as well as local staff from the programme’s Pattani branch office, teachers, and others involved on the ground. This committee met frequently, and was instrumental in organizing workshops, making and maintaining key contacts in the region, and supervising the work of the teachers. The “Steering Committee” involved some of the RILCA team plus representatives from the Thailand Research Fund, UNICEF, the Ministry of Education (both OBEC and the Office of the Education Council), SIL International, the Royal Institute, Yala Rajabhat University, the National Security Council, the Delegation of the European Union to Thailand, and other high level stakeholders. The Steering Committee met annually, although committee members were frequently consulted outside of formal meetings to provide advice and assistance to the programme.



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Steering Committee Meeting, Pattani, 2016



© RILCA

Steering Committee with school and community representatives



Thai Foreign Minister Kasit Piromya and ambassadors from 9 nations visit a PMT-MLE classroom



Organisation of Islamic Cooperation Ambassador Tawfeeq Al Mansoor visits a PMT-MLE classroom



© UNICEF Thailand/2012/Jingjai N.

UNICEF AND PMT-MLE

“When we thus empower the most disadvantaged children with education, especially in their mother tongue...equip them with skills...and enable them better to achieve their goals, they will not only build a more positive future for themselves. They will someday, as adults, narrow the inequalities in their generation and in the generations to follow.” Anthony Lake, Executive Director, UNICEF.⁴³

Chapter Highlights

- An overview of UNICEF’s work in Thailand
- How UNICEF’s focus on the children’s rights led to engagement on issues of children friendly schools and ethnic diversity
- The strengths UNICEF brought to the programme

⁴³ Lake, 2015

UNICEF’s presence in Thailand dates to 1948. Early programmes focused on basic development issues: nutrition, vaccination, sanitation, clean drinking water, etc. Over time, programmes related to children with HIV-AIDS, child rights, child protection, and other evolving social issues were added.⁴⁴

In the mid 1990s, UNICEF Thailand was becoming concerned that, while the nation’s progress toward its EFA goals was clear, momentum on child rights issues and educational equality was lagging. UNICEF drew upon the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) as the starting point to work with the Thai government to develop the “Child Friendly Schools” programme in over 1500 schools in less developed areas throughout Thailand (including the Deep South). UNICEF also became deeply involved in education emergency response and child protection in the wake of the 2004 tsunami, which devastated the Southern coastline.

As violence in the Deep South escalated in 2004-05, UNICEF commissioned a situation analysis: *Children and Young People in Thailand’s Southernmost Provinces*. Aside from the obvious impact on education from school burnings and teacher killings, this document explored why Patani Malay youth and adults were dissatisfied with Thai government schools. Language was identified as a key concern, requiring different responses in different environments:

Urban parents complain that their children studying at government schools are losing the ability to speak Malay, resurrecting lingering fears that the distinctive culture and language of the region will disappear.... the real need in urban areas is for instruction in the local dialect to prevent its disappearance. In rural areas, however, primary school children who study in the Thai language remain at a disadvantage... Responding to their needs would require bilingual education in the local dialect.⁴⁵

In 2006-07, UNICEF cooperated with four Thai NGOs to research the impact of the violence on children. Over 2,300 children and 700 adults were interviewed. The results of those interviews, along with pictures drawn by some of the children (below), were published in 2008 in *Everyday Fears: A Study of Children’s Perceptions of Living in the Southern Border Area of Thailand*. The study concluded:

...the children suffer anxiety and stress associated with the ongoing threat and anticipation of violence, as well as their own violent experiences and their proximity to places vulnerable to violent attacks. Their everyday experiences include witnessing attacks and other violent incidents associated with injury and death.⁴⁶



"Good" and "bad" experiences drawn by a 10-year-old Buddhist girl from a village in Yala. In the good picture, her brother is teaching aerobics “far from the unrest”; in the bad picture, the father of her Muslim friend is shot on his way to prayer.



"Good" and "bad" experiences drawn by a 12-year-old Muslim boy from a village in Yala. A family visit to the zoo contrasts with death by gunfire in a tea shop.



A 17-year-old Muslim boy in rural Yala chose to illustrate helping his parents cut rubber trees as his good experience, and the destruction of his school as his bad experience.

44 Martin, 2000
45 UNICEF, 2005
46 UNICEF, 2008

Meanwhile, UNICEF Thailand’s focus on low performing schools, guided by a rights-based approach, aimed to support the Thai government in providing education to all children and recognizing the diverse needs of different communities in various parts of the country. UNICEF thus became interested in RILCA’s Ethnolinguistic Mapping Project, and visited the Mahidol University campus in 2006 to engage on the issue. Toward the end of that meeting, linguist Dr. Suwilai Premsrirat casually mentioned that she and her colleagues were contemplating a “Strong model MLE” programme in the Deep South. UNICEF was intrigued, and a partnership was born that would lead to a decade of close cooperation.

UNICEF brought a unique perspective to the partnership, based on its child-rights outlook plus its “brand name” recognition and convening power. In addition, UNICEF brought insights into how issues of language and education can be connected to cross-cutting issues, including child rights, gender, and child friendly schools.

From the outset, UNICEF saw PMT-MLE as a long-term pilot project with the potential to capture crucial research evidence. UNICEF thus helped RILCA to develop clear programme research questions and objectives.

Ensuring the success of the research component of the programme was a high priority for UNICEF. Rigorous evaluations would be carried out with two purposes: 1) to identify and correct programme weaknesses and 2) to provide longitudinal evidence of impact by contrasting the achievement of programme students in the pilot schools with their peers in “normal” Thai language only comparison schools.

UNICEF also played a crucial role as an intermediary between the programme and the Thai Ministry of Education. The fact that UNICEF was a programme partner raised PMT-MLE’s status within the MOE. In addition, UNICEF served as a kind of translator between the RILCA linguists and the MOE educationalists, helping link the key principles and benefits of MLE to MOE priorities and understandings. For example, UNICEF was able to explain MLE in terms of its cognitive, affective, and psychomotor benefits, and also helped RILCA develop clear visuals of the “MLE Bridge” and the “Step-by-Step Progression” (both discussed in a later chapter) to answer specific concerns raised by senior MOE executives.



UNICEF, RILCA, and YRU partners present lessons learned from 10 years of PMT-MLE at the Fifth International Conference on Language and Education

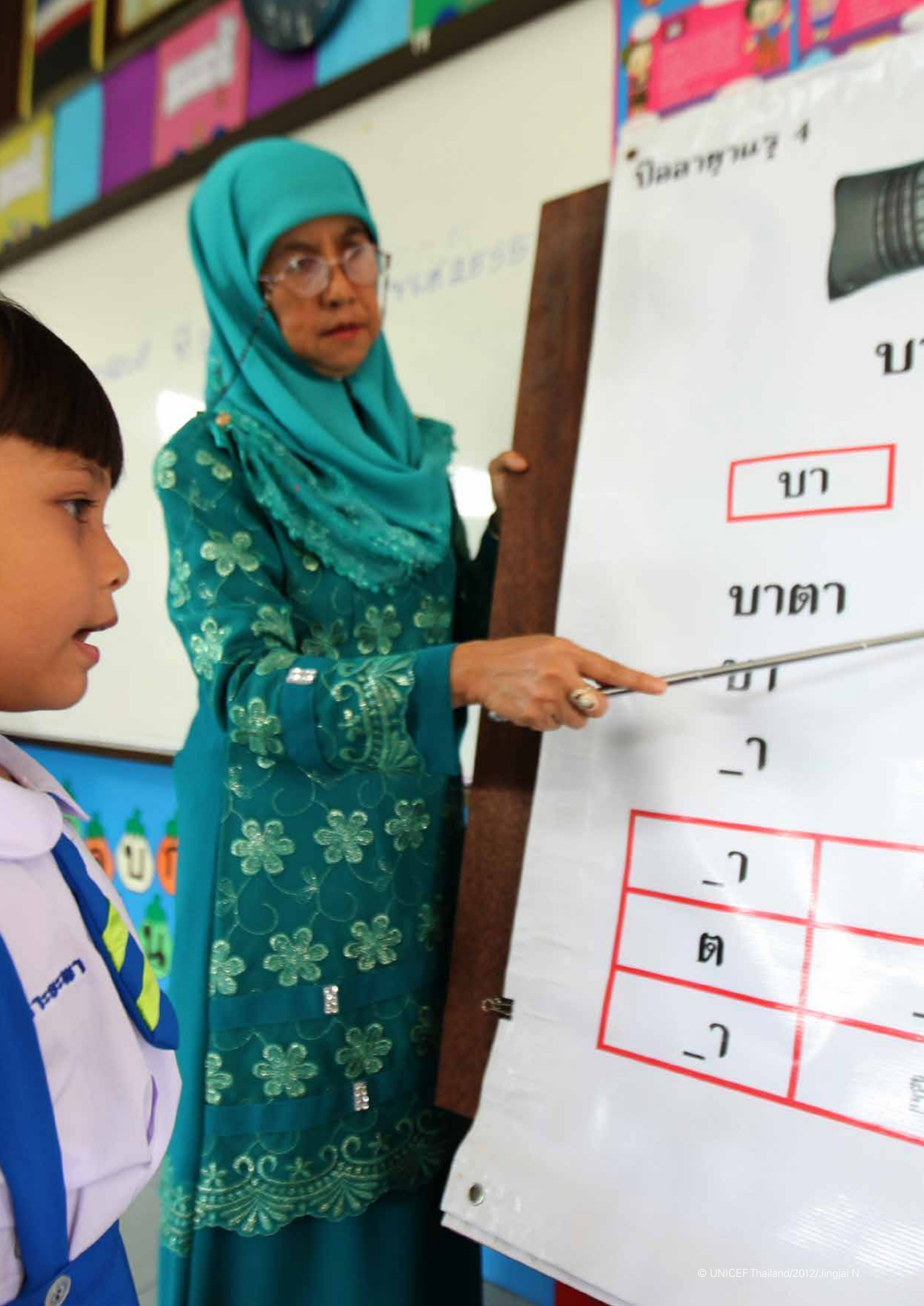
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PMT-MLE PROGRAMME OBJECTIVES (UNICEF, 2006)

1. To plan and implement strong (8-year) MTB-MLE pilot classes in 4 schools in the four southern border provinces of Thailand.
2. To develop MLE curricula, teaching and learning materials for the MTB-MLE programme in Patani Malay and Thai that will be acceptable to the Office of the Basic Education Commission, promote educational success for Patani Malay-speaking students, and be a model for similar programs in other ethnic minority communities of Thailand.
3. To foster cooperation and participation among the Patani Malay community, government agencies, academic institutions, and non-governmental and international organizations in order to develop and sustain a strong and effective MTB-MLE programme that all stakeholders consider successful.
4. To evaluate the educational achievement of Patani Malay speaking children in the 4 schools as they progress through the MTB-MLE programme and then continue their education.

PMT-MLE ORIGINAL RESEARCH QUESTIONS (UNICEF, 2006)

1. Will a strong MTB-MLE programme that uses Patani Malay as well as Thai as languages of instruction through primary school help Patani Malay students achieve better academic success than Patani Malay students who are taught only in Thai?
2. Will a strong MTB-MLE programme help Patani Malay children develop better Thai language skills than Patani Malay students who are taught only in Thai?
3. Will a strong MTB-MLE programme that affirms the Patani Malay students' heritage language and culture result in the students' having a deeper knowledge and appreciation of their own language and culture than students who are schooled in the Thai-only system?
4. Will a strong MTB-MLE programme result in more parental participation in and community support for local schools than is currently the situation in communities with Thai-only schools?
5. Which activities and resources, from which stakeholders (local communities, government agencies, academic institutions, international organizations, and the general public), are most important for the success and sustainability of a strong MTB-MLE programme?



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ORTHOGRAPHY MATTERS: HOW TO WRITE AN UNWRITTEN LANGUAGE

“...Developing a writing system for an unwritten language is perfectly feasible – such work has gone on for centuries. Linguistic tools have improved and speeded up the process.” UNESCO, 2003⁴⁷

Chapter Highlights

- **An overview of the relationship between orthographies and the languages they represent**
- **A technical explanation of key factors to be considered when creating a new orthography (or adapting an existing one) for an MLE project**
- **A discussion of PMT-MLE’s community based orthography development process, including how some very difficult challenges were addressed.**

Orthographies and languages

6000 years ago, no languages were written. Later, people in Mesopotamia and China developed the idea that marks on clay, bone, pottery or stone could represent sounds, words, and ideas, and writing was born. Over the centuries, orthographies were developed for many of the world’s languages—particularly those spoken by large numbers of people.

Today, some languages still do not have a written form. That does not mean that those languages cannot be written; it just means that no one has done it yet. Indeed, in the 20th century alone, new orthographies were developed for at least 1500 languages.⁴⁸ Some of these new alphabets were created by native speakers, others by outside linguists working alongside the language communities.

Other languages may have several different alphabets that emerged due to dialect differences, political situations, or religious influences. The Hmong language, for example, has been written at least a dozen ways, using ancient Chinese characters closely linked to traditional religion, several Romanized scripts (some developed by missionaries, others by Chinese scholars), three Thai-based scripts, two Lao-based scripts, and a unique “semi-syllabic” script alleged to have been revealed by God to a Hmong farmer. Meanwhile, the Akha of Myanmar, China, Thailand and Laos recently agreed on a unified Romanized script that supersedes the many Romanized and Thai-based orthographies used by Akha groups in different religious and geographical contexts.⁴⁹

47 Robinson & Gadelii, 2003

48 Person, 2009

49 Person, 2009

Key factors in orthography creation or adaptation

William Smalley outlined a series of criteria that can be used to create a new orthography or evaluate the suitability of an existing one. Linguists call these “Smalley’s Maximums.” They are:

- **Maximum motivation** “Will learners be excited to learn the orthography, and will their society as a whole accept it?”
- **Maximum representation of speech** “Using this orthography, can a native speaker easily write anything he or she can say, and will other native speakers be able to easily read and understand it?”
- **Maximum ease of learning** “Is the orthography and spelling system easy to learn?”
- **Maximum transfer** “Is the orthography similar to other important languages in the area, especially the national language?”
- **Maximum ease of reproduction** “Can the language be written using available technologies [including computers and smart phones]?”⁵⁰

Community-based orthography development in PMT-MLE

Any visitor to the Deep South will be struck by the diversity of languages and scripts in use in public signs. Thai, English, Chinese and Arabic are visible in their respective scripts, as well as Standard Malay written in both the Arabic-based Jawi script and the Roman-based Rumi script, plus Patani Malay written in informal Thai transcriptions.

ENGLISH: A TERRIBLE EXAMPLE

English has only 44 consonant and vowel sounds, but spells those sounds more than 200 different ways!⁵¹ For example, the sound ‘ay’ as in ‘say’ is spelled differently in bake, ballet, maid, straight, gauge, great, veil, grey, and weigh. That is one reason why children in the UK learn to read more slowly than children in many other European countries!⁵²

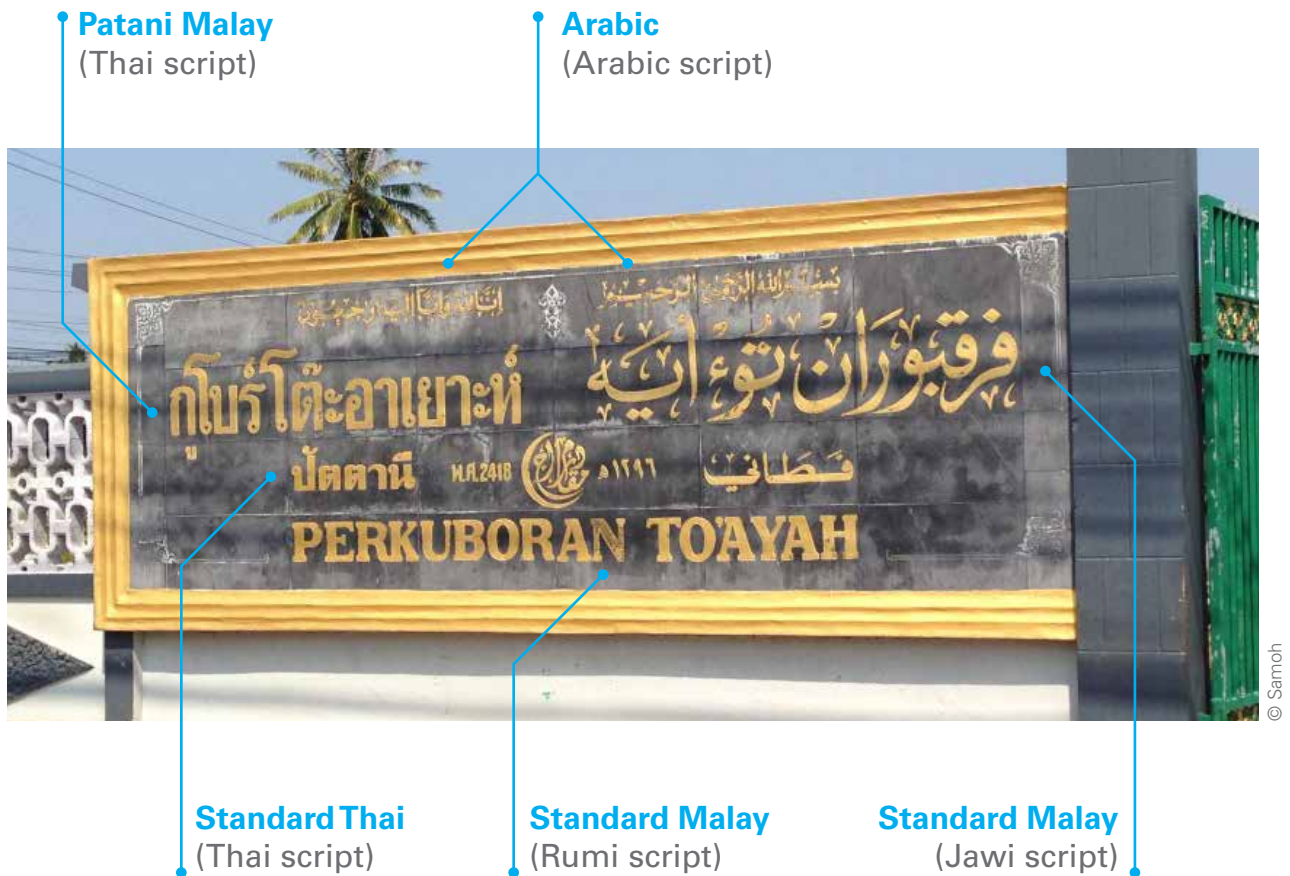
It is too late to “fix” English—the language is used by too many people all over the world. However, when we create a new orthography or adapt an existing one for use in an MLE project, we should try to ensure greater consistency, aiming for a “1 sound=1 symbol” correspondence, with very few spelling “exceptions.” That way children will learn it quickly!

50 Smalley, 1959

51 Vangelova, 2015

52 Seymour, Aro, & Erskine, 2003

Figure 14: Multiple languages and scripts on a sign for a Muslim cemetery



As mentioned earlier, preliminary research in the Deep South revealed three main script options: Thai-based, Jawi (Arabic-based), or Rumi (Roman-based). As mentioned earlier, two-thirds of the 1255 Patani Malay people surveyed preferred a Thai-based script for educational purposes.⁵³

But aside from the popular support for the Thai-based script, what linguistic factors should be considered? To address these questions, we will examine the suitability of each of the three options with the help of "Smalley's Maximums."

Jawi

The Arabic-based Jawi script has been used for centuries, primarily for religious materials. The association between Arabic and Jawi is so close that many local people believe them to be the same language.⁵⁴ Virtually all Patani Malay children learn to read Jawi through the formal and non-formal religious study, but they are not accustomed to writing Jawi in daily life. In addition, Jawi represents Malay as it was spoken hundreds of years ago, which differs from contemporary Patani Malay pronunciation.

⁵³ Premsrirat et al., 2009

⁵⁴ Samoh, 2016

To “modernize” Jawi to fit the current oral language would require a change of spelling rules and the introduction of new letters and diacritics. However, since Jawi is regarded as a holy script, changing it would not be socially acceptable; it would be seen as destroying the purity of Jawi. While Jawi is sometimes used in websites, it is rarely used in text messages, emails, or social media. It is occasionally used in local newspapers, but usually as only single words or in very short columns, usually about religion. In addition, since there are several different Jawi spelling systems in existence, there is ambiguity on some words.⁵⁵

In recent times, the Jawi language has appeared in many more public places, yet there are problems. Jawi expert and Malay language professor Waemaji Paramol explains:

Many government offices now have signs in the Jawi script, but they are full of spelling errors. People just read the Thai, since they are more familiar with it. Foreign organizations have asked me to translate things into Jawi, including human rights documents. I tell them that no one will read these things in Jawi, but they ask me to do it anyway for the psychological effect. When people chose, most take the Thai version and leave the Jawi ones to gather dust. Channel 9 television has Jawi script subtitles, but no one reads them. Outside of the religious domain, Jawi script is a symbol—a very important symbol—but not a script for everyday use.⁵⁶

We could therefore conclude that, while Jawi meets the first of Smalley’s Maximums (maximum motivation for the learner in his/her society), it does not meet the remaining four maximums (except possibly for helping transfer to Arabic).

Rumi

Patani Malay people often see Standard Malay written in the Romanized Rumi script. Many have worked in Malaysia, and those living near the border watch Malaysian television. Many signs, business cards, and local newspapers contain a few Standard Malay words—although misspellings are common.

Some outsiders have suggested using Malaysian school textbooks, written in the Rumi script, in the Deep South. However, as discovered in the preliminary research, most Patani Malay people feel that their Standard Malay language skills are weak. For young children in rural areas, Standard Malay would still be a foreign language, as the vocabulary and grammar can be quite different from Patani Malay.

Others have suggested adapting Rumi to write contemporary Patani Malay; indeed, some young people already use an informal Rumi system on social media. An adapted Rumi script could fulfill Maximums #2-5. However, there were strong social reasons (Maximum #1) for not using Rumi. While Rumi would be useful for transfer to Malay and English, it would not help young children bridge to Thai—which most parents feel is the most important language for them to learn. Furthermore, survey participants rated themselves as having low Standard Malay/Rumi abilities. Therefore, most parents would be unable to help their children with Rumi script homework. Most teachers do not know Rumi. Finally, an adapted Rumi script would look very much like Standard Malay, and could be perceived as a political statement, suggesting that the Deep South should be ceded to Malaysia—which would violate the first sentence of the Thai constitution: “Thailand is a single indivisible Kingdom.”

Thai

The idea of using Thai script to write the Patani Malay language is not new; various Thai-based transcriptions had been in use for decades, often in books designed for Thai speaking government officials to learn the local language, or more recently in place names such as village signs. However, these transcriptions were inconsistent and did not fully represent all the sounds of the language (Maximum #2). As with both Rumi

55 Samoh, 2016

56 Waemaji, 2016

JAWI SCRIPT AND MODERN PATANI MALAY⁵⁷

Just as the English language has changed since Shakespeare’s day, there are differences between the way Jawi script spells words and the modern Patani Malay pronunciation. Patani Malay words are typically shorter, having lost initial prefixes and final consonants. This would make it difficult for small children with no literacy skills in any language to begin reading and writing in Jawi, since they would have to learn different vocabulary and pronunciations first, as shown below:

Jawi Script	Patani Malay	Meaning
ڤڠكالن /pəŋkalan/	'กาแล /kkalɛ/	port
كريتا /kɛreta/	แกกตอ /kkɛtɔ/	car
سليموت /sɛlimut/	'ลีมู /llimu?/	cover

There are also differences between Jawi script and modern Patani Malay grammar. In the example below, note how Jawi places the word 'finished' in the middle of the sentence, while Patani Malay has it at the end.

Jawi	saya	sudah	makan	nasi
	I	finished	had	rice
Patani Malay	sayɔ	make	nasi?	doh
	I	had	rice	finished
"I have finished having rice."				

WHY NOT USE STANDARD MALAY?⁵⁸

Although Patani Malay and Standard Malay are closely related, there are many differences in pronunciation and syllable structure that would be challenging for Patani Malay children not regularly exposed to Standard Malay, as shown in the phonetic transcriptions of these common words:

Patani Malay	Standard Malay	Meaning
ayɛ	ayam	chicken
make	makan	eat
bɔyɔ	buaya	crocodile
suŋa	suŋaj	canal
hakeŋ	hakim	judge
sɛpa?	tɛrɛpa?	stumble
bbulu	bɛrbulu	hairy
kkɛju?	tɛrkjɛut	shock
ddalɛ:	di dalam	inside

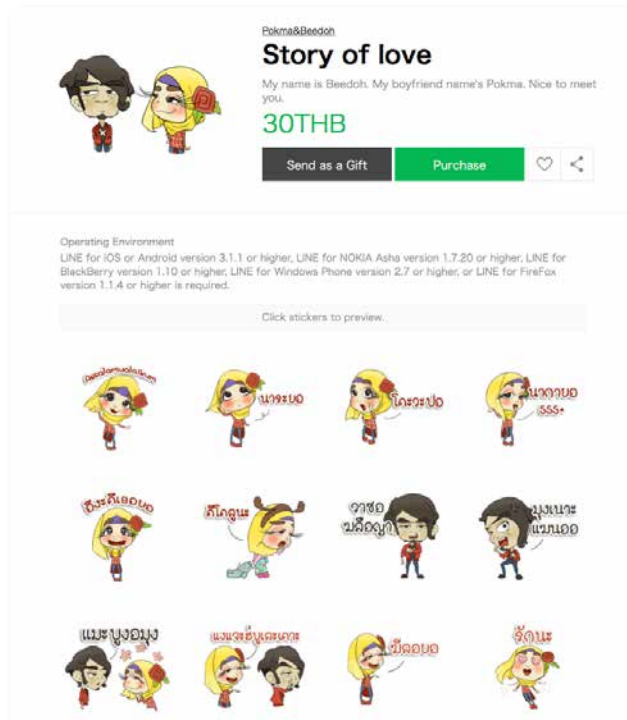
57 Adapted from Samoh, 2016

58 Adapted from Samoh, 2016

and Jawi, a Thai-based script would need to be adapted and systematized to match modern spoken Patani Malay. Such a system would provide motivation for the learners and their parents, and would more easily be seen as a tool for developing better Thai skills—a high priority for parents and educational officials alike. As mentioned earlier, informal Thai-based scripts abound in social media and other formats, and most rural parents feel that their Thai literacy skills are stronger than their Jawi or Rumi abilities. Caregivers would thus be more likely to be able to help their children with homework and other aspects of the school experience. However, some conservative elements might feel that a Thai-based script was a threat to the Jawi script.



Patani Malay written in informal Thai-based script on social media



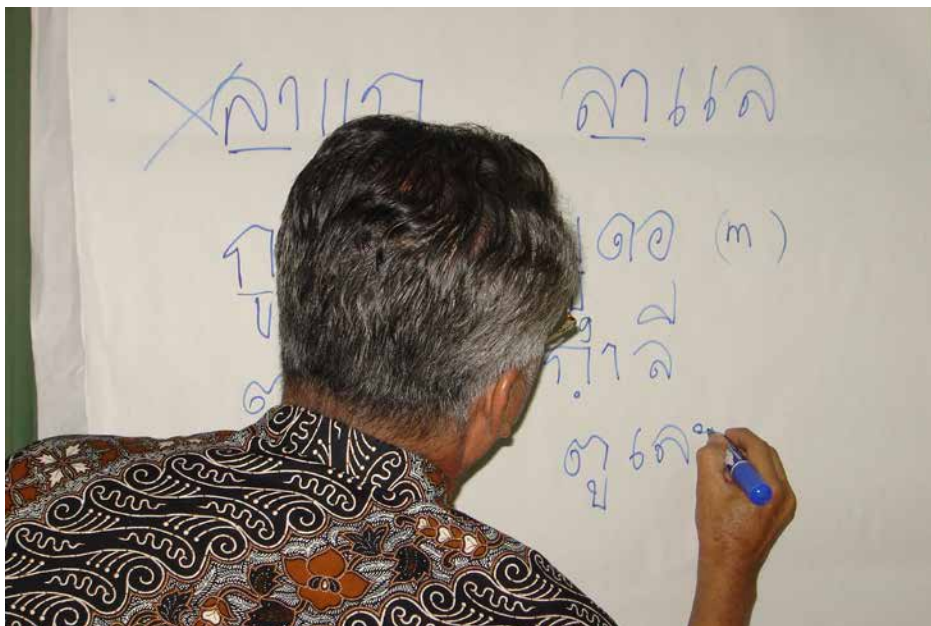
Patani Malay stickers using informal Thai script for sale via the popular social media application “LINE”

Development of the Thai-based Script

The decision to utilize a Thai-based script was not made exclusively on the basis of the language situation survey. It was also discussed in a series of orthography workshops attended by key local programme partners—including religious leaders, teachers, and Malay language experts.



Discussing Jawi script vowels, Orthography Workshop



Testing Thai-based script for Patani Malay, Orthography Workshop

One key issue that emerged during the workshops was dialect variation. Patani Malay is spoken over a wide region and different areas pronounce certain words differently. This is not unusual. England is home to at least 27 major English dialects, some of which are almost incomprehensible to native Londoners.⁵⁹ However, dialects usually differ from one another in specific ways that can be identified through linguistic analysis. Additionally, some dialects are recognized as being more prestigious than others.

In the case of Southern Thailand, some words and sounds are associated with different provinces. Yala, Narathiwat, and Pattani are fairly similar while Satun (site of one pilot school) is quite distinct. What this meant for the programme was that two versions of many learning materials were prepared: one for Satun, the other for the other three provinces.

Beyond dialect variation, it was important for the linguists involved to develop an inventory of Patani Malay *phonemes*. In order to meet Smalley's criteria of "Maximum Representation," each *phoneme* (defined as a distinct unit of sound) should ideally be represented by only one letter. Through linguistic analysis, it was determined that Patani Malay has 30 initial consonant phonemes and 15 simple vowels — compared to 21 and 15, respectively, in Thai.

For historical and linguistic reasons, Thai's 21 consonant phonemes are represented by 44 letters, as shown in table 3. In some cases, one sound can be represented by two, three, or even six different letters.

59 "List of Dialects of the English Language," 2016

Table 3: Thai consonant phonemes (21) and letters (44)

No.	Phonemes	Letters	No.	Phonemes	Letters
1	p	ป	12	f	ฟ ฟ
2	t	ต ถ	13	s	ซ ส ษ ศ
3	k	ก	14	h	ฮ ห
4	ʔ	อ	15	l	ล ฬ
5	ph	พ ภ ผ	16	m	ม
6	th	ท ฑ ฒ ษ ถ ฐ	17	n	น ณ
7	kh	ค ฅ ฆ ข ฃ	18	ŋ	ง
8	b	บ	19	w	ว
9	d	ด ฎ	20	r	ร
10	c	จ	21	j	ย ญ
11	ch	ช ฌ ฎ			

These 44 consonant letters are divided into three classes: high, mid, and low. The Thai language has five tones, with each tone creating different meanings. Each of the consonant classes produces different tones in different situations. For example, a simple syllable consisting of a consonant plus a vowel will produce a mid-tone when written with a low or mid class consonant, and a rising tone when written with a high class consonant. Thai also has several diacritic markers that can be used to change the tone of a word although, again, the effect of the diacritic depends on the class of the initial consonant. This complex interplay of consonant classes and diacritic marks makes Thai spelling challenging!

While tone is extremely important for the Thai language, it is completely absent from the Patani Malay language. This is one reason why Patani Malay children have such difficulties learning to speak Thai well, much less write it correctly. Unless a child has the tone firmly embedded in his or her mind, they will not know how to spell a simple word like *sua*—which could mean ‘mat,’ ‘tiger’ or ‘shirt,’ depending on the tone.

Therefore, the decision was made to include only mid class consonants in the Patani Malay orthography. Mid-class consonants generally carry a mid tone, which is equivalent to the tone-less sounds of Patani Malay. This greatly reduced the number of consonant letters that Patani Malay children need to learn to begin reading and writing their mother tongue.

An additional challenge was the eight sounds in Patani Malay that do not exist in the Thai system. As a result, workshop participants agreed on a system of dots and lines to be added under Thai consonants to represent these unique sounds.

Figure 15: Alphabet chart for Thai-based Patani Malay script (initial and final consonants). Note use of subscript lines and dots for unique sounds not found in Thai.



As mentioned earlier, both Patani Malay and Thai have 15 simple vowels. However, Thai has an additional 17 complex vowels (some of which change their shape depending on the final sound of a syllable), while Patani Malay has 9 “gliding vowels” that require special methods to write in Thai script. In the vowel chart below, the upper section contains vowels which are identical in both languages, while the lower section contains the unique Patani Malay vowels.

Figure 16: Alphabet chart for Thai-based Patani Malay script (vowels). Those unique to Patani Malay are in the second group



These alphabet charts provide visual evidence for one key element of literacy skills transfer. By the time the children in the PMT-MLE programme begin to learn the Thai alphabet, they have already mastered half of the letters, and already know how to combine consonants and vowels to create new words. This makes their acquisition of Thai much faster and more efficient, as they are able to transfer literacy skills learned in the mother tongue to Thai.



EDUCATIONAL PRINCIPLES FOR MLE PROGRAMMES

“In all actions concerning children the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration.” Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 3

Chapter Highlights

- Seven basic educational principles that are foundational to MLE programmes
- Examples of how the PMT-MLE programme used each of these principles

Why is theory important? How is it useful to teachers—or students?

The truth is that every textbook, every poster, every classroom activity is based on a conscious or unconscious theory. Maybe it is “Children learn best through repetition,” resulting in many drills. Maybe it is “Children learn to read by mimicking the teacher,” resulting in the teacher reading a sentence and having the children shout it back. Maybe it is “The best way to learn something is to write it,” resulting in students copying many pages of information. Many of these unconscious theories and practices do not support deep learning.

By contrast, every part of the PMT-MLE programme is child-centered, and was designed with specific educational principles in mind. The purpose of this chapter is to briefly explain some of those theories or ideas, so that the reader can understand why special materials were created, and how teachers were trained to use them.⁶⁰

“We learned about education theory at the teacher training institute, but never understood why it was important until we started MLE.”

Teacher in Africa

Schema Theory: From Known to Unknown

When children come to school, are their heads empty? The answer, of course, is “No!” Even before a baby is born, she is able to recognize the sound of her mother’s voice. Even before a child can speak he can understand some things that adults say. Even before a child can read a storybook she can tell stories. Even before learning math a child knows if his sister got more pieces of candy than he did.

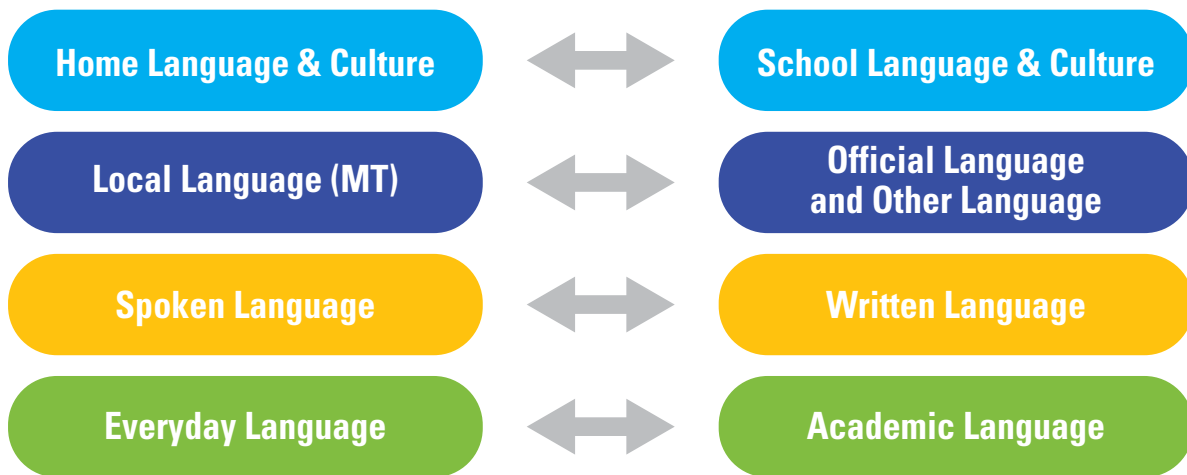
⁶⁰ The purpose of this chapter is not to explain all these theories and ideas in detail; interested readers can consult other sources to learn more.

A child-centered approach recognizes the knowledge that a child brings to the classroom, and uses that knowledge (what is “known”) to introduce new concepts (what is “unknown”). By this process, the student builds a “schema,” a way of organizing knowledge⁶¹. Take photosynthesis, for example. Young children may have knowledge of plants, water, soil, and sunlight, but not yet realize how they are related. In a science lesson, they would learn how all of these things work together to help the plant grow through a process call photosynthesis. Thus, a good teacher uses what the student already knows about plants to understand new knowledge, thus expanding the student’s plant knowledge “schema.”

Suppose, however, that a child lived all his life at the North Pole. He would not have experience with soil, water, or plants. The teacher would have to use other ways to build his schema, before introducing photosynthesis.⁶²

MLE recognizes that an ethnic minority child brings a great deal of knowledge to the classroom. The job of the school is to use that knowledge to teach new concepts. Thus the home language and culture are used as the basis to teach the child about the school language and culture. Learning materials must be built on the existing knowledge, and the teachers must be trained to use “known” concepts to build bridges to new knowledge.

Figure 17: Building from the “known” to the “unknown” (adapted from RILCA)



In the case of PMT-MLE, the home language (Patani Malay) and culture (rural Islamic society) are very different from the school language (Thai) and culture (largely urbanized Buddhist society). Thus, the programme’s early education materials reinforce what the students already know about their home culture, and use that knowledge to help them bridge to the school culture.

For example, the students already know the words and gestures to greet adults respectfully in their village. PMT-MLE teachers remind them of this fact, and use it to introduce the way to greet adults in Thai society. She might say something like this:

61 Anderson, 1984

62 In one experiment, American high school students were assigned to read a passage about playing cricket. While cricket is a popular sport in many parts of the world, it is largely unknown in the United States. Therefore, the students had great difficulty understanding the reading passage. By contrast, a student in India or Pakistan would easily understand the passage because of their background knowledge (Anderson, 1984).

When you see your mom’s friend in the market you say *Salamalaykhum* while you shake their hand and then touch your hand to your heart and then your nose. This is our Melayu way to show respect. When you come to the school and see a Thai teacher you put both hands together with the top of your index fingers touching your nose and say *Sawasdii krap* if you are a boy or *Sawasdii kha* if you are a girl. This is how Thai people show respect.

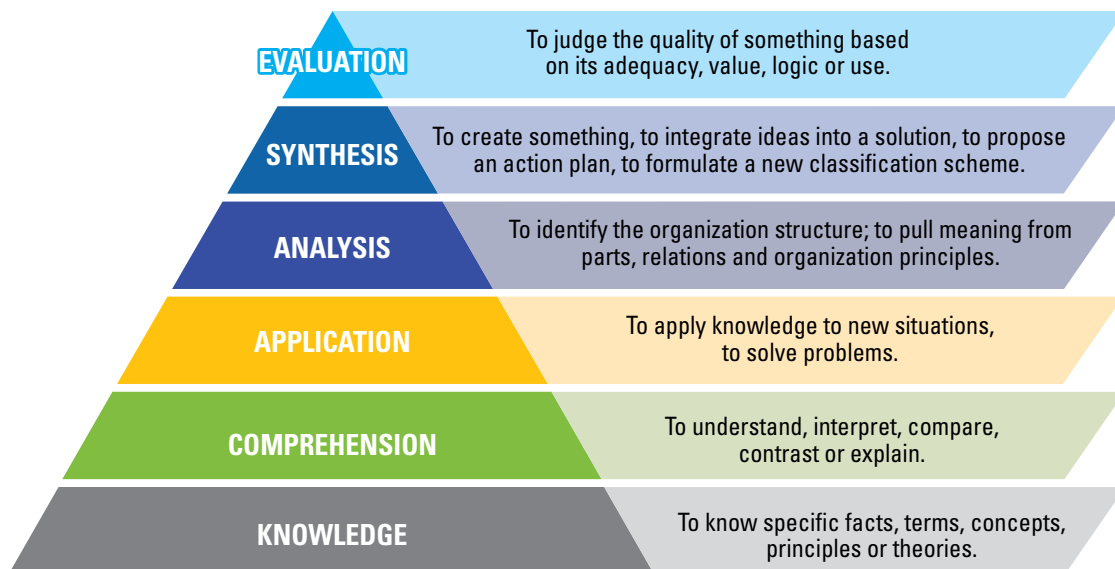
In this way the “known” becomes a tool to build new knowledge.

Bloom’s Taxonomy: Stimulating Thinking

Although it has been revised by recent scholars, Bloom’s Taxonomy as put forth in 1956 remains an important part of modern educational philosophy. But what does it mean? Some teachers (and education systems!) have *misunderstood* the taxonomy, thinking that students need to start at the bottom and work their way up—that they must have knowledge (“remember”) before they can understand, evaluate or create.

In reality, the taxonomy is useful as a tool for teachers to develop different kinds of questions to stimulate student thinking at *all levels, even in the same lesson*. Closed, fact-based questions are appropriate for the lower levels of the taxonomy, while the higher levels require open-ended questions.

Figure 18: Bloom’s taxonomy (adapted from <https://www.uaa.alaska.edu/studentaffairs/assessment/assessment-cycle.cfm>)



A student’s language ability impacts how well she is able to respond to questions at all levels. If the child does not speak a language fluently, she might appear unable to function at the higher levels while using that language. This is why it is important that early education take place in the language a student speaks and understand best, so that she can truly say everything that she thinks.

This has been the clear experience of the PMT-MLE programme. Many classrooms in the Deep South are very quiet; only the voice of the teacher is heard. When the teacher asks simple questions (knowledge level or “remembering”), students typically give only short answers. When she asks higher level questions, the students are silent. In fact, Thai teachers in the South freely admit that they only ask the students “yes or no” questions; otherwise the students cannot or will not answer.⁶³ The teachers ask “What” but not “Why.”

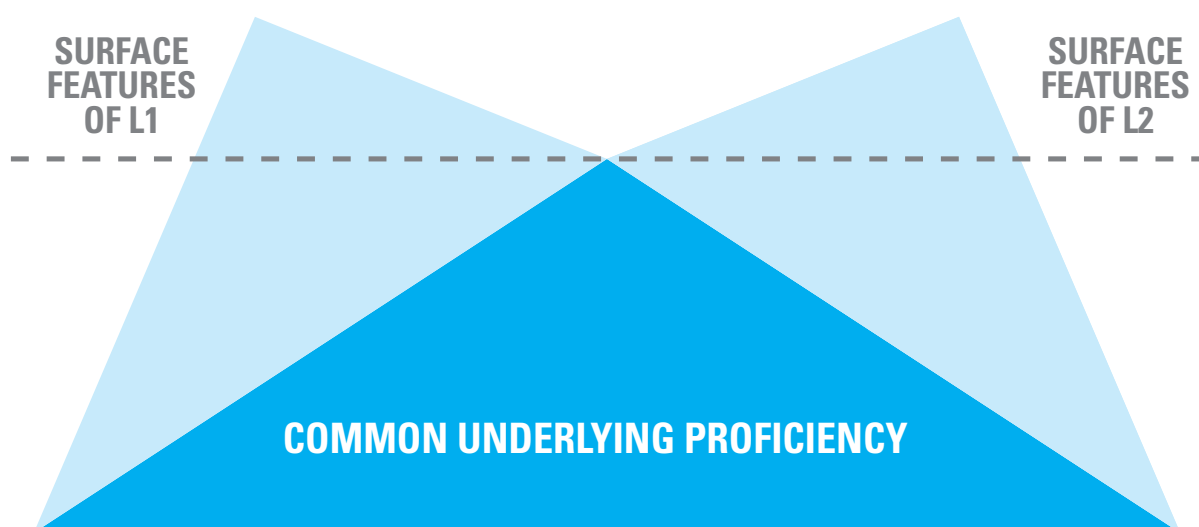
By contrast, many teachers, school administrators, and parents have commented that PMT-MLE classrooms are very noisy, as the students are eager to answer questions and express their opinions. This happens because the students are able to use their mother tongue, and because the PMT-MLE teachers have been trained to ask open-ended questions from the higher levels of the taxonomy, encouraging creative and critical thinking by asking “What,” “How,” and “Why.”

Cummins’ Iceberg: Unseen Knowledge and Skills

Schema theory talks about how humans build knowledge. But for ethnic minority children in MLE programmes, is it necessary to build the same knowledge in both their mother tongue and the national language? For example, after building a schema about photosynthesis in their mother tongue, do students need to build a new, separate photosynthesis schema in the national language? Even more importantly, do a student’s higher level thinking skills need to be developed separately in the different languages?

Canadian bilingual education expert Jim Cummins’ answer is “No.” Instead, he says that the knowledge we have acquired in one language can be transferred to all the languages we learn. He gives an illustration of an iceberg with two peaks. Most of an iceberg is under the water; the peaks are what people in boats see.

Figure 19: The “Common Underlying Proficiency” in relation to first and second languages (adapted from Cummins 1996)



63 Burarungrot, 2016

Cummins compares the peaks to the L1 (mother tongue) and L2 (school language), the things we can say or write in both our first and second languages. Underneath the surface is the “Common Underlying Proficiency” or CUP.

The CUP includes all the skills and knowledge that have been and will be acquired. Thus, when MTB-MLE students learn a new concept in their L1, they only need to learn the appropriate L2 vocabulary and grammar patterns to talk about it in the L2. We do not build separate schemas in both languages; instead we attach L2 vocabulary to the knowledge schema we already have. Thus, students who have learned about photosynthesis in their mother tongue only need to learn the second language vocabulary to describe that concept. They do not need to relearn the concept of photosynthesis.

We Only Learn to Read Once

The CUP explains another principle central to MLE: we only learn to read once. Once we have learned to read and write in our first language, we can transfer those skills to other languages.

Children who are forced to learn to read for the first time in a language they do not speak fluently are faced with a huge problem, because it is hard for them to make the thought-sound-letter connection. Their pronunciation might be incorrect, causing them to be confused about how the sounds and letters are linked. Spelling thus seems confusing and senseless, so students often memorize the word as a picture, instead of learning the sound of each letter and how to combine those sounds into words.⁶⁴ Merely recognizing a word as a picture, without knowing how the word is built, is not true reading.

This is also why mastering literacy skills in the mother tongue first is a *more efficient way to develop reading skills in the new language*. Mother tongue literacy skills, including letter recognition, decoding and encoding, as well as higher level skills like text interpretation and creative writing, transfer to the new language.

PMT-MLE was structured to take full advantage of the transfer of mother tongue literacy skills. After developing strong listening, speaking, reading and writing skills in their mother tongue, as well as strong listening and speaking skills in Thai, the students use a transitional primer to bridge to Thai literacy. The first 15 lessons of the transitional primer review the letters that are the same in both Pattani Malay and Thai. The format of the transitional primer is identical to that of the mother tongue primer, so the students already know the “rules of the game.” Unfamiliar Thai letters are then introduced systematically, with the more frequently used letters taught first.

Clear evidence of the transfer of mother tongue literacy skills was found in the programme evaluation (as will be discussed at length in a later chapter). For example, grade 1 PMT-MLE students who received only 200 hours of Thai language instruction performed better on a Thai language test than comparison students who spent 350 hours studying Thai as a subject (as well as studying all other subjects in Thai only).⁶⁵

64 This can be a problem for children who speak non-standard dialects. Young speakers of African American Vernacular English, for example, often do not pronounce final consonant clusters, misspelling words like ‘gold’ or ‘told’ as ‘gol’ and ‘tol’ (Treiman & Bowman, 2015).

65 Burarungrot, 2016

We Crawl Before We Walk: The Natural Progression of Language Acquisition

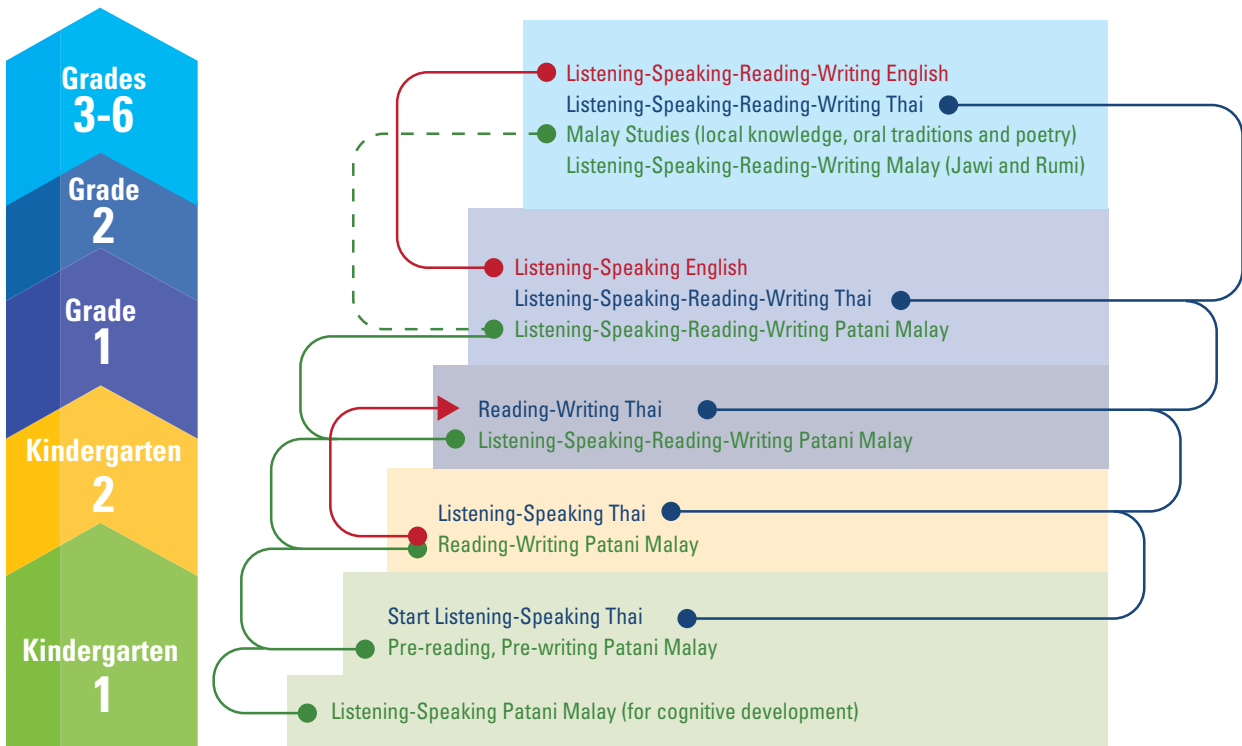
The fact that children find it very difficult to learn to read or write a language they do not speak points to another core belief of the MLE approach. In a natural situation, children are able to hear and understand verbal statements before they are able to speak. No one expects a small child to read or write before he can speak! Still, in many places, teachers try to teach children to speak the new language by forcing them to write it!

Similarly, children are often forced to speak a second language before they have developed good listening skills. Teachers may use a “repeat after me” strategy, where the students merely shout out the words the teacher has said. Still, the children may not know the meaning of the words, and mother tongue interference may result in mispronunciation.

For this reason, MLE stresses the importance of developing listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills *in that order*, first for the mother tongue and later for the second language.

What did this mean for PMT-MLE programme students? The key language-related steps of the programme at each grade level are illustrated in figure 20, below.

Figure 20: Language skills progression in PMT-MLE (adapted from RILCA)

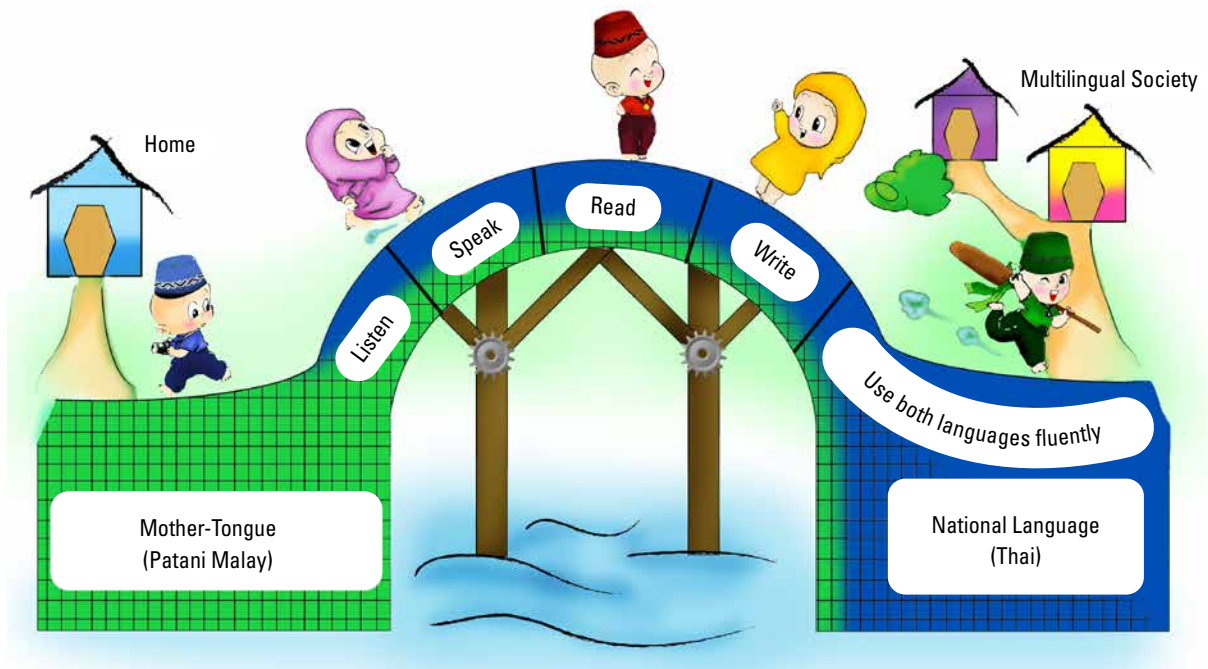


In the first half of kindergarten 1, the PMT-MLE children spend a lot of time listening to stories in their mother tongue, and later telling their own stories—developing strong oral skills and confidence in expressing themselves. They then move on to pre-reading and prewriting exercises in the Mother Tongue. They then begin listening to Thai and obeying Thai commands (Total Physical Response) before starting to speaking Thai. During that time they are adjusting their ears and brains to the sounds of the Thai language. Special attention is given to Thai sounds that do not exist in their mother tongue, so that they can learn to hear those sounds and pronounce them correctly.

In kindergarten 2, programme students develop reading and writing skills in the mother tongue, while continuing special sessions on Thai listening and speaking. In grade 1, after they are comfortable listening to and speaking in Thai (and after they have already developed strong mother tongue literacy skills), they begin to learn Thai reading and eventually Thai writing. This is done with help from a “transitional primer” that starts by teaching the letters that are the same in Patani Malay and Thai, and then explains the Thai letters that are different—moving from known to unknown, building on the CUP. Both the mother tongue and Thai continue to be developed through grades 2 and 3, enabling the children to build a strong language bridge, as illustrated in figure 21:

Every teacher and parent interviewed for the project evaluation reported “confidence in expressing themselves” as the #1 benefit of PMT-MLE.

Figure 21: The “MLE Bridge” (adapted from RILCA)



Meaning and Accuracy: The “Two Track” Approach

A key idea underlying PMT-MLE and other MLE projects is that classroom activities can be separated into two tracks. “Meaning Track” activities give the students freedom to express their ideas without the fear of being wrong, while the “Accuracy Track” involves more typical school activities where the focus is on correct spelling, proper grammar, etc. The two tracks are illustrated below.

Table 4: “Meaning” and “Accuracy” tracks in literacy skills development (adapted from Susan and Dennis Malone, 2010)

	EMPHASIS ON MEANING (focus on whole texts)	EMPHASIS ON ACCURACY (Focus on parts of the language)
Listening	Students listen in order to understand and respond to what they hear	They recognize and distinguish sounds, syllables, words and sentences
Speaking	They speak in order to communicate their thoughts and ideas to others	They use correct vocabulary, pronunciation and grammar
Reading	They read for enjoyment and to understand and use new ideas and information	They recognize parts of words (letters, syllables, tone marks, etc.), sentences and paragraphs, and can sound them out
Writing	They write in order to communicate their thoughts and ideas	They form letters properly and neatly, spell words correctly, and use correct grammar
<p>In the Meaning Track, teachers encourage higher-level thinking. Students are encouraged to analyze and evaluate what they hear and read and to apply what they know and be creative in their speaking and writing. Teachers DO NOT CORRECT MISTAKES in the Meaning Track.</p> <p>In the Accuracy Track, teachers do correct mistakes so that students learn to use their own and other languages accurately.</p>		

Because “accuracy” is the dominant model in classrooms, it is very important for teachers to keep “accuracy” in its correct place—in activities designed for accuracy—so that the “accuracy monster” does not invade more creative or meaning based activities (thus stifling or discouraging the students).

In addition, it is necessary that the students understand the meaning of everything done in the classroom—every picture, every word, every story, every song. For this reason, nonsense syllables are *not* used in reading or writing drills; students should only be asked to read or write meaningful words that they understand. This is also true of more advanced vocabulary: it is not enough to spell a word correctly if the student does not know its meaning! Similarly, a student should be able to explain how to solve a math problem, showing that she understands the mathematical concept that produces the correct answer.

PMT-MLE's use of the "two track" approach contrasts sharply with the accuracy-focused outlook of Thai education. Many Thai teachers believe that every mistake must be corrected immediately, so that the error does not become "fossilized" in the student's mind. Unfortunately, this near-obsession with accuracy combined with a focus on deriving the "correct" answers from reading passages instead of interacting meaningfully with a text's content, may be one reason why Thai students have performed so poorly in PISA reading assessments.⁶⁶

Translation is not Teaching

One of the most common incorrect beliefs about MLE is that the teacher should provide "simultaneous interpretation" in both languages. The truth is that word-by-word or sentence-by-sentence translation gets very boring very quickly, and children will ignore the new, "hard" language and wait for the "easy" translation. Continuous translation is not an effective teaching technique.

Lesson plans for PMT-MLE therefore specify which language is to be used for which activity in specific time slots, so that there is not a constant mixing/translation of languages. For example, for content classes such as science or social studies in grades 2 or 3, the lesson might call for the teacher to introduce the topic in Patani Malay, including an explanation of key Thai vocabulary words. Thereafter, she would teach the bulk of the lesson in Thai, with a Patani Malay summary at the end to ensure that the students understood the lesson. This "sandwich" method is much more effective than sentence-by-sentence translation, because it gives the children the tools to unlock the lesson content by themselves, rather than relying on a translator. Thus, their knowledge schemas grow!

66 On the 2015 PISA reading assessment, Thailand placed 57th out of 70 countries (Bangkok Post, 2016d)



CREATING CURRICULUM, TRAINING TEACHERS

“...the education of the child shall be directed to... development of respect for the child’s parents, his or her own cultural identity, language and values, [and] for the national values of the country in which the child is living....” Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 29 (c)

Chapter Highlights

- **How community members and local teachers working with “experts” can produce a culturally relevant curriculum that meets national educational standards**
- **How 145 teachers and 13 teacher assistants, along with musicians, artists, religious leaders, community members and linguists produced over 1400 books, songs, games, posters and other educational materials for Patani Malay children through a series of 106 workshops over a 9 year period.**
- **How in-service teacher training for the PMT-MLE programme occurred alongside the curriculum development process**

“If you don’t have a target, you’ll always miss it.”

It is wonderful to see a child learn a new concept, gain confidence in a new skill, or develop a love of reading. These joyful moments inspire teachers to continue their valuable and difficult work. They see success in the eyes of the children.

Policy makers and curriculum development specialists work under a different definition of success, often related to checklists of specific skills that children can be expected to master in each grade level. Most countries have very clearly defined objectives and indicators for their schoolchildren. Joy and spontaneity are secondary to achievement of these goals, as measured through testing.

Many MLE projects in Asia grew out of community literacy projects where success was defined as being able to read and write certain letters, numbers and words. It can thus be intimidating to look at a Ministry of Education’s detailed objectives and indicators. Often, teachers and students in remote areas are not able to achieve all that the government expects of them, and the mismatch between requirements “from above” and realities “on the ground” can lead to frustration and cynicism.

How then can an MLE programme, with few resources, hope to meet government requirements?

The answer lies in empowering the community to create new mother tongue materials that are relevant to the children’s lives and connect with government education indicators. And the PMT-MLE programme is an example of how that can be accomplished!

Creating a Culturally Relevant Curriculum: Where to start?

A researcher working alone in a remote area might spend months or years recording, transcribing and translating a collection of folktales. By contrast, a group of committed community members in a workshop environment can produce the same amount of material in weeks. The key is to find the right people and give them the tools—and the motivation—to create materials that could be used for anything from community based adult literacy projects to full MLE curriculums.

Early on, Dr. Suwilai and her team developed a network of committed contacts in the Deep South. The workshop approach was used early on, first to standardize the Thai-based Patani Malay orthography, and then to test the orthography by using it to write stories, poems, and songs. This resulted in some changes to the orthography, to ensure that it could be used to write anything that a Patani Malay person might say.

One of the first steps in the PMT-MLE curriculum development process was the creation of a cultural calendar. Workshop participants were given blank calendars to brainstorm things that the children would experience on a month-by-month basis: community events, agricultural activities, weather, holidays, etc. They used the cultural calendar to develop weekly “themes,” as illustrated below:

Table 5: Weekly themes for PMT-MLE kindergarten 2, term 2

week#	Theme
21	water
22	rain
23	disease carrying creatures
24	important days
25	time
26	day and night
27	travel
28	communication
29	Islamic New Year Day + Thai Children’s Day
30	Honoring Teachers Day
31	tools in the house
32	vegetables
33	healthy food 1
34	healthy food 2
35	kites
36	The Prophet’s Birthday
37	science
38	mathematics
39	soil-stones-sand
40	conserving nature

The themes guided the curriculum development efforts. Authors knew what to write about. Musicians were able to suggest existing songs, or create new ones, to match the themes. Artists were given inspiration for cultural posters and other visual aids.

MLE programmes worldwide have utilized similar sets of materials, which typically include:

Listening Stories to be read aloud by the teacher for students to listen to and discuss.

Big Books to be used for shared reading activities for students learning to read. Typically big books have predictable content, repetition of simple sentence patterns and a surprise ending. The pictures need to be clear and easily recognizable. They may be illustrated in color, but black and white drawings are also fine. The pages need to be big enough for the whole class to see at the same time. The story should be 8-12 pages long.

Small Books to be used for shared and individual reading activities. They are usually shorter than Big Books and do not need to have predictable content or repetition. They do need to be interesting and fun for the reader. Often each student gets a copy of the book to keep and take home. They can color the pictures themselves if they want.

Picture Stories with which a story can be told with a series of 4-6 pictures, without the need for text. Students are able to put the pictures in a logical order based on their own ideas and tell stories by using the pictures as a guide. The same picture stories can later be used for national language learning.

Cultural Posters (also called “Big Busy Pictures”) which are designed to give students lots of things to talk about to promote speaking, creativity and critical thinking skills. They reflect cultural themes familiar to the students. 16-20 activities can be shown on one poster, corresponding to many themes. They are usually about 1 meter wide and 70-80 centimeters long so that everyone in the classroom can see the details in the picture. Additionally, they can be used for national language learning, as students link familiar concepts to new vocabulary.⁶⁷

These materials were created through a series of workshops. Between workshops, participants reflected on their work, sought new inspiration, and shared their materials with children and adults in the community as part of the testing/feedback loop. They learned principles of self-editing and peer-editing; curriculum creators needed to feel “safe” enough to give and receive constructive criticism. Programme staff sometimes needed to “fill in the gaps” by creating materials that could not be produced at workshops due to time limitations. Workshops were typically held during the October and April-May school breaks, with participants preparing materials that would be used in the near future.

Weekly lesson plans were linked to national standards. For K2 students, for example, the MOE (2003) has 12 standards (related to cognitive, social, and physical development) whose achievement is measured through a variety of indicators and “desirable characteristics.” Table 6 shows how a K2 language standard was realized in the PMT-MLE programme:

67 Adapted from Foerster and Saurman, 2013

Table 6: Matching PMT-MLE to MOE standards

MOE Standard (2003)	Indicators (Adapted from MOE)	Desirable Characteristics (Adapted from MOE)
#9: Use language to communicate as appropriate to age	#1: Converses, answer questions, and tells an understandable story in the first language	32. Can converse, answer questions, and tell a story
	#2: Listens and speaks with confidence and accuracy	33. Can listen to a story in the first language and retell it
		34. Can draw a picture from a story and use it to retell the story
		35. Can create an original story and tell it in the first language
	#3: Has manners and knows how to conduct oneself as is appropriate to the cultural setting	36. Knows how to welcome, greet, take leave, and ask permission in the Thai language
		37. Is able to use appropriate Thai pronouns for self, friends, school staff, and family members
	#4: Remembers and makes the correct sound for Patani Malay letters	38. Can tell the name of the letter in the Patani Malay language and read it with the correct pronunciation
	#5 Creates words by combining Patani Malay letters	#39 Can create words by combining Patani Malay letters previously studied
	#6 Knows the foundations of the sound system of the first language	#40 Can distinguish between the sounds that are similar and different in various words
	#7 Reads texts with accuracy and understanding	#41 Can read syllables correctly and with good rhythm
	#42 Can read small Patani Malay story books with accuracy	
	#43 Can answer questions about the text read	
#8 Writes words, sentences, and short stories	#44 Able to write own name, teacher's name, and school's name	
	#45 Handwriting is correct following models, clear, and organized	
	#46 Able to create and write short stories	
#9 Able to connect the first and second languages as appropriate to age	#47 Can follow simple commands	
	#48 Able to give simple commands for friends to follow	
#10 Able to understand at least 950 Thai words	#49 Able to give the Thai name for various objects	
	#50 Able to give a series of simple commands for friends to follow	
	#51 Able to answer simple questions using the Thai language	
#11 Able to converse, answer questions, and tell understandable stories in Thai	#52 Can draw a picture and tell a 1-3 sentence story in Thai about it	
	#53 Can converse, answer questions, and tell a continuous story of 1-3 sentences in Thai	



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Brainstorming about how to integrate Bloom's taxonomy into lesson plans at a teacher training workshop

Lesson plans specify which MOE expectations will be addressed each week, as show in table 7:

Table 7: K2, Week 24 lesson plan linked to MOE standards, indicators and desirable characteristics

This week the students will...	Standard	Indicator	Desirable characteristics
Name the letter and pronounce its sound correctly	9	4	38
Spell words, create words, write letters	9	5	39
Use the language for conversation to ask and answer questions	9	1	32,35
Listen to and follow commands	9	9	47
Able to organize things by certain characteristics	10	2	3
Compare different amounts of things	10	8	54
Organize objects according to capacity	10	2	58
Know and understand the culture of various religions	7	1	23,24,26
Listen, sing, and do appropriate actions	5	1	20
Able to make creative art	11	1	61
Use the large and small muscles well	2	1	4, 5
Display positive mood/emotions	3	1	1
Able to play local games according to rules	2	3	12
Understand ethical principles	7	1	26

The influence of the weekly themes and MOE expectations can be seen in the daily lesson plans. Table 8, for example, shows the PMT-MLE kindergarten 2, term 2 lesson plan for the first day of school week #24. Note how cultural themes and familiar activities are emphasized in the learning activities. Games, songs, and experiences (including outdoor class sessions, hands-on activities such as cooking a cultural dish or traditional handicrafts) are often included in the weekly schedules:

Table 8: Lesson plan for Monday of week#24, Kindergarten 2, Term 2

Patani Malay Primer lesson (40 minutes)	Family/Community/Art & Culture/Free Activities (50 minutes)	Patani Malay Story Time (30 minutes)	Listening-Speaking Thai Using TPR (30 minutes)	Physical Education (20 minutes)	Math and Educational Games (30 minutes)
<p>Primer Lesson # 46 The letter & ʻ</p> <p>*Teacher follows normal procedure to teach the letter, including word breakdown and word buildup using the 5 step method</p>	<p>Picture/discussion for language development</p> <p>*Teacher shows pictures of 3 people: 1 going to a mosque, 1 throwing water (Songkran/Thai New Year Festival), 1 placing a candle-lit float in the water (Loi Krathong Festival), and uses the following questions to stimulate discussion:</p>	<p>Big Book Group Reading Activity: "The Islamic New Year"</p> <p>1. Teacher introduces the book the class will read as being about an important day. Teacher opens each page for students to look at pictures/guess about the story BEFORE reading the story</p>	<p>Total Physical Response Drills</p> <p>TPR-Picture pointing drill: Teacher places pictures of house, mosque, cemetery around the room and teaches the Thai words. She then commands different individuals and groups to find the picture and perform an action:</p>	<p>Sport for the Day: One Legged Marathon</p> <p>Warm up and stretch to the left and right 5 times</p>	<p>Jigsaw puzzle for the day: New Year Celebrations</p> <p>6 piece jigsaw puzzle illustrating activities on important days. Groups of 3 students work together to match the activities to the event: Islamic New Year, European New Year, Thai New Year</p>
<p>*Teacher uses the "letter bank" to create new words (combining the letter for today with previously taught letters)</p> <p>*Teacher and students cooperate to create new sentences using words with the letter for today</p>	<p>* Is the person in this picture Patani Malay, Chinese, or Thai? Why do you think so?</p>	<p>*Teacher reads each page, pointing underneath each word with a ruler in a flowing motion</p>	<p>*Walk to the house and greet the teacher in the Thai way.</p>	<p>Teacher demonstrates how to play the game</p>	
	<p>*Have you ever seen a person pray at the mosque/throw water/place float in water? If so, where did you see this?</p>	<p>*Class reads along with the teacher</p>	<p>*Run to the mosque and pray</p>	<p>Students play the game</p>	
	<p>*When is the Islamic New Year? How do you know that the Islamic New Year is coming soon?</p>	<p>*Volunteer(s) read along with the teacher</p>	<p>*Jump to the house</p>	<p>Teacher and students summarize game and get cleaned up</p>	
	<p>*When is the Thai New Year? How do you know that the Thai New Year is coming soon?</p>	<p>*Volunteer(s) reads by himself/herself</p>			
	<p>*How do you know when to begin fasting?</p>	<p>*Class reads along with the teacher</p>			
	<p>*How are the Songkran and Loi Krathong pictures different?</p>				
	<p>Homework: Ask your parents about activities related to Islamic New Year and Islamic fasting</p>	<p>2. Creative Writing: Students write a story about a holiday activity (or any other topic!). They may use pictures only, text only, or both. Volunteers "read" their stories to the class.</p>			

"What about teacher training?"

Typically, education officials or publishing companies create materials and train teachers how to use them.

Much of the initial in-service teacher training took place through the curriculum development workshops. The teachers thus both *created* new materials *and* learned how to use them! They thus developed a deep understanding of *what* they were creating and *why*, as well as *how* to use the materials.

Practice and peer encouragement were a vital part of this process. During the workshops, the participants were trained to give (and receive) constructive criticism. Teachers practiced teaching the lessons to other teachers. This helped them gain confidence and competence in teaching methodologies that were very different from what they had used in the past.

Programme staff made periodic site visits to each school, to make sure that the teachers were using the materials properly and discuss concerns. As part of the feedback loop, teachers made notes on what worked and what did not, as well as suggestions for improving the materials. These corrections were collected by programme staff on their site visits and during workshops. Thus the overall quality of the curriculum improved over time.

Teachers who came into the programme in subsequent years had less of a burden, as they needed only to be trained to use the materials developed by those who had come before them. Still, all new teachers were required to develop some learning materials of their own, to demonstrate a clear understanding of the principles involved. New materials sometimes replaced older ones, contributing to the ongoing improvement of the curriculum.

WHY TRANSLATING TEXTBOOKS DOESN'T WORK

Writing new MLE curriculum seems like a big job. Why not just translate the national textbooks? While that may work for some academic subjects for older children, it is not a good solution for young children. Translators are often not familiar with the subject matter or the mother tongue technical terms teachers use in the classroom. In addition, the national textbooks may contain cultural information and vocabulary that is unfamiliar to ethnic minority children.

DON'T FORGET THE SCHOOL DIRECTORS!

The programme also organized short workshops for school directors, and also invited them to observe materials development and teacher workshops. School directors need to understand MLE principles, so they can support the teachers and answer questions from parents, local education officials, community leaders, etc.

Table 9: PMT-MLE learning materials (produced by programme)

Kindergarten 1		
Cultural Posters ("Big Busy Pictures")		12
Educational Songs		40
Picture Stories		41
Educational Games		27
Kindergarten 2		
Patani Malay (Thai Script) Primer		1
Level 1 Small Books		95
Cultural Posters ("Big Busy Pictures")		7
Educational Songs		60
Educational Games		17
Level 2 Small Books		22
Listening Stories		90
Big Books		39
Grade 1		
Big Books		
	Patani Malay	7
	Thai	9

Small Books		
	Patani Malay	8
	Thai	2
Bilingual Small Books		
9		
Picture Stories		
	Patani Malay	4
	Science Subject	1
	Thai	38
Cultural Posters ("Big Busy Pictures")		
10		
Listening Stories		
21		
Thai for Ethnic Children Materials		
	Lesson plans	
	Transitional Primer	30 lessons
	Big Books	1
	Supplemental Reading books	18
	Thai Poster Stories	5
Bilingual Activity Sheets for Academic Subjects		
6 subjects		
Picture Cards		
	Objects	34
	Plants and Fruit	63
	Animals	41
	Mathematics	81
	Human Body Parts	14
	National Culture	5
	Thai Language (as subject)	97
	People and Actions	47
Grade 2		
Big Books		
	Patani Malay	1
Small Books		
	Patani Malay	1
Bilingual Activity Sheets for Academic Subjects		
6 subjects		
Picture Cards		
	Thai Language (as subject)	162
	Art (as subject)	53
	Work and occupations (as subject)	75
	Health (as subject)	35
	English Language (as subject)	56
	National Culture	5
	People and Actions	47
Grade 3		
Lesson Plans for Subject Areas		
8 subjects		
Activity Sheets for Academic Subjects		
8 subjects		
Picture Cards for Teaching		
8 subjects		
Grade 4		
Lesson Plans for Subject Areas		
8 subjects		
Activity Sheets for Academic Subjects		
8 subjects		
Picture Cards for Teaching		
7 subjects		

How were all these workshop-produced materials used? What were the new teaching techniques for which they were developed? These questions will be answered in the next chapter.



On-site follow-up with programme teachers

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Fun with a matching game

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DEVELOPING MOTHER TONGUE LITERACY SKILLS

"The purpose of reading is understanding. And understanding is achieved when children make connections between what they read and the knowledge that they already have acquired. Children who have no access to reading materials that build on what they already have acquired, whether language, culture, or geography, are seriously disadvantaged." Robert Prouty, World Bank⁶⁸

Chapter Highlights

- **The materials and methods used by PMT-MLE to systematically build listening, speaking, reading and writing skills in the mother tongue during the pre-primary and early primary years.**

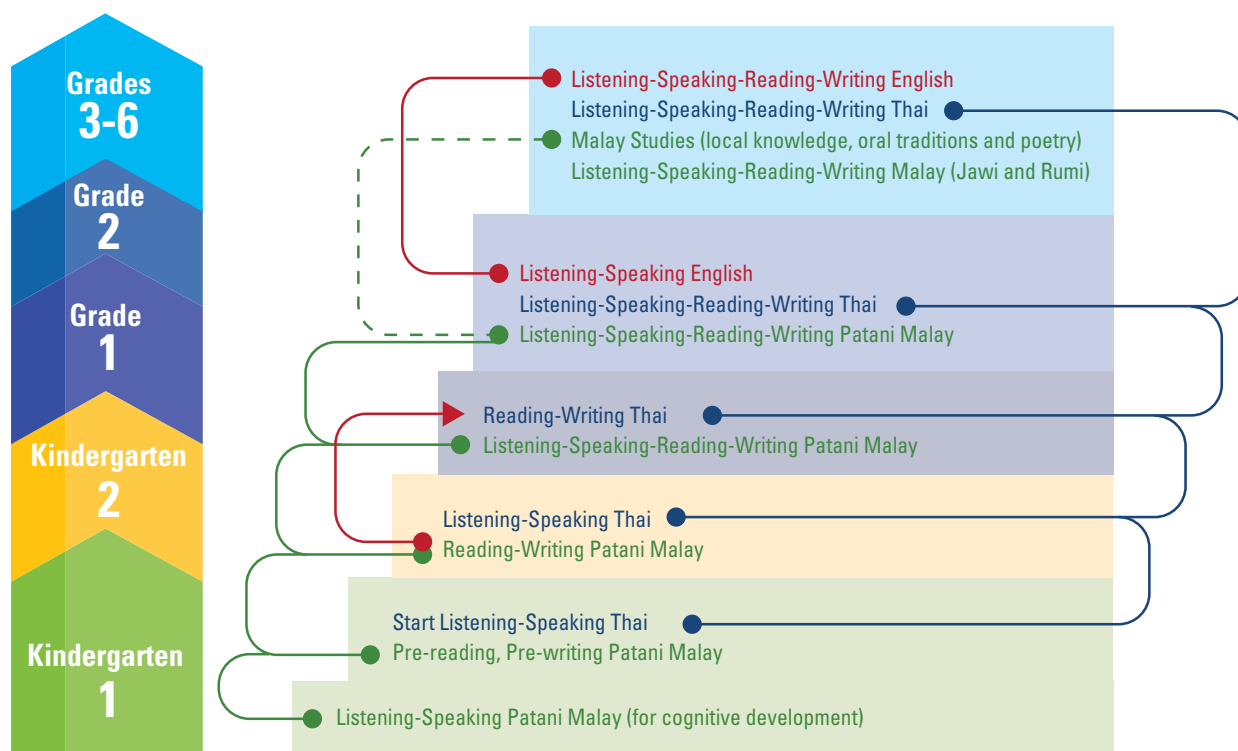
PMT-MLE Step-by-Step

The earlier chapter on "Educational Principles" stated that the programme follows a sequenced, "step-by-step" approach to language learning and literacy skills development, as summarized in figure 22, below.

This chapter will discuss the materials and methods used by PMT-MLE to systematically build listening, speaking, reading and writing skills in the mother tongue during the pre-primary and early primary years. A later chapter will discuss how Thai language skills are incorporated into the sequence.

68 Prouty, 2009

Figure 22: Language skills progression in PMT-MLE (adapted from RILCA)



Kindergarten 1, Term 1: Developing listening, speaking, and critical thinking skills in the Mother Tongue

The first day of school can be traumatic for children everywhere. Leaving the familiar setting of family and home, they enter a large building filled with strangers. What are they to do? Where are they to go? And what if they have no idea what these strange adults, called "teachers," are saying, because they speak a different language? Many children cry the first day of school; how can a teacher comfort them in a language they do not speak? How can a teacher explain basic classroom behavior if the children cannot understand her words?

PMT-MLE teachers and parents agree that allowing teachers to speak to their pupils in their mother tongue makes the transition from home to school much easier on students, teachers and parents. The students learn that school is a place where they are accepted and loved. A child-friendly school speaks the child's language!

But school is also a place for cognitive and academic development. International research shows strong links between early childhood education and long-term academic success. PMT-MLE takes this very seriously and, with the help of local partners, has created curriculum and utilized teaching methods designed to give the students a strong start to school.

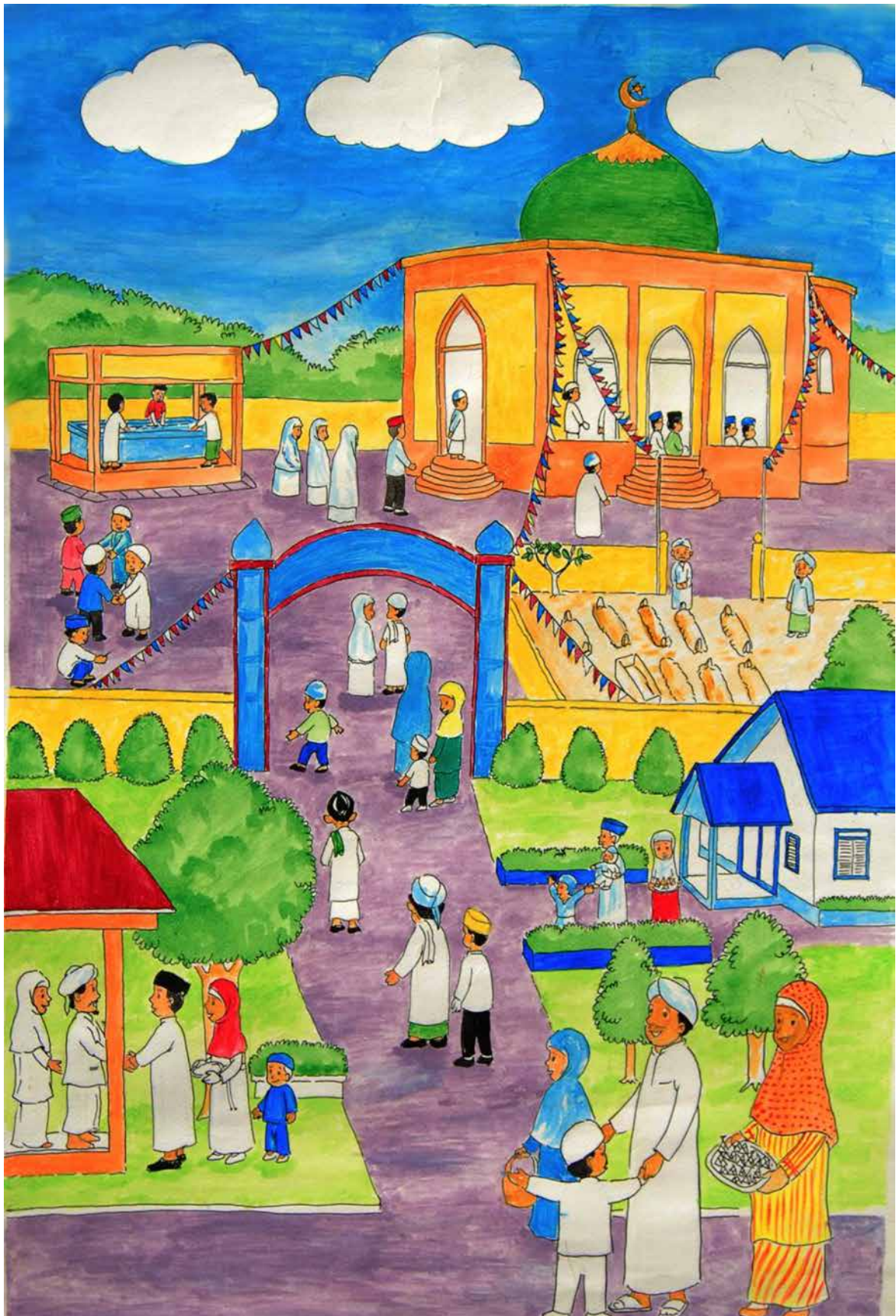
The overall goal of PMT-MLE K1 is "to develop critical thinking skills in the mother tongue to provide a foundation for other learning." This is accomplished through activities that "focus on cognitive development and developing self-confidence in expressing opinions through activities that use the mother tongue."⁶⁹ To do this, the teachers use some of the materials mentioned in the previous chapter, including:

69 Burarungrot, 2016

1. **Listening Stories:** the students listen to a story read by the teacher and answer both closed and open-ended questions.
2. **Picture Sequence Stories:** the students use a series of 4-6 picture cards to create a sequential story. They can then "tell" the story to their friends.
3. **Cultural Posters ("Big Busy Pictures"):** the children discuss large posters of local cultural scenes and activities and answer higher-level questions about the activities they see in the pictures.
4. **Patani Malay Songs:** The students learn traditional songs, as well as songs created by local musicians and teachers specifically for PMT-MLE.
5. **Relay Stories:** Using pictures or topic prompts, classes create stories together, sentence by sentence. The teacher writes the story on poster paper to demonstrate the link between speaking and writing—that the students' thoughts and words can be written, even though they cannot yet read.
6. **Experience Stories:** The students and teachers participate in an activity (often outdoors), and then create a story talking about what they did. Again, the teacher writes the story sentence-by-sentence on poster paper, and then reads it to the students.



Creating a relay story



Cultural poster illustrating scenes from daily life

Kindergarten 1, Term 2: Preparing to write

During the second half of the year, K1 students continue to develop strong listening, speaking, and reasoning skills in their mother tongue through some of the same activities mentioned above. In addition, they work on visual and oral discrimination, as well as fine motor skills to prepare them for writing. As described by Burarungrot:

Fine motor skills are developed to help with writing later. For example, the students work with clay, tear paper, and practice tracing lines and shapes. This is done in both the MLE and comparison schools. However, the MLE schools also add units on grouping and separating sets of similar objects and pictures.... They move on from separating sets of objects and pictures to separating and grouping shapes. Finally, they work on matching and separating groups of letters and numbers. This develops observational skills that facilitate stronger letter recognition skills. This is especially important for the Thai alphabet, where many letters are distinguished only by a small line or a differently placed loop.⁷⁰

It is important to emphasize that while the K1 PMT-MLE children are identifying how letters are different, they are *not* yet learning letter names or sounds. They are looking at them as shapes, and observing the unique characteristics of each letter. This contrasts sharply with the focus in "normal" Thai schools on memorizing all 44 consonants at a very early age. Again, PMT-MLE is built on the principle that everything presented to the children must be *meaningful* to them; mere memorization is not.⁷¹

For listening discrimination, the students are often told to close their eyes and listen for various sounds. These may be natural sounds, or the teacher might sing a Patani Malay song and ask the children to perform certain actions when they hear specific words. Later, the teacher will read lists of similarly sounding words, asking the students to perform some sort of action to show that they know which word is which. Doing this in the mother tongue develops listening discrimination skills which will help with their later acquisition of Thai—where they must learn to distinguish between "new" consonants, vowels, and tones that are not present in their mother tongue. When the children later begin developing Thai listening skills through similar classroom activities, they already know "the rules of the game."

Kindergarten 2: Mother Tongue Literacy

Kindergarten 2 builds on the experiences of the previous year, bringing greater focus to Patani Malay literacy skills. The goal is for students to be able to express themselves in writing, using the mother tongue. Key activities include:

1. Pre-reading/writing: matching games, fine motor development, writing practice
2. Letter names and letter writing: Patani Malay alphabet chart
3. Reading and Writing: Patani Malay Primer Lessons (bottom-up approach)
4. Big Books/Small Books: For group and individual reading experiences (top-down approach)
5. Creative writing: transforming students' oral stories

As mentioned earlier, the PMT-MLE programme adheres to a "Two Track" model of literacy development. The "meaning" track focuses on reading for meaning and creative expression, while the "accuracy" track emphasizes correct spelling and grammar. The teachers are trained to keep the two tracks separate, using different methods and materials for each, lest the "accuracy monster" take over the curriculum—as is the natural tendency in classrooms!

⁷⁰ Burarungrot, 2016

⁷¹ Due to pressure from local authorities, some PMT-MLE teachers confessed to teaching children all 44 Thai letter names in K1, term 2—but added that the children quickly forgot the letter names, and thus needed to relearn them in K2, term 2.

Meaning Track: Group and individual reading, creative writing

Big Books play an important role in introducing the children to reading. As the name implies, Big Books are large, with a colorful picture on one page and a single sentence in large font on the facing page. A Big Book story is typically 8-12 pages long and, particularly in the early years, will involve repetition in the form of similar sentences.



Using a "Big Book" in class

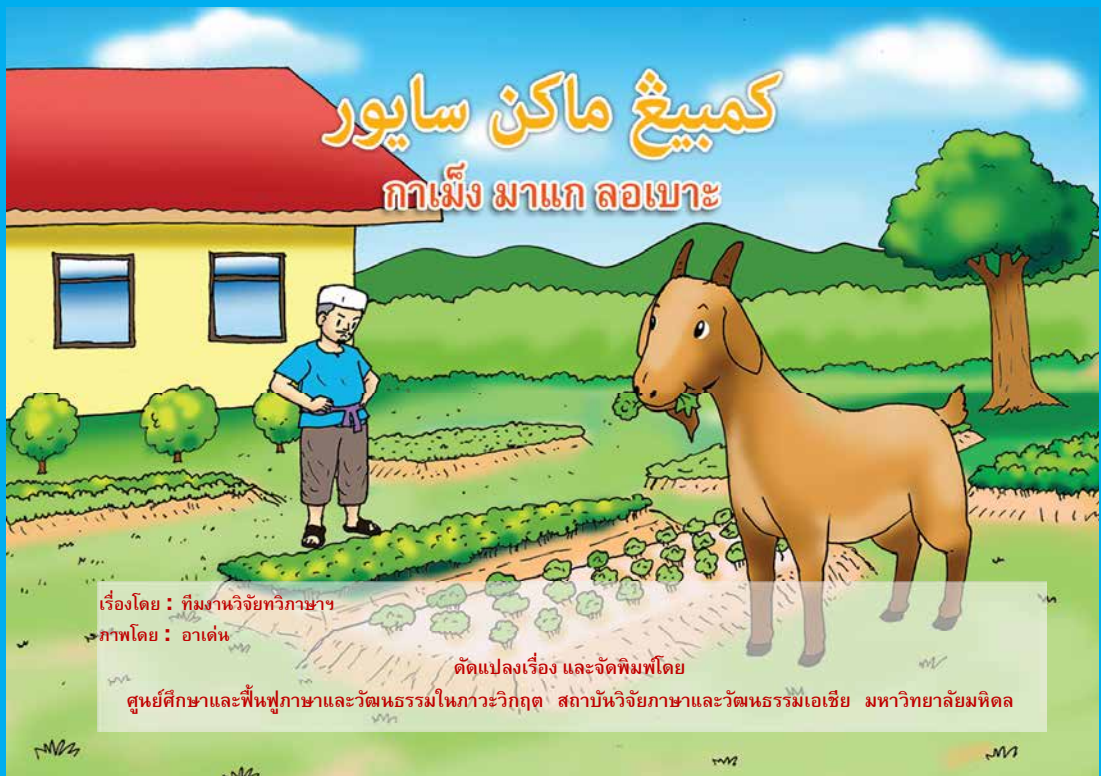
Figure 23: Five step process for teaching reading (adapted from Malone & Malone, 2010)

When using "Big Books" (and all other group reading activities) a 5 step process is followed:

1. Teacher reads the entire text to the students (if the students have already learned the letters in the text, they read it together with the teacher).
2. Teacher reads the text with all the students.
3. Teacher reads one part of the text with one or two student volunteers.
4. One or two student volunteers read part of the text by themselves.
5. Teacher and students read the entire text together.

IMPORTANT: In steps 2 & 3, the teacher always reads with the students. Students should not listen to the teacher read a sentence and then repeat it.

THE GOAT EATS THE VEGETABLES: A BIG BOOK STORY



Padawma planted vegetables beside his house.
Padawma fertilized and watered every day.
A goat liked to come eat Padawma's vegetables every day.
Padawma threw a stick at the goat.
The next day the goat came back to eat.
Padawma threw a stone at the goat.
The next day the goat came back to eat.
Padawma built a fence to keep the goat out.
The goat can't come to eat anymore. The vegetables are beautiful.

"NOW THEY RUN TO GRAB BOOKS — THEY LOVE TO READ!"

*Assanah Binsulong,
PMT-MLE teacher*

This is a "top down" methodology designed to give the children a "feel" for meaningful reading, further developing the link between the written and spoken word. In the early stages, the children are not truly "reading" the whole sentences, but as they say them along with the teacher they can begin guessing what will come next. In fact, during steps 2 and 3 the teacher will often stop at the end of the page and ask open ended questions like "Why did X do Y?" or "What do you think will happen next?" Sometimes in steps 3 or 4 the teacher may ask a student volunteer to point to a specific word. However, the student is not truly reading the word in a phonetic sense. Rather, the student is making an educated guess about the word based on its position in the sentence (based on the knowledge that reading is a sequential activity) and, perhaps, because they recognize the general "shape" of the word. As with all PMT-MLE activities, right answers are rewarded with encouragement and wrong answers are gently corrected in a way that does not cause the student to lose face or feel stupid.

"Small books" can be used for group listening times (when the teacher or, sometimes, a student reads a story to the entire class) or individual reading. The latter has proven very popular; teachers and students complain that there are not enough small books to feed the students' voracious reading appetites! As a result, the programme glued Patani Malay translations into existing Thai storybooks. Still, demand outstripped supply—a very good problem to have, especially since Thai people in general rarely read for pleasure.⁷² The fact that the PMT-MLE programme has succeeded in instilling a love for reading is a huge indicator of success.

The big and small books, as well as the continued use of relay stories and group experience stories introduced in K1, provide a foundation and motivation for the students' own creative writing. The children are encouraged to write and illustrate their own stories, and share them with their classmates. Again, the focus of these exercises is meaning, not accuracy, so teachers are trained NOT to correct spelling or grammar for such assignments. In addition, the fact that the students share their stories with the whole class allows them to get feedback from their peers. This contrasts with "normal" Thai classrooms, where creative writing assignments are very rare and, when present, are only seen by the teacher and are graded on the basis of spelling and grammar (accuracy). Thus, the "power" in PMT-MLE classrooms is somewhat more decentralized, in contrast to the teacher-centered model that remains the norm in many Thai schools 20 years after the Ministry of Education officially adopted "child-centered" policies.

72 The Nation, 2012

Accuracy Track: Learning letters, writing words

As mentioned in the chapter on orthography development, the Patani Malay Thai-based alphabet includes 30 initial consonants, 2 final consonants, 15 simple vowels, and 9 vowel glides. As is the case with the Thai alphabet, each of the Patani Malay letters is associated with a specific object familiar to the student from everyday life, based on the aforementioned principle of making everything in the programme meaningful. By contrast, some of the Thai letter associations are to objects outside of a Muslim Patani Malay child's normal environment (Hindu hermit, ancient sailing vessel, base for Buddha image, etc.).

Figure 24: Patani Malay (Thai script) consonant and vowel charts

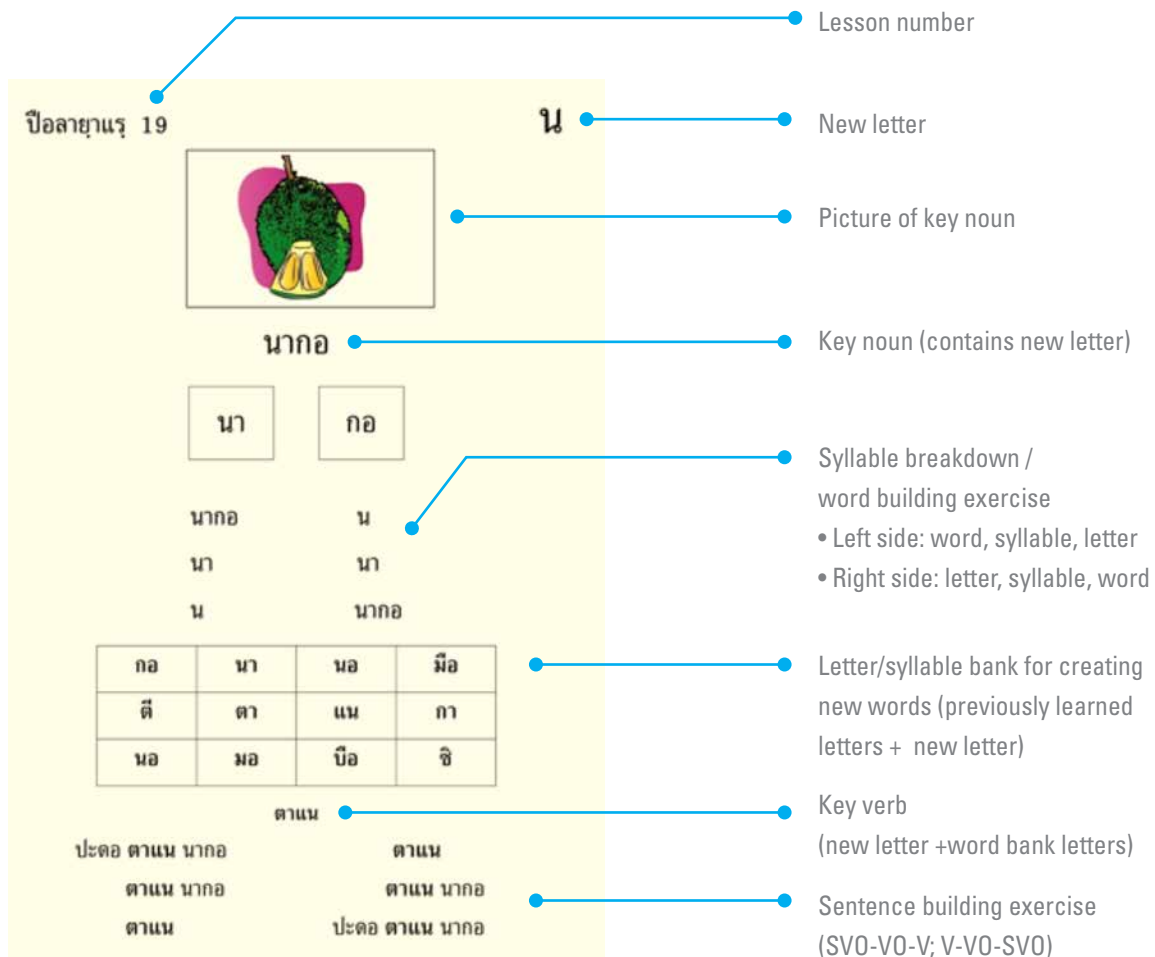


The students learn the alphabet through a variety of games, songs, and other fun activities.

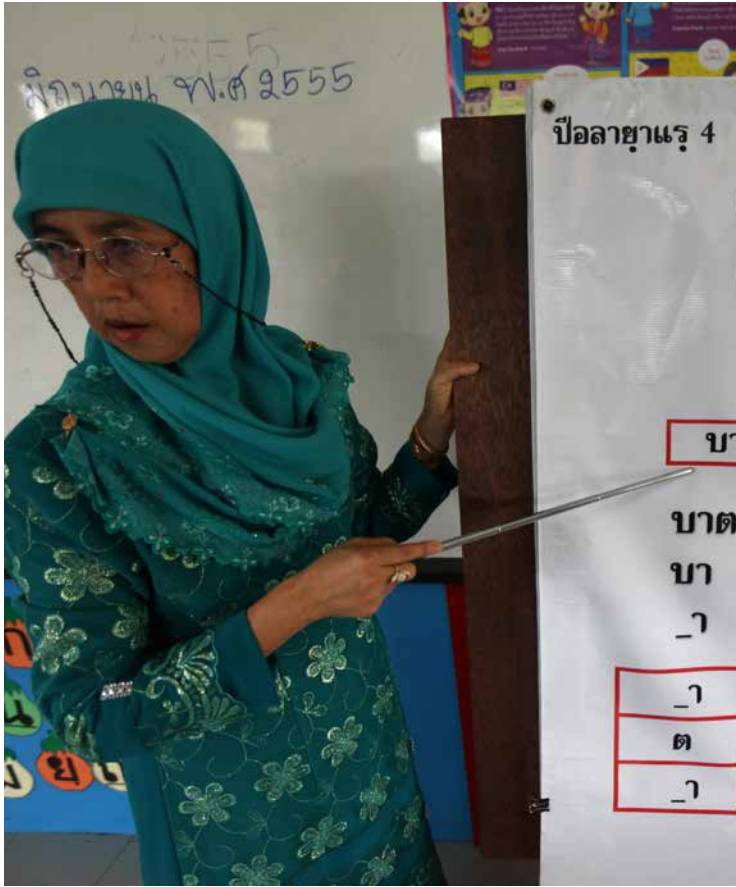
Once children have mastered the alphabet, they begin learning word formation skills through 76 primer lessons. Primer lessons are organized by letter frequency, with the most often used consonants and vowels introduced first. This enables the children to start reading and writing many familiar words quite quickly.

The typical primer lesson is organized around the focus letter, printed at the top of the page, as shown in figure 25. A picture illustrates a simple word that contains the focus letter. If appropriate, the word is separated into syllables (the students having already been trained to clap their hands to determine the number of syllables in a word). In two parallel columns, the example word is first broken down to leave only the focus letter, then built back up starting with the focus letter. The same 5 step procedure used for teaching big books is used for the word breakdown/buildup. Below the parallel columns is a box containing the focus letter plus previously studied letters or syllables; the students use these letters and words to build new words, which are written on the board. A verb that can be constructed from the letters/syllables in the box is then used in a sentence in a second group of parallel columns (bottom of primer page)—first breaking down the sentence to leave only the focus verb, then building it up again from the focus verb. In this way, a single page introduces a new letter/word while reviewing previously learned letters/syllables/words and reinforcing word and sentence building concepts.

Figure 25: Breakdown of Patani Malay primer lesson #19



While primer lessons can be printed as student textbooks, it is even better to have them written on the board or on posters, so that the learning can truly be an interactive group experience. In fact, the students enjoy taking on the role of a "teacher," and leading their classmates through primer lessons! This is one more way in which PMT-MLE develops the "confidence in self-expression" so often mentioned by parents and teachers as a key benefit of the programme.



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"THIS APPROACH SHOULD HAVE BEEN TRIED LONG AGO. IF I HAD STUDIED IN A PMT-MLE SCHOOL, I WOULD NOT BE ILLITERATE TODAY."

Mrs. Saruma Maming, age 57



BRIDGING FROM L1 TO L2: THAI FOR ETHNIC CHILDREN

**"The level of development of children's mother tongue is a strong predictor of their second language development...Children...with a solid foundation in their mother tongue develop stronger literacy abilities in the school language."
Jim Cummins ⁷³**

Chapter Highlights

- **Why a bridge between languages is needed—and how it can be built**
- **How the programme students were taught Thai listening and speaking skills**
- **Factors impacting the transfer of mother tongue literacy skills to the national language**

Why and How to Bridge?

MLE projects in several countries have shown great initial success, then stumbled when it came time to introduce the national language. This was because the programme coordinators failed to fully understand the importance of systematically bridging from the mother tongue to the national language. The national curriculum was introduced all at once, without being linked to the students' previous knowledge.

So what is the "known" that can provide the foundation for bridging? The "known" includes knowledge of how school operates. It includes the memory of how teachers used different techniques to develop listening and speaking skills in the mother tongue; thus similar techniques can be used for learning the new language.

The "known" also includes literacy skills, including an inventory of letters and knowledge of word formation. Ideally, the mother tongue will use many of the same letters as the national language (Smalley's principle of maximum transference). This gives the minority students an easy tool to begin the transition to the national language.

In all of this, it is important to remember the "natural" order of language acquisition. Just as children naturally develop first language listening skills before they can speak, and reading skills before they can write, so the bridging process must begin by teaching listening skills in the national language before moving sequentially to speaking, reading, and writing skills. Teachers may be tempted to try to teach pronunciation by having students write words; this must *not* be done, as this would actually prevent the child from developing good pronunciation! The children's ears must be trained to hear the second language sounds, and their tongues trained to reproduce those sounds correctly *before* they attempt to read or write them!

73 Cummins, 2000

Young children learn best when they are not stressed. Therefore, second language acquisition techniques should emphasize fun and readily achievable goals.

Developing Thai Listening and Speaking Skills

As shown in the "Language skills progression" diagram (figure 22), programme students begin acquiring Thai listening skills in the second semester of K1. This continues through K2 and the early primary grades. Specific teaching methods used to introduce Thai are shown in table 10, and will be explained below.

Table 10: Teaching methods for developing Thai listening and speaking skills (adapted from Burarungrot 2016)

Thai teaching methods for oral skills development	
Kindergarten 1-2	Grades 1-2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Total Physical Response (TPR) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> TPR-Body TPR-Object TPR-Picture TPR-Story (900 Thai words taught) Thai yes/no questions, What & Who questions (K2) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tonal awareness practice (ear training with minimum pairs, pictures, and activities) Relay story (arrange picture cards to create sentences) Cultural posters (discuss people, objects, activities) Sequence pictures (use picture cards to tell story and ask/answer questions) Thai listening story (acting out story, ask/answer questions) Thai easy conversation (speaking appropriately in different social situations)

Total Physical Response (TPR)

The main method used to teach Thai skills in K1-2 is TPR, a well known language acquisition technique in which students act out commands spoken by the teacher.

PMT-MLE staff developed a Thai word bank to use for TPR. This included many objects found in the children's local environment, and are categorized as follows:

- Words related to the human body (TPR-B)
- Words related to objects and actions done with those objects (TPR-O)
- Words related to pictures (TPR-P)
- Words related to stories, events, and emotions (TPR-S)

As implied in this list, TPR as used in the programme is not limited to a handful of action verbs. Indeed, it is not limited to single words, but eventually includes complex sentence structures and stories that the children act out. Through TPR, the children become accustomed to hearing Thai words, and remember the meanings of those words by performing specific actions. Just as a toddler can respond to adult words even before they can speak, programme students learn to listen to Thai words, understand their meanings, and produce some sort of behavior which reinforces their learning.

Through TPR, the K1 and K2 students developed a Thai vocabulary of approximately 900 words. They also learned to recognize and respond to increasingly complex Thai sentence structures, beginning with simple verbs and progressing to yes-no questions. Over the course of several months, for example, they might encounter a series like this:

- Sit!
- Point to the floor!
- Sit on the floor!
- Sit on the floor and smile!
- Boys sit on the floor!
- Point at the doll!
- Make the doll sit on the floor!
- Is the doll sitting on the chair? (Nod head to answer yes or no)

However, the children in K1 and K2 do NOT yet begin speaking Thai. As mentioned earlier, rushing children to speak a new language before they have acquired its sound system and basic vocabulary can fossilize incorrect pronunciation and cause stress.

TPR continues to be used in grade 1, building more vocabulary and greater sentence complexity. Grade 1 teachers introduce simple wh-questions (who, what, when, where), and the children are allowed to respond with single Thai words and more advanced sentences. For example:

- Where is the doll sitting? (Ans: floor)
- Who is sitting on the floor? (Ans: doll)
- What is the doll doing? (Ans: sitting)
- When will the doll sleep? (Ans: night)

Additional Methods

While TPR is the main method used to build Thai listening skills in K1 and K2, additional methods are introduced in grade 1. Many of these methods were also used for mother tongue activities in K1 and K2. Once again, the programme uses previous knowledge (how the games and activities work) to make it easier to introduce new knowledge (Thai language). In fact, some of the same posters, story cards, and big books used for mother tongue activities in kindergarten are used for grade 1 Thai activities. Specific methods and materials will be discussed below.

Tonal Awareness Practice (listening discrimination)

As mentioned earlier, tone is very important in the Thai language. The word *mai*, for example, can have 5 different meanings, which are all spelled differently, depending on whether the word is pronounced with a mid, low, high, rising, or falling tone. In the standard Thai curriculum, students are taught about all five tones simultaneously, and are drilled on reading syllables (many of which have no meaning) to demonstrate how the tones are written. In the following tone drill (commonly used in Thai schools nationwide), only 1 of the 5 words has meaning:

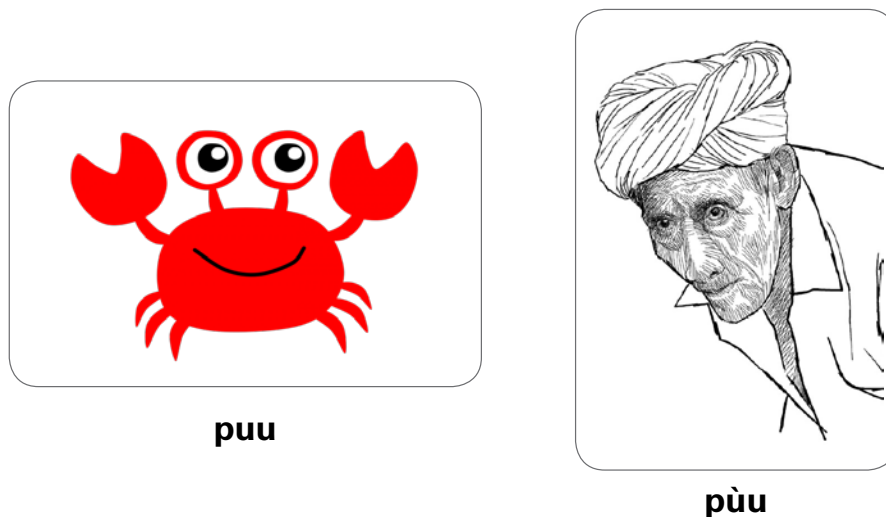
กา ก่า ก้า ก๊า ก๋า

ka (mid), ka (low), ka (falling), ka (high), ka (rising)

Like English and thousands of other languages, Patani Malay does not have tone. Therefore, it is very difficult for Patani Malay children to learn to hear tonal differences, much less pronounce the tones correctly and, later, learn how to spell words with different tones.

To build tonal awareness, the programme staff organized a series of what linguists call "minimal pairs"—meaningful words that sound similar but differ in tone. The example cards below show two easily confused words: *puu* (mid tone) 'crab' and *pùu* (low tone) 'grandfather.'

Figure 26: Tonal awareness minimal pair example cards (Adapted from Burarungrot 2016: 103)



The teacher places the two pictures on the board, and follows these steps:

1. Teacher introduces the minimal pairs using TPR techniques ("point to the crab...point to the grandfather... grandfather...crab...grandfather...crab...crab...")
2. Teacher and students together use gestures to show the tonal contour, as follows:
 - Mid tone: arm raised to shoulder level
 - High tone: arm raised to 45 degree angle
 - Low tone: arm lowered to 45 degree angle
 - Falling tone: students "write" an upside-down V-shape in the air
 - Rising tone: students "write" a V-shape in the air
3. Teacher says words, students make gestures
4. Teacher makes gesture, students say the word that matches it
5. Teacher says two words, students respond with "equal" or "not equal" hand gestures to show whether the teacher said the same word twice or different words with different tones.
6. Teacher says new words (not included in the pictures) with the same tones as the words in the pictures; students respond with "equal" or "not equal" gestures.

Note that the tonal awareness practice does NOT include teaching the students how the minimal pairs are spelled differently in Thai. That comes later in the process, once the students have internalized the Thai sound system. **Teachers must avoid the temptation to use writing to teach pronunciation, as listening and speaking precede writing in natural language acquisition.**

Thai Picture Sequence Stories

Children love stories. While the PMT-MLE children were in K1 and K2, the teachers would use Patani Malay to tell a simple story illustrated in four or more pictures. The children would then organize the pictures sequentially, to show the correct order of events in the story. Later, the children would use the same pictures to write their own creative stories.

The same activity (and some of the same stories) is used to introduce Thai. The emphasis is on listening and meaning, as the students listen to what the teacher is saying in Thai, match it to the picture, and line the pictures up sequentially. The teacher then asks them simple questions about the story, including yes/no and wh-questions. Through this, the children are naturally acquiring a knowledge of Thai sentence order, as well as how Thai question sentences are structured—which can be different from the way questions are asked in the mother tongue. In addition, they are learning about the discourse features used to tell stories in Thai—how opening sentences like "One day" or "At my house" connect to the rest of a text in natural speech. Sequence stories can be done as an individual or group activity.

Take, for example, a story about a boy asking his father to take him to the sea (a familiar situation in the South). The teacher reads the story (written on the back of the card) and the students arrange the cards into the correct sequential order, based on what they have heard. The teacher then reads the story again, asking increasingly complex questions (again written on the back of each card) which the students answer in Thai.

GOING FISHING WITH DAD: A PICTURE SEQUENCE STORY



Card #1 Story sentence: On a holiday, Mahoh asked his father to go to the sea.

Card #1 Questions:

1. On the holiday, did Mahoh ask his father to go to the sea? (Yes)
2. On the holiday, who did Mahoh ask to go to the sea? (His father)
3. On the holiday, what did Mahoh ask his father to do? (Go to the sea)
4. Who asked his father to go to the sea? (Mahoh)
5. What did Mahoh do? (Asked his father to go to the sea)

As shown in the fishing story, the questions become shorter, and the expected responses longer, requiring the students to utilize more complex grammar patterns as they go through the question-answer sequence.

Just as the picture sequence stories were first used to develop listening/sequencing skills in the mother tongue, and were later reused in mother tongue creative writing activities (in which students wrote stories to match the pictures), the students will later reuse the cards to write stories in Thai.

Thai Listening Stories with Role Play

In their TPR lessons in K2, the children acted out sequential actions like "Pick up the red pencil and the blue pencil. Walk to the teacher's desk. Put the blue pencil on the teacher's desk...." In grade 1, they act out stories the teacher tells them in Thai. Again, this method is familiar to the students; they did similar things in their mother tongue in kindergarten. For this type of role play, there are no pictures. The following sequence is followed:

1. Teacher reads the whole story in Thai
2. Teacher reads the whole story sentence-by-sentence, acting out each sentence so the students clearly understand it
3. Teacher reads the whole story sentence-by-sentence, acting out each sentence and asking the students wh-questions (written out on the lesson plan)
4. Students summarize the story in Thai, with teacher prompts as needed (e.g. "What did the boy do after he caught the fish?")
5. Teacher reads the whole story and the students (group or individual) act it out.

Thai Conversational Situations with Role Play

While TPR and storytelling methods build Thai listening and speaking skills, students also need to develop Thai conversational skills. This includes knowledge about Thai culture, including the correct way to act and the appropriate words to say in specific situations.

During the curriculum development phase, programme staff and teachers developed a list of common conversational situations that the children would encounter during daily interaction with Thai people. This included appropriate greetings for different people (teachers, government officials, friends, parents), how to receive a gift and thank the giver, the importance of lowering heads in respect when walking in front of elderly people, how to ask for help or offer help to others, how to ask to borrow something, how to give and receive compliments, etc. Specific attention was given to situations in which cultural misunderstanding could occur if the children did not know the correct Thai words or appropriate body language.

A clear example of this is the *wai*, a key part of Thai culture. Minutes after birth, Thai parents begin teaching their babies to *wai* by holding their palms together. As they grow, Thai children learn many unspoken rules about the *wai*. They learn that when meeting an adult, the child must *wai* first—and that the height of the *wai* is an indication of respect. For example, when greeting the school director, the child's fingers should be touching his or her nose. The school director may reply with a lower *wai*, at the chest level, since the students are on a lower social level than the director. If, however, a child was to greet the school director with a chest level *wai*, it would be seen as very disrespectful. Failure to *wai* correctly can have strong social consequences!

The intricacies of the *wai* are challenging for Patani Malay children, due to the different social structure in which they live. For some Patani Malay Muslims, the *wai* is strongly associated with Buddhism; Thai *wai* monks and Buddha images. Thus some Muslim parents are reluctant to teach their children to *wai*.

Each conversation lesson contains a description of the situation and the goal of the lesson. This is followed by a short scripted dialogue for two people, as well as additional instructions to the teacher. For example:

Situation: A child sees an elderly lady struggling to carry something heavy and wants to help.
Goal: To learn to politely offer help to a senior person
Script:
 Elderly lady: "Oh! This is so heavy!" (acts like she is carrying something)
 Child: "Grandmother, I will help you carry it!" (runs to help)
 Elderly lady: "Thank you very much. You are a good child." (Hands the child something to carry)

In teaching this lesson, the following steps would be taken:

1. Teacher speaks Patani Malay to introduce the situation and the Thai cultural knowledge involved (in this case that it is polite for children to call elderly Thai ladies "Grandmother" even if they are not real family members)
2. Teacher acts out the situation, playing both roles and saying the Thai words
3. Students act out the situation (first along with then without the teacher), saying the Thai words
4. Teacher summarizes the situation (speaking Patani Malay) and reminds the students of the cultural information and language used.

Transitioning from Mother Tongue Literacy to Thai Literacy

As mentioned earlier, the Patani Malay Thai-based script was designed for "maximum transfer"—meaning that it shares many features with the Thai alphabet, making it easier for students to develop Thai literacy skills. In all, 22 of Patani Malay's 30 consonants are represented by phonetically identical Thai letters, while the 8 Patani Malay consonant sounds that Thai does not have are indicated with a dot or dash below the closest Thai equivalent. For example, the 'g' sound present in Patani Malay but absent in Thai, is represented by the Thai letter for 'k' ก with a subscript dot ก. Other examples are shown in figure 27.

Figure 27: Patani Malay (left) and Thai alphabet posters, with identical letters circled



The Thai-based Patani Malay script is therefore the basis for developing Thai literacy skills, using a variety of methods and materials similar to what the students experienced in their mother tongue in kindergarten 1 and 2, including big books, small books, relay stories, experience stories, and primer lessons.

(Re)learning the Thai Alphabet

All Thai letters are linked to a word starting with that letter. For example, the first letter of the Thai alphabet is *ก* /k/, and when reciting the alphabet one must say "kaw kai" meaning "k is for chicken." The Thai-based Patani Malay orthography follows this pattern, with appropriate substitutions: "kaw-kujing" meaning "k is for cat," for example.

To Thai educators and parents alike, being able to recite the 44 consonant letters of the Thai alphabet in their correct order is a major educational milestone. Many songs, games, videos, and smartphone apps are used to teach the alphabet to younger and younger children. Most people assume that any child who can recite the alphabet must also be literate, believing that knowledge of the alphabet will automatically transfer to reading and writing skills. The reality is that many Thai children are able to recite the alphabet with no understanding of how letters combine to form words.

Due to the emphasis on every educational activity having meaning, programme staff originally wanted to delay memorization of the Thai alphabet until grade 1, after the children had mastered the Thai-based Patani Malay orthography and had internalized the Thai sound system enough to make memorizing the alphabet meaningful. Nonetheless, programme teachers insisted that the children memorize the alphabet in K2, due to expectations of parents, government officials, and other potential visitors. Any time a Thai official visits a school, for example, one of the first things he or she will do is to ask a randomly chosen child to recite the alphabet. If the child cannot, the visitor will form a negative opinion of the school.

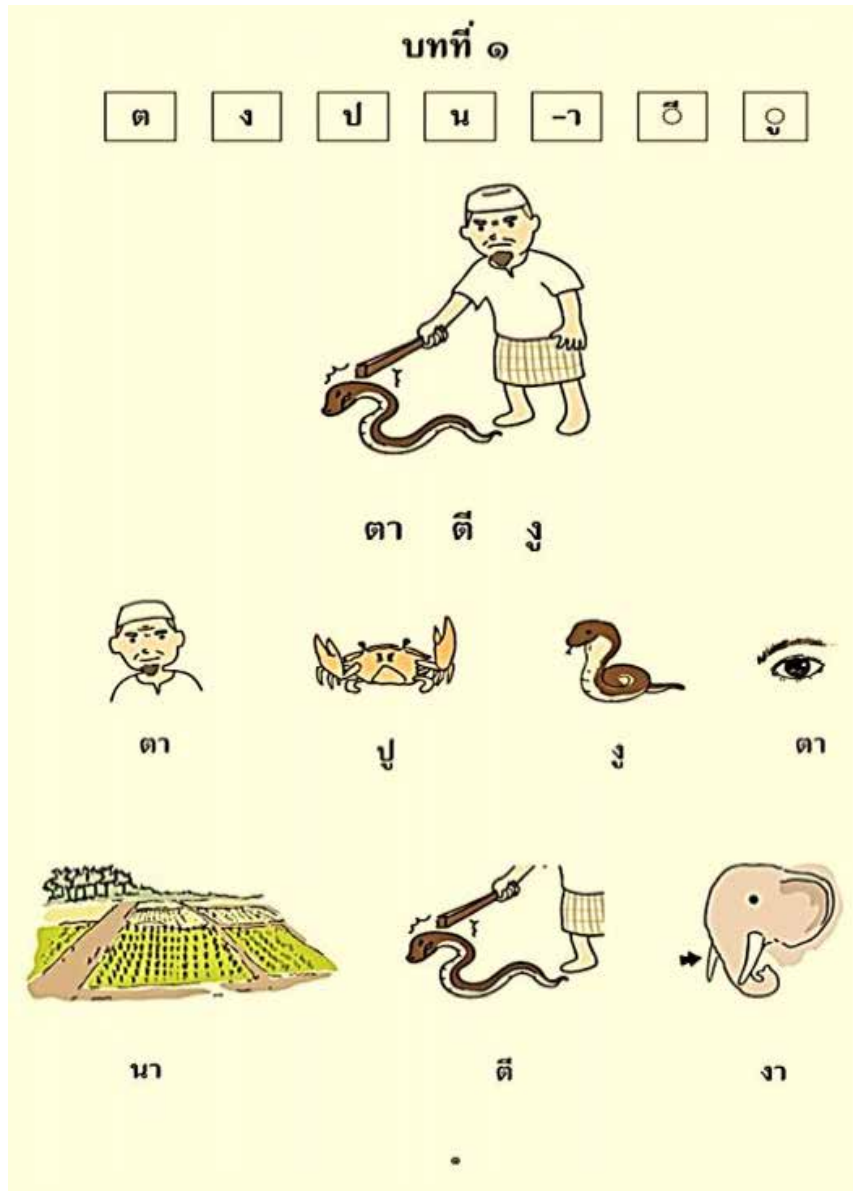
Nonetheless, the experience of the programme schools has been that students who learn the alphabet in kindergarten have forgotten it by the time they enter first grade. Thus it is necessary to relearn it. This is typically done at a rate of 3 letters per day, using alphabet flashcards, songs, and board work.

Once the children have memorized the 44 letters, the Patani Malay and Thai alphabet charts are placed side-by-side, and the children are instructed to circle all the shared letters. This task builds on the visual discrimination activities done in kindergarten. The objective of this activity is to once again connect old knowledge to new, building the children's cognitive schemas.

The Transitional Primer

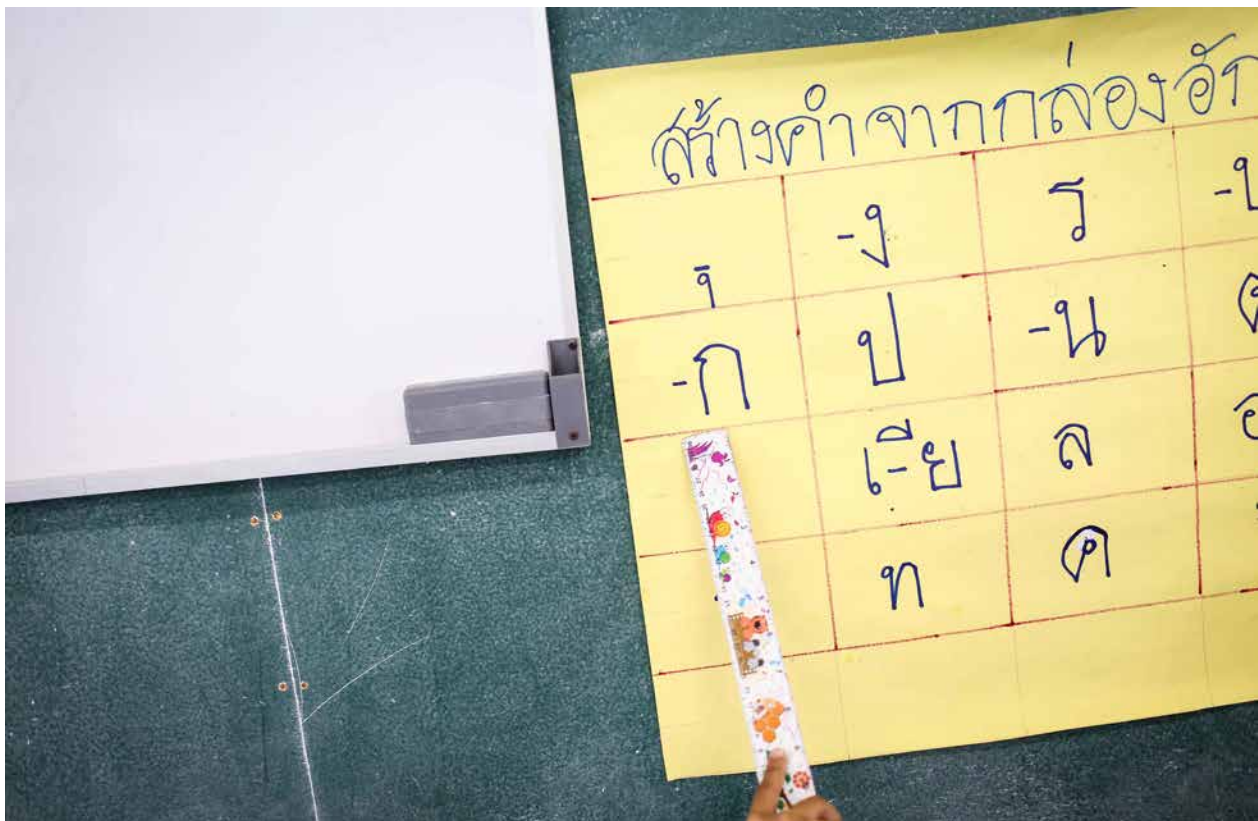
The transitional primer builds on the children's mother tongue literacy skills, to help them bridge to Thai. The first 15 lessons in the transitional primer cover the consonants and vowels found in both Patani Malay and Thai, using Thai example words that the children have already learned through TPR. This contrasts with "normal" Thai primers, which contain many meaningless syllables.

Figure 28: First page of the Thai transfer primer, "Grandfather hits a snake." Note that all letters used in this lesson are found in both Patani Malay and Thai, and that the grandfather is wearing typical Southern clothing.



At the top of the page are all the vowels and consonants that will be included in the lesson. None of the letters are new to the students, as they all occur in Patani Malay. Beneath the main picture is the sentence, "Grandfather hits snake." Below that are other pictures and Thai words using the focus letters. Thus, the students are combining letters they already know from their Patani Malay literacy lessons to create real words they already know from their "Thai for Ethnic Children" listening and speaking activities. This insures an easy and efficient transition of literacy skills between the two languages.

Lesson #16 begins introducing Thai letters not found in the Patani Malay script. The format for the lessons is identical to the Patani Malay primer lessons the children experienced in kindergarten, with a picture, keyword, word building examples, a short sentence, other familiar objects using the same letter in different positions (word initial, word medial), and a "letter bank" from which the children can build other Thai words they know on the blank lines at the bottom of the page. Later lessons have other activities, such as matching words and writing original stories from picture prompts.



Thai letter bank word-building activity



Thai primer lesson #30: the vowel /ia/

Big Books, Small Books, Experience Stories and More!

Programme first graders typically spend 4 days/week studying transfer primer lessons. They also spend 1 day/week using other materials familiar to them from their mother tongue studies, including big books and small books. Some (but not all) of these are Thai translations of Patani Malay stories they experienced in kindergarten, so they are once again able to link their previous knowledge to new Thai words and sentence structures. Teachers continue to lead the students in group experience stories, written now in Thai, and other creative writing exercises. Once again, the focus in these activities is meaning, not accuracy; grammar and spelling mistakes are not corrected; rather the children are encouraged to express themselves creatively and confidently. Issues of correct spelling and grammar are saved for separate, accuracy-focused lessons.



A hands-on outdoor lesson on measurements

Contrast with Comparison Schools

Because programme students already have positive experiences in reading and writing their mother tongue, they approach Thai reading and writing with greater confidence and enthusiasm. This contrasts sharply with the comparison school students, many of whom who are frustrated and intimidated by their accuracy-focused Thai language lessons.

OTHER ATTEMPTS TO TEACH THAI

"Thai teaching schemes for the South come and go. Years ago, the *Chan Dek Lek* project tried to teach first graders 1200 basic words so they could speak Thai fluently. It was used for a while, then disappeared. Then another project, called *Head Start*, tried to teach intensive Thai for 2 months during the summer before the kids started first grade. That eventually disappeared. Then *Kaw Kai Sawasdi* came and went. None of these approaches have really worked because they are so obsessed with teaching the Thai language that they ignore the cognitive development of the whole child. Only MLE does that." Jehusen Jeh-ubong, retired EASO official and PMT-MLE staff member

WHAT ABOUT OTHER SUBJECTS LIKE MATH AND SCIENCE?

For grades 1-4, the programme prepared "bilingual teaching sheets" for each lesson in the government's math, science, and social studies textbooks. These sheets contained Patani Malay and Thai key terms for each lesson, as well as recommendations for using local materials or cultural examples. After the children had gained confidence in the Thai language, teachers used the "sandwich method" for teaching these subjects, as follows:

1. Introduce the topic of the lesson using the mother tongue and explain the Thai vocabulary that will be used
2. Teach the lesson in Thai
3. Summarize the lesson in the mother tongue, asking the students open-ended questions to make sure they understood the content

While the programme students acquired a "feel" for the flow of Thai grammar from "top-down" methodologies including big books and experience stories, as well as a knowledge of Thai spelling from "bottom up" primer lessons, the comparison students were only exposed to "bottom up" strategies. Much of their time is spent in reading and writing drills that include unfamiliar or meaningless words, often copied from the board. There is a heavy emphasis on correct spelling and grammar. Burarungrot found that, despite worldwide research demonstrating the importance of teachers and parents reading stories to children, the only stories experienced by children in the comparison schools were short stories written on the board (=no pictures) that the students faithfully copied into their notebooks. When the comparison students are asked to write original Thai sentences based on teacher prompts, only the teacher reads their work; there is no peer-to-peer sharing of the type done in the programme schools.⁷⁴

Although the programme schools have a systematic approach for bridging from the mother language to Thai, the comparison schools (like most schools in the South) do not take the special linguistic and cultural challenges faced by Patani Malay students into account. Thai educators know that foreigners have problems learning Thai tones; numerous books, DVDs, and smartphone apps have been developed to help. Yet none of these methodologies have been used to help Thai children who speak Patani Malay or other minority languages as their mother tongue. While numerous projects to improve the Thai language abilities of Patani Malay children have been launched in government schools over the past 50 years, they are mostly a re-packaging of the standard curriculum, with more drills and repetition.

The impact of these different teaching methodologies will become apparent in the next chapter: Programme Results.

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PROGRAMME RESULTS

"One of the great mistakes is to judge policies and programs by their intentions rather than their results." Milton Friedman

Chapter Highlights

- **How five very different assessments confirmed four "key wins" for PMT-MLE, including**
- **Better Thai faster:** Grade 1 students in the programme schools were 271 per cent more likely to score perfectly on a Thai letter dictation test. They were 207 per cent more likely to pass a Thai sentence writing test. Grade 3 student essays contained twice as many words, utilized more complex sentences, and were 65 per cent more likely to use "difficult" Thai vocabulary.
- **Improved learning of other subjects:** From grades 1-6, 72.5 per cent of PMT-MLE students met basic educational criteria in Thai language, math, science, and reading comprehension—compared to only 44.5 per cent of comparison school students.
- **Strong community support:** Interviews with over 200 parents and teachers found strong support for PMT-MLE. Most parents cited "better Thai reading and writing abilities" and "improved self-confidence" as key benefits.
- **Improved O-NET scores:** PMT-MLE students scored above the Deep South average in Thai, math, and science on the nationwide grade 6 O-NET exam.

Why Assess?

Rigorous, longitudinal academic assessment is crucial to MLE programmes. Regular evaluations are required by most donors, and a clear view of a programme's strengths and weaknesses is helpful to the project planning cycle. But assessment should not be limited to students; the attitudes of teachers, parents, and community leaders are also important to the success of an MLE intervention. Assessments that include academic performance and community acceptance can be powerful advocacy tools.

PMT-MLE Results

From the beginning, the programme collected longitudinal data that would be useful for improving the programme, as well as providing evidence of PMT-MLE's effectiveness to policy makers, academics, and educators in Thailand and other countries. As the project developed, a variety of assessments were conducted by different actors asking different research questions:

1. Mirinda Burarungrot, a programme team member and PhD candidate at RILCA asked, "**Are mother tongue literacy skills transferring to Thai?**" She thus developed and administered short Thai literacy tests for students in grades 1 and 3 in both the pilot and comparison schools.
2. The external evaluation team from Yala Rajabhat University led by Dr. Suppaluk Sintana and supported by UNICEF asked, "**How does the overall academic performance of PMT-MLE students in basic subject areas compare to students in the comparison schools?**" YRU thus conducted annual student testing for grades 1-6 for the first two cohorts of MTB-MLE students and their peers in the comparison schools.
3. An assessment team from the Thailand Research Fund (donor and technical partner) led by Dr. Virasakdi Chongsuivatwong asked, "**What are the attitudes of the community, especially teachers and parents, toward PMT-MLE?**" This was done in 2010, when the first cohort was in grade 1.
4. An external evaluation team commissioned by the Delegation of the European Union to Thailand and led by Dr. Virasakdi Chongsuivatwong asked, "**What are the attitudes of all stakeholders, and what progress has been made in institutionalizing MLE in the teacher production process?**" This was done in 2016, after the first cohort completed grade 6.
5. The Thai Ministry of Education asked, "**How do PMT-MLE students perform in comparison to students nationwide?**" The MOE thus required the PMT-MLE students to sit for the standard grade 6 national exam, known as the O-NET, with results reported to school directors and local education administration officials.

1. "Are mother tongue literacy skills transferring to Thai?"

Background: As one of the ethnic Thai linguists on the RILCA team, Mirinda Burarungrot helped develop the "Thai for Ethnic Children" materials for the PMT-MLE curriculum. Part of her work included evaluating the linguistic differences and similarities between the two languages (including Thai language errors often made by PM students), and developing strategies to systematically bridge from one language to the other. Therefore, her dissertation research essentially tested the effectiveness of the programme's approach to Thai literacy.

Test Subjects: Grade 1 and 3 students from two PMT-MLE schools and two comparison schools, at both the beginning and end of the school year. For grade 1, there were 54 PMT-MLE students and 47 comparison students, while for grade 3 there were 51 PMT-MLE students and 46 comparison students.

Development of Instrument: Based on her project experience, and with advice from Dr. Steve Walter of the Graduate Institute for Applied Linguistics (GIAL), the researcher developed a package of succinct tests to assess the Thai reading and writing skills of grade 1 and grade 3 students. The tests focused on specific letters, words, and grammatical forms that would serve as clear indicators of the students' Thai language abilities, based on Ministry of Education standards (including a list of words students should know at each grade level). The tests also benefitted from teacher input (to ensure that the test content reflected what the teachers had taught in class), and were field tested in non-target PMT-MLE and comparison schools. As part of instrument design and result interpretation, the researcher evaluated 46 hours of videotaped class sessions from two PMT-MLE and two comparison schools.

Test Administration: The tests were administered by the normal classroom teachers, to ensure that the students would not be confused or intimidated by a stranger with a different accent. The teachers were supplied with clear guidelines, including a script for explaining the test to the students. The teachers spoke only Thai to the students, and the test papers were only in Thai.

Limitations: The study tested two separate cohorts; that is, the grade 1 students were different from the grade 3 students. The study tested students in 4 schools (2 PMT-MLE, 2 comparison) only, having field tested the test in a third school pair. Therefore, the number of students tested was relatively low. The results are nonetheless statistically valid.

Grade 1 Test Content: The grade 1 first semester and second semester tests both had five parts with increasing levels of complexity, as follows:

1. Letter dictation
2. Word completion (initial consonant fill-in-the-blank)
3. Word ordering (arranging supplied words into sentences)
4. Word writing (from picture prompt)
5. Sentence writing (from word prompt)

Grade 1 Results: As shown in figures 29 and 30, PMT-MLE students outperformed the comparison students on the raw scores for all five parts in both semesters. The differences were statistically significant (as indicated by a yellow star) for letter dictation (part 1), word writing (part 4) and sentence writing (part 5) in both semesters, and for word completion (part 2) in the first semester only, and word ordering (part 3) in the second semester only

Figure 29: First grade, first semester Thai writing assessment results (adapted from Burarungrot, 2016)

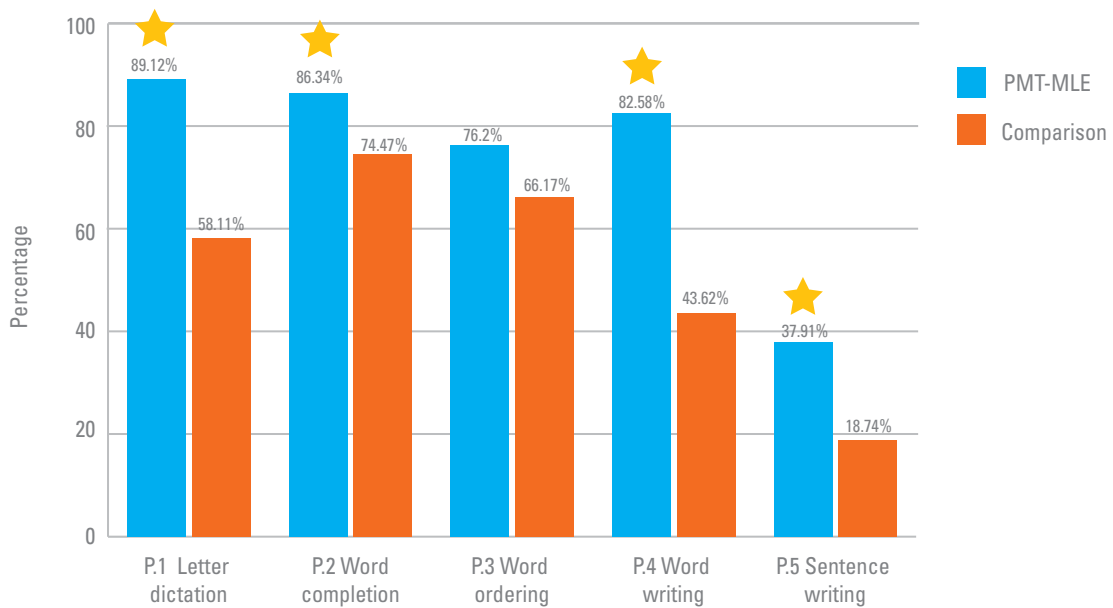
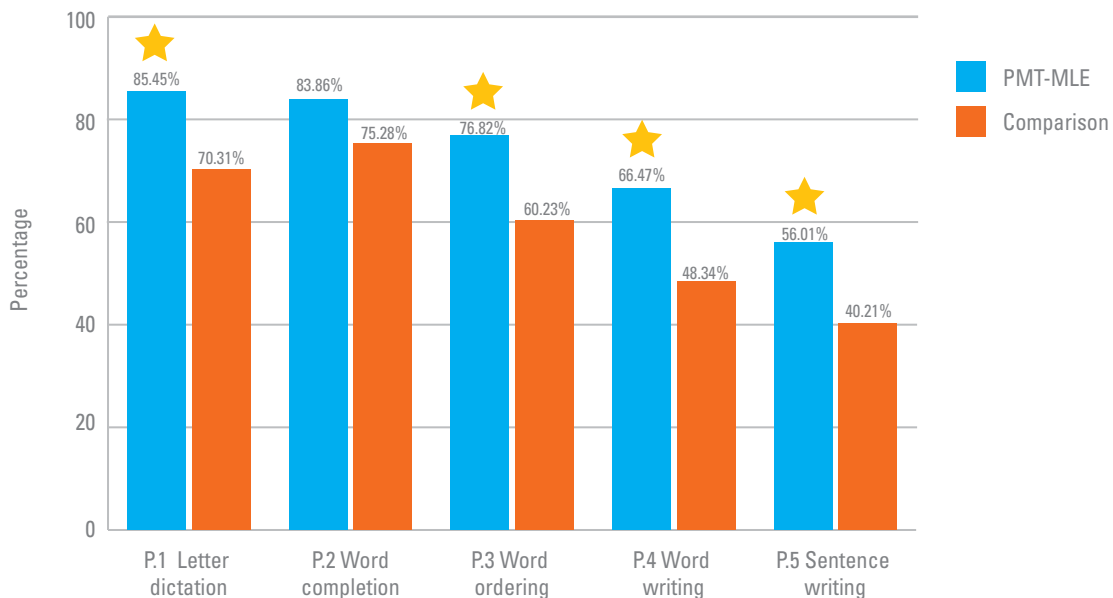


Figure 30: First grade, second semester Thai writing assessment results (adapted from Burarungrot, 2016)



However, only looking at figures 29 and 30 gives an incomplete picture, because they only show the average of all student scores. The difference between PMT-MLE and the comparison students is more dramatic when we look at how individual students performed. To do this, we will examine first semester individual results from parts 1 and 5, which were the least and most complex tasks, respectively.

Part 1: Letter Dictation. The raw data for part 1 as shown in table 11 shows a dramatic, inverse correlation between the two groups of students. While 63 per cent of PMT-MLE students wrote all consonants and vowels correctly, 62 per cent of comparison students made errors in both consonants and vowels. Only 8 comparison students wrote all the consonants and vowels correctly, while only 5 MLE students wrote them all incorrectly.

Table 11: Individual results for grade 1, semester 1, part 1 (letter dictation) Thai writing assessment (adapted from Burarungrot, 2016)

	1. All consonants & vowels correct +C/+V	2. All consonants correct but not all vowels +C/-V	3. All vowels correct but not all consonants -C/+V	4. Errors in both consonants and vowels -C/-V
PMT-MLE (n=54)	34 (63%)	7 (13%)	8 (15%)	5 (9%)
Comparison (n=47)	8 (17%)	7 (15%)	3 (6%)	29 (62%)

Part 5: Sentence writing (from word prompt). The raw data for part 5 again shows an inverse correlation. 86 per cent of PMT-MLE students were able to answer with either full sentences or phrases, compared to only 28 per cent of comparison students. By contrast, 64 per cent of comparison students either left the test blank or only wrote a single letter on the test paper, as shown in table 12:

Table 12: Individual results for grade 1, semester 1, part 5 (sentence writing) Thai writing assessment (adapted from Burarungrot, 2016)

	1. Full sentence with SVO	2. Phrase VP/NP only	3. Word only	4. Letter only	5. Left blank
PMT-MLE (n=54)	24 (44%)	24 (44%)	3 (6%)	0 (0%)	3 (6%)
Comparison (n=47)	13 (28%)	0 (0%)	4 (8%)	14 (30%)	16 (34%)

Yet even these dramatically different scores do not give us the whole picture, since a simple, grammatically correct sentence would receive the same number of points as a more complex one. Thus, the researcher points out that the 13 comparison students who were able to write complete sentences wrote only simple sentences containing a subject, object, and verb. By contrast, the 24 PMT-MLE students who answered in full sentences often created complex sentences containing adjectives, prepositions, numbers and classifiers.

Grade 1 Conclusions: Based on this data, the researcher concluded that the PMT-MLE students' written Thai abilities were far superior to the comparison students, even though the PMT-MLE students had only 200 hours of Thai instruction while the comparison students received 350 hours of Thai (in addition to all subject matter being taught in Thai). PMT-MLE was much more effective in helping the majority of students achieve high results, while only a minority of comparison students achieved high results. For the researcher, the explanation is that the PMT-MLE students had first developed strong literacy skills in their mother tongue, and then transferred those skills to Thai. By contrast, the comparison students were struggling to develop literacy skills in a language which they could not yet speak fluently. Mother tongue literacy helped the PMT-MLE students master Thai literacy quickly and efficiently. Therefore, the answer to the research question "Are mother tongue literacy skills transferring to the national language?" is a clear "Yes!"

Grade 3 Test Content: The grade 3 tests consisted of a single writing prompt: "My daily life" for the first semester and "What I want to be when I grow up" for the second semester. A customized rubric was used to evaluate three skill areas:

- A. Language features (sentences, words, spelling, handwriting, punctuation)
- B. Content structure (orientation, plot, characters, closing)
- C. Cognitive features (organization, makes sense, reflective comment)

Grade 3 Results: As shown in figures 31 and 32, the PMT-MLE students outperformed the comparison students in all skill areas in both semesters, with the difference being statistically significant for Part A in the first semester and Part B in the second semester.

Figure 31: Third grade, first semester Thai writing assessment average scores (adapted from Burarungrot, 2016)

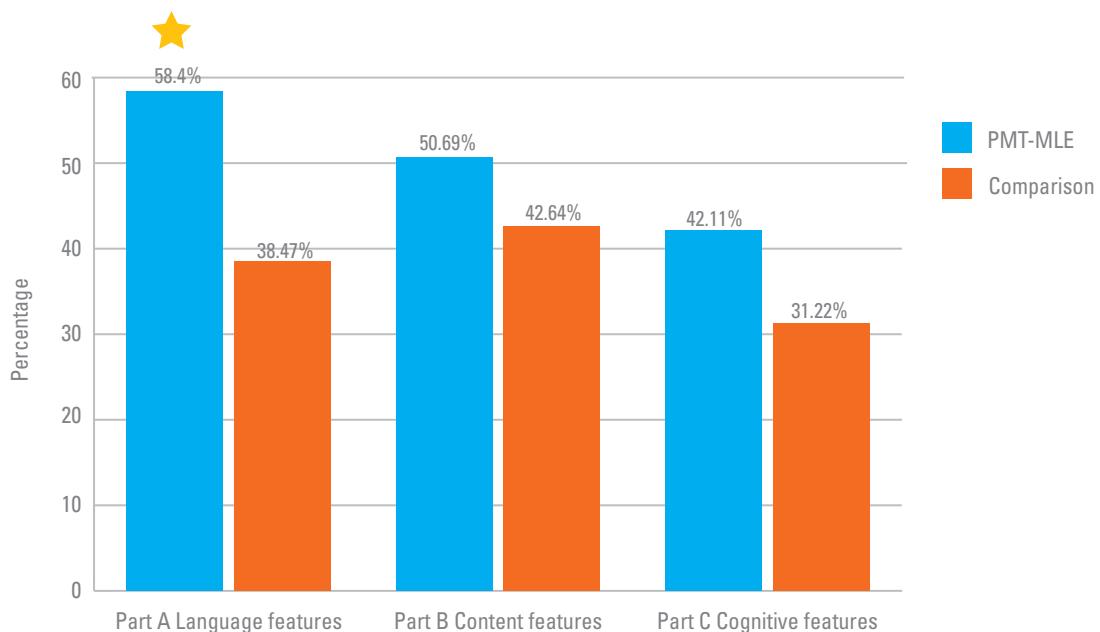
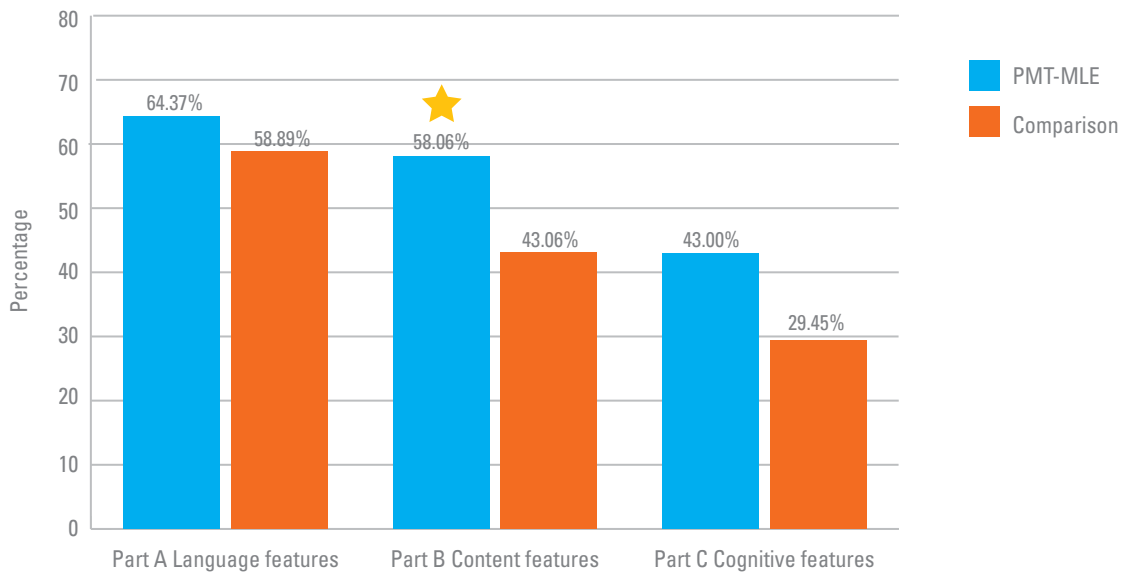


Figure 32: Third grade, second semester Thai writing assessment average scores (adapted from Burarungrot, 2016)



However, as was the case with the grade 1 test results, the true difference in student performance becomes clearer when we look beyond the average scores to how individual students performed. As seen in figures 33 and 34, the PMT-MLE students used many more words than the comparison students—roughly twice as many on the second test—and were more likely to use advanced vocabulary ("difficult words").

Figure 33: Breakdown of word types used in third grade, first semester Thai writing assessment results (adapted from Burarungrot, 2016)

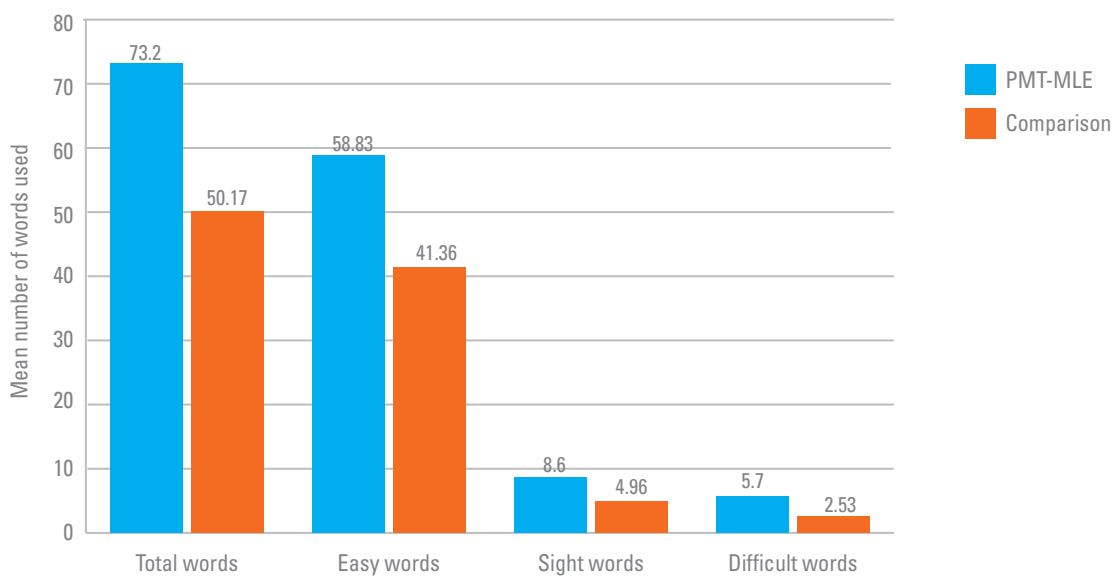
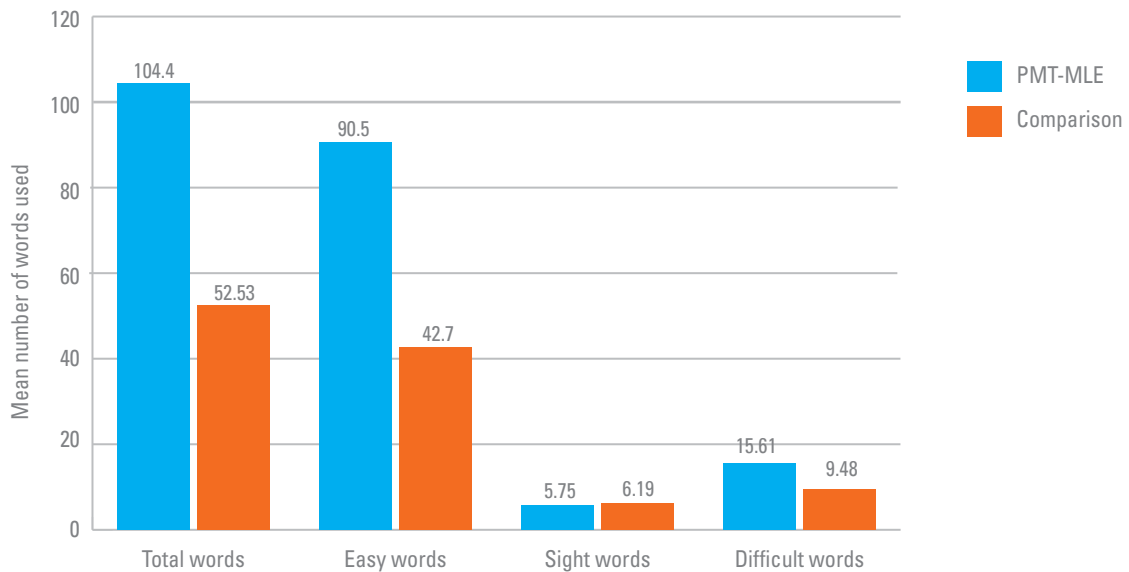


Figure 34: Breakdown of word types used in third grade, second semester Thai writing assessment results (adapted from Burarungrot, 2016)



The highest scoring papers from both groups emphasize this difference. The top PMT-MLE student on the first semester test, a girl, wrote 160 words (including 20 hard words), misspelling only 1 hard word. She included many characters, used complex sentences, and explained why she did certain things. She used the word 'then' just 3 times, employing other connective words and phrases to link her sentences. The top comparison student, a boy, wrote only 86 words (including 9 hard words), misspelling 4 words. While he included some explanation, he used mostly simple sentences, using the word 'then' 6 times—resulting in a much duller and repetitive-sounding story.

Grade 3 Conclusions: Based on this data, the researcher concluded that the Thai writing abilities of the grade 3 PMT-MLE students were far superior to those of the comparison students. Although the comparison school students had made some progress, their Thai writing skills were still very basic. She states:

The Patani Malay data provide evidence that **initial education success in Patani Malay mediates enhanced mastery of Thai in the earlier grades.** The PM data also provide evidence of heightened educational efficiencies with respect to the amount of time required to learn a fixed set of skills.⁷⁵

In other words, the best way for Patani Malay students to gain strong Thai literacy skills is to give them a strong foundation in reading and writing their mother tongue!

PHONICS IN A SECOND LANGUAGE?

Phonics-based approaches can produce excellent results if the student already speaks the language well, and understands how sounds match letters. However, phonics is often not a productive method for students who do not speak the target language fluently. Spelling will not "make sense" to them because the accented sounds coming out of their mouths do not match the written letters. Thus the sound-letter link is not firmly established.

75 Burarungrot, 2017

2. "How does the overall academic performance of PMT-MLE students in basic subject areas compare to students in the comparison schools?"

Background: At the beginning of PMT-MLE, the programme contracted Dr. Suppaluk Sintana and her colleagues at the Yala Rajabhat University Southern Border Research and Development Institute to conduct UNICEF-funded annual external assessments. YRU was a natural choice: located in the Deep South, YRU supplies more teachers to the regional than any other institution. YRU staff are familiar with the problems faced by Patani Malay primary school students, and some speak Patani Malay as their mother tongue. This would prove crucial, as the early primary assessments in the experimental schools were conducted in the Patani Malay language.

Development of Instrument: Separate instruments were developed for each grade level. First, Dr. Suppaluk and her team met with YRU professors specializing in primary education to create grade-appropriate tests for each of the subject areas, based on MOE indicators. These tests were then reviewed by experienced primary school teachers. The most common complaint from the teachers was that the tests reflected MOE expectations that were rarely achieved in actual classrooms. For example, a teacher in the Deep South might only be able to cover 75 per cent of the MOE's curriculum in a given year. Thus the tests were revised to include only the concepts which the students were likely to have been exposed to in the classroom. For grades 1-3, the tests were prepared in Thai and Patani Malay, then checked by a Patani Malay language expert with close ties to the programme, to insure consistent usage of Patani Malay vocabulary. For grades 1-2, a "dummy" test was developed and administered two months prior to the real evaluation, so that the children would be familiar with the testing procedure and the YRU researchers could address potential problems.

The assessments were administered in late February, close to the end of the Thai academic year. The YRU research team was present on-site for all assessments. To reduce possible interference from regional dialects, YRU students from the target areas were trained to administer the assessments—giving instructions to the children, etc. The results were tallied quickly, so the research team could return to the programme schools to investigate problems revealed by the assessment and advise the programme accordingly. Assessment results were shared with all stakeholders.

Limitations: YRU's research was carried out only in the original PMT-MLE and comparison schools (8 schools total). Each classroom had approximately 20 children, meaning that there were fewer than 100 children from each school type per year.

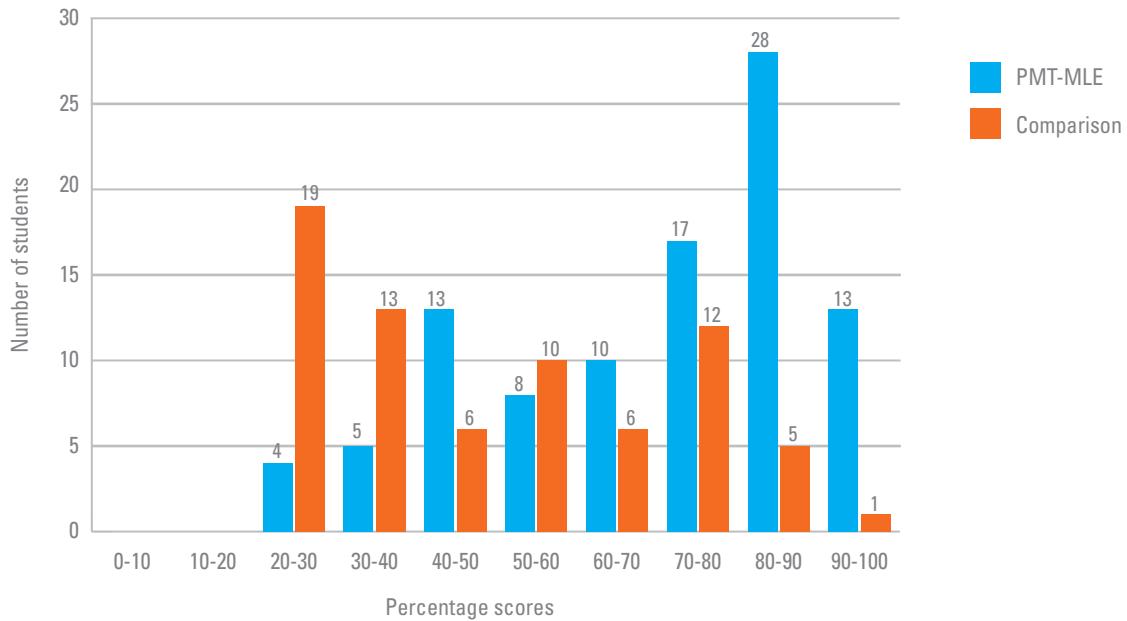
Results: In this section, we will examine grade 1 results for the first cohort in detail, then present summary results for both cohorts for grades 1-6

Grade 1 Results: YRU's grade 1 assessment produced a large number of tables, charts, and graphs, analyzing many factors. However, one chart in particular stands out. Figure 35 combines two histograms, showing the average scores from all 5 subject areas: reading, Thai, math, social studies,⁷⁶ and science. This chart has been reproduced in numerous academic papers, conference presentations and advocacy materials, as it clearly demonstrates programme effectiveness.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ Social studies was not included in later assessments, due to variation in the amount of material covered by different teachers and the limited time available for on-site testing.

⁷⁷ All graphs and data in this section were provide by Yala Rajabhat University and are used with permission.

Figure 35: Performance of PMT-MLE and comparison students on grade 1 comprehensive evaluation (adapted from Walter, 2011)



Most comparison students scored in the 20-40 per cent range, while most MLE students scored 80 per cent or higher. A few comparison students achieved high scores; in any population group some students of natural intelligence do well regardless of the school situation. And, indeed, over the course of the next 5 years of testing there were always some comparison students who did well—but they were the minority. Conversely, some PMT-MLE students consistently performed poorly—although conversations with teachers revealed that those were generally boys who may have had learning disabilities. **The key point is that PMT-MLE helped the majority of students move from low-mid level achievement to mid-high achievement.** The student population as a whole benefitted.⁷⁸

"This programme has solved the problem of language incompetency. In addition to being proud of their mother tongue, the children have learned to live with people who speak other languages."

*Tuanyoh Nisani, Teacher,
Ban Pracan School*

⁷⁸ This is corroborated by interviews with school directors and teachers who noted that almost all PMT-MLE students learn to read and write well, whereas in non-MLE classrooms very few young students master Thai literacy.

The benefits of MLE become even clearer when we look at the percentage of students who "passed" the evaluation—meaning that they scored 50 per cent or higher on a given test. This is shown in table 13, which shows that participation in the PMT-MLE programme increased the students' likelihood of passing every subject test.

Table 13: Pass rates and increase in pass rates due to the PMT-MLE intervention (adapted from Walter, 2011).

	PMT-MLE pass rate	Comparison pass rate	Increased likelihood of passing
Reading (all students)	72.4 %	41.7 %	73.6%
Girls	72.5 %	51.4 %	41.1%
Boys	72.3 %	32.4 %	123.3%
Math (all students)	50.0 %	25.0 %	100.0%
Girls	51.0 %	20.0 %	154.9%
Boys	48.9 %	29.7 %	64.8%
Science (all students)	95.9 %	80.6 %	19.2%
Girls	96.1 %	77.1 %	24.6%
Boys	95.7 %	83.8 %	14.3%
Social Science (all students)	88.8 %	52.8 %	68.1%
Girls	90.2 %	45.7 %	97.4%
Boys	87.2 %	59.5 %	46.6%
Thai (all students)	65.3 %	34.7 %	88.2%
Girls	72.5 %	40.0 %	81.4%
Boys	57.4 %	29.7 %	93.4%
Overall (all students)	77.6 %	47.2 %	64.3%
Girls	80.4 %	51.4 %	56.4%
Boys	74.5 %	43.2 %	72.4%

For boys, the PMT-MLE intervention had the greatest impact on reading skills, increasing their likelihood of passing the reading test by 123 per cent.⁷⁹ For girls, the greatest impact was in mathematics, where participation in the PMT-MLE programme increased their likelihood of passing the examination by 155 per cent.

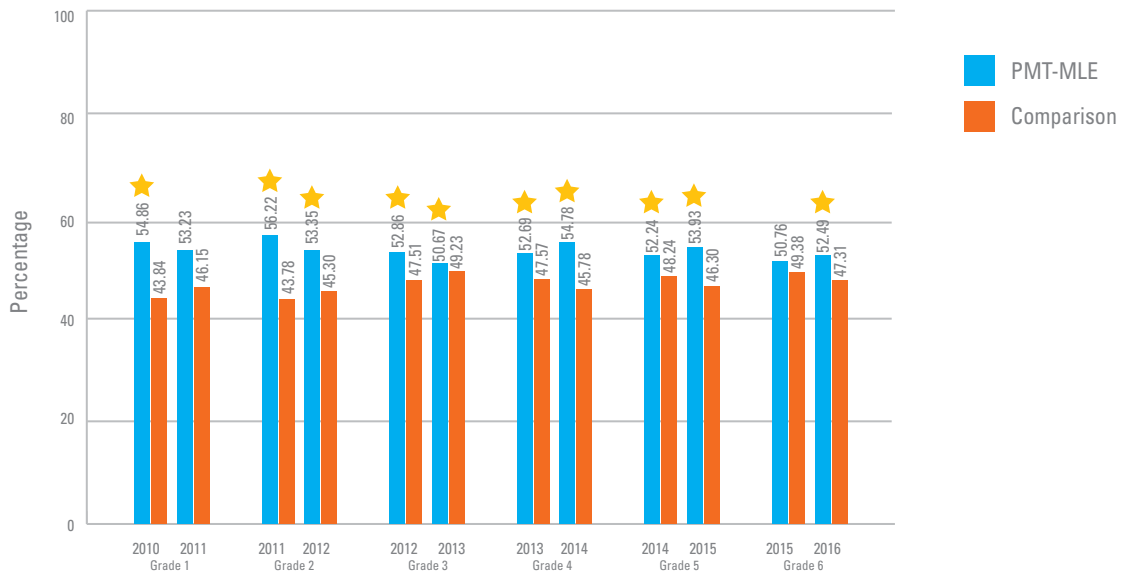
In summary, **"The PMT-MLE intervention always increased and never decreased the likelihood of achieving a passing score for all subjects."⁸⁰**

⁷⁹ In a 2013 talk at the Foreign Correspondents' Club of Thailand, Major General Nakrop Bunbuathong, then Deputy Commander of ISOC's Operations Coordination Centre 5, commented that illiterate boys were more likely to join the insurgency, since their occupational choices were limited by their low education levels.

⁸⁰ Walter, 2011

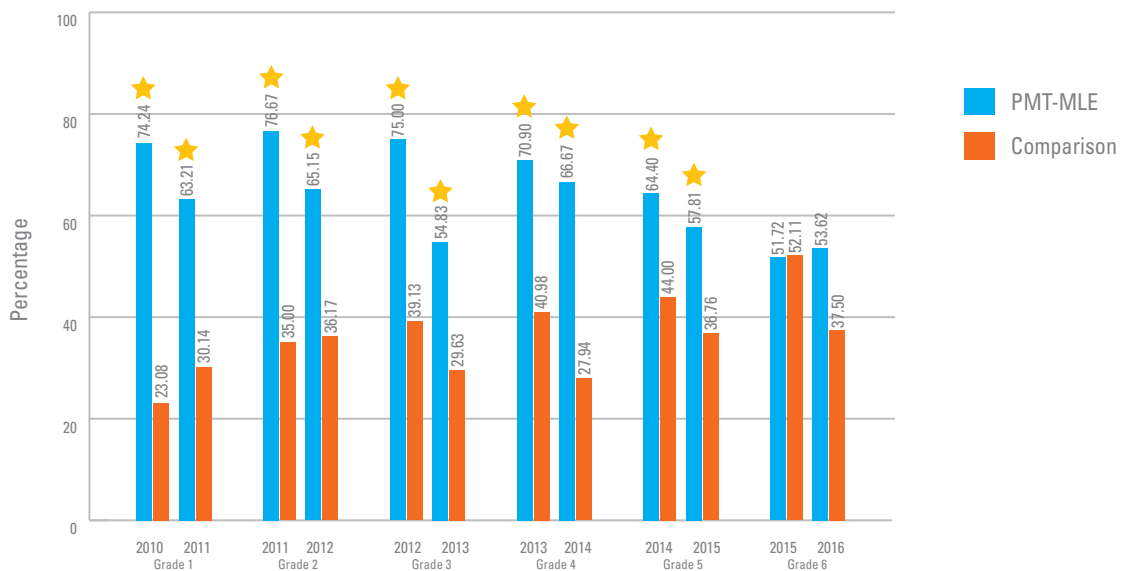
Grade 1-6 Summary Results: As mentioned above, the YRU evaluations consistently showed the PMT-MLE students performing at higher levels than the comparison students from grades 1-6 for both the first and second cohorts. This is shown in figure 36:⁸¹

Figure 36: Average scores, 3 subjects plus reading (grades 1-6, cohorts 1 & 2)



The results become even more impressive when we look at the percentage of students who "passed" the evaluation—meaning that they scored 50 per cent or higher on all four tests. This is shown in figure 37:

Figure 37: Passing rate, 3 subjects plus reading (grades 1-6, cohorts 1 & 2)



The gap between MLE and comparison students was greatest in the early grades of primary school, indicating that the use of the mother tongue has the greatest impact on younger students. The gap becomes less dramatic in grade 5, and is almost eliminated in grade 6. The reasons for this will be described later.

⁸¹ Whereas figure 35 and table 13 include all 4 pilot and comparison schools, figures 36 forward only include the 3 pilot and comparison schools in the Deep South proper. The pilot and comparison school dropped from the statistics were located in an area of Satun Province where language shift was occurring; the people were ethnically Malay, but were speaking more central Thai than Patani Malay in the home.

Individual Subject Results: Science

As shown in figure 38, both cohorts of PMT-MLE students outperformed the comparison school students in science at statistically significant levels for all grade levels. PMT-MLE students were also much more likely to pass the science test (meaning they scored 50 per cent or higher), as shown in figure 39.

Figure 38: Average scores, science (grades 1-6, cohorts 1 & 2)

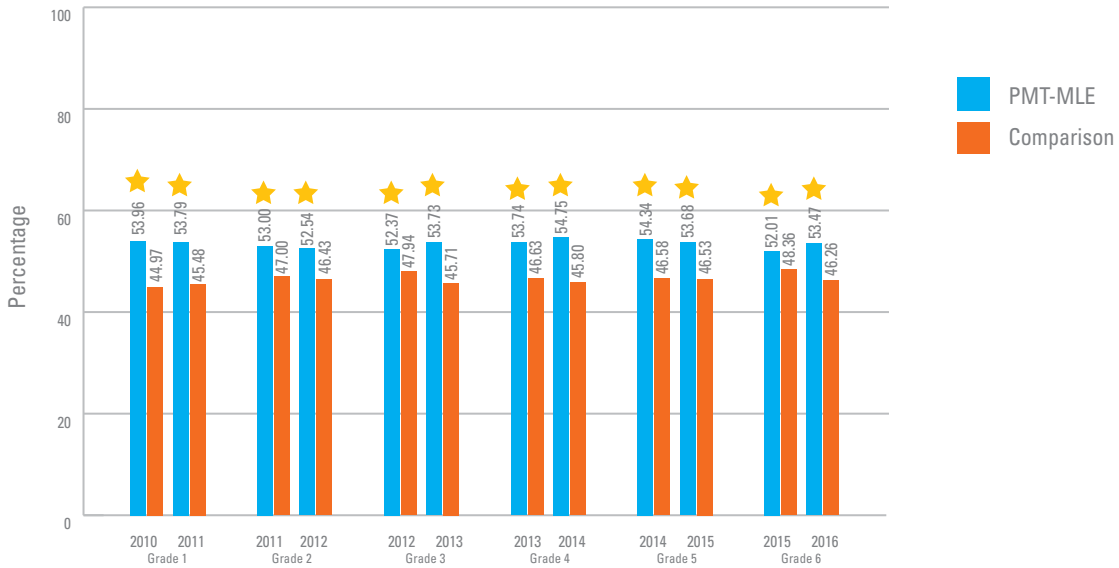
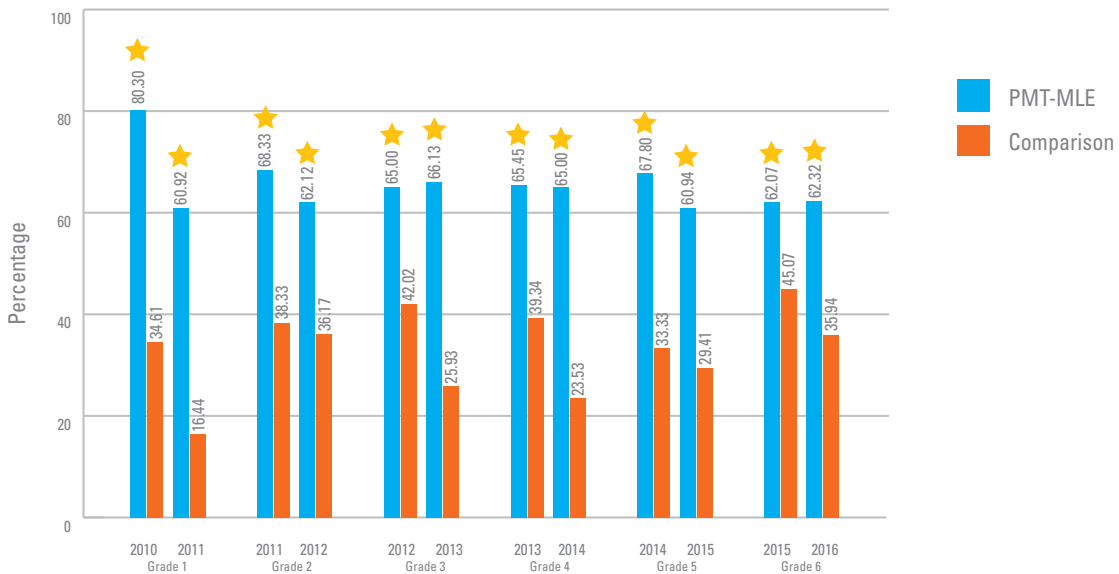


Figure 39: Passing rate, science (grades 1-6, cohorts 1 & 2)



Individual Subject Results: Mathematics

As shown in figure 40, the difference in average scores between PMT-MLE students and comparison students is not as dramatic for mathematics. The second cohort of PMT-MLE students did better than the first, posting statistically significant higher scores in grades 2-5.

Figure 40: Average scores, mathematics (grades 1-6, cohorts 1 & 2)

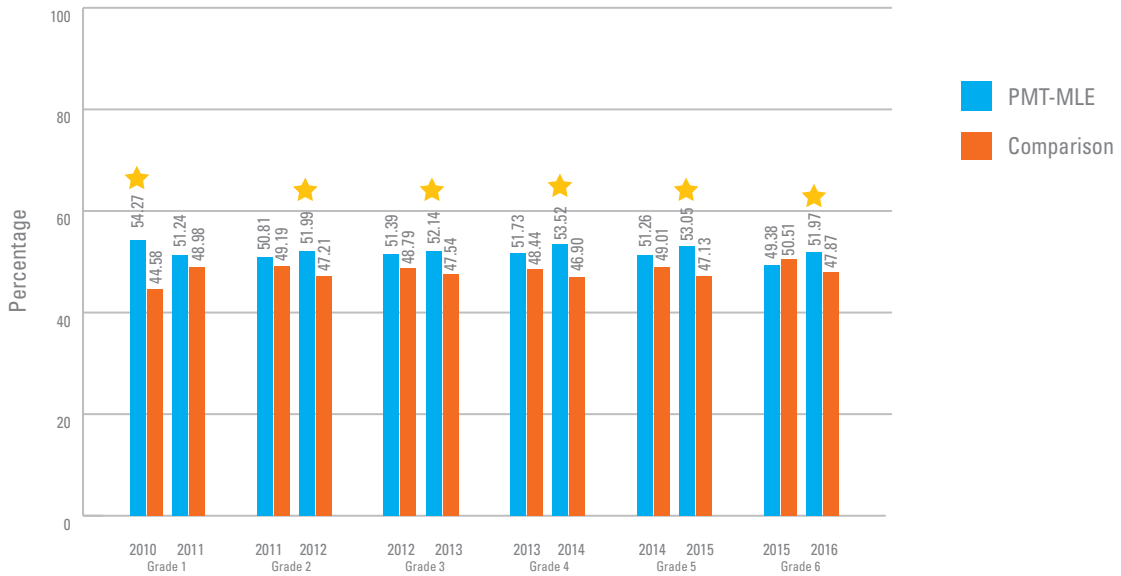


Figure 41: Passing rate, mathematics (grades 1-6, cohorts 1 & 2)

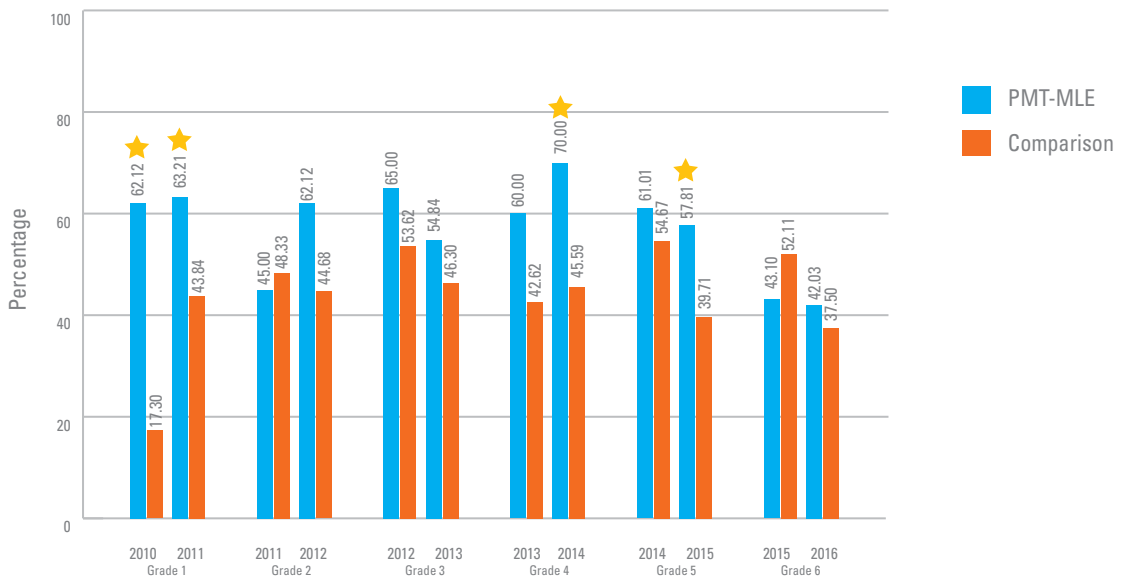


Figure 41 shows few statistically significant differences in the number of students scoring 50 per cent or higher. A post-assessment site visit revealed that some of the math teachers for the first PMT-MLE cohort had not been trained in MLE. In addition, there was a problem with choosing the right mother tongue vocabulary to explain technical terms. For these reasons, some teachers used the Thai language in the math lessons instead of the mother tongue. PMT-MLE programme staff addressed the problem, gaining consensus on Patani Malay mathematical terms. The second cohort of students performed at higher, statistically significant levels in grades 1, 4 and 5.

Individual Subject Results: Thai language

As shown in figure 42, both first and second cohorts outperformed the comparison students in the average score for all grades on the Thai language test. The difference was statistically significant for most grades.

Figure 42: Average scores, Thai language (grades 1-6, cohorts 1 & 2)

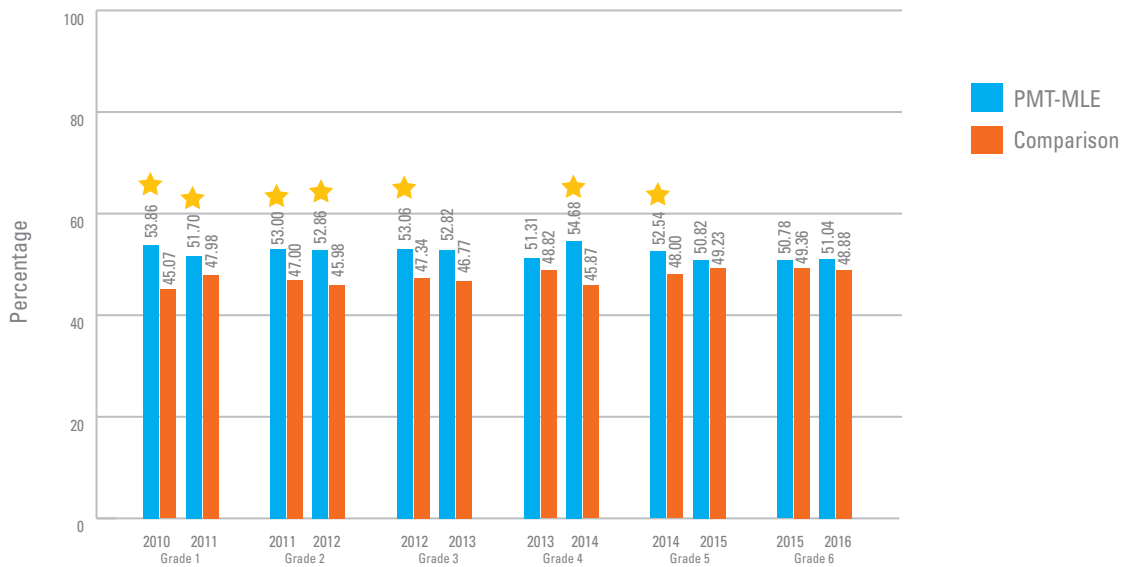
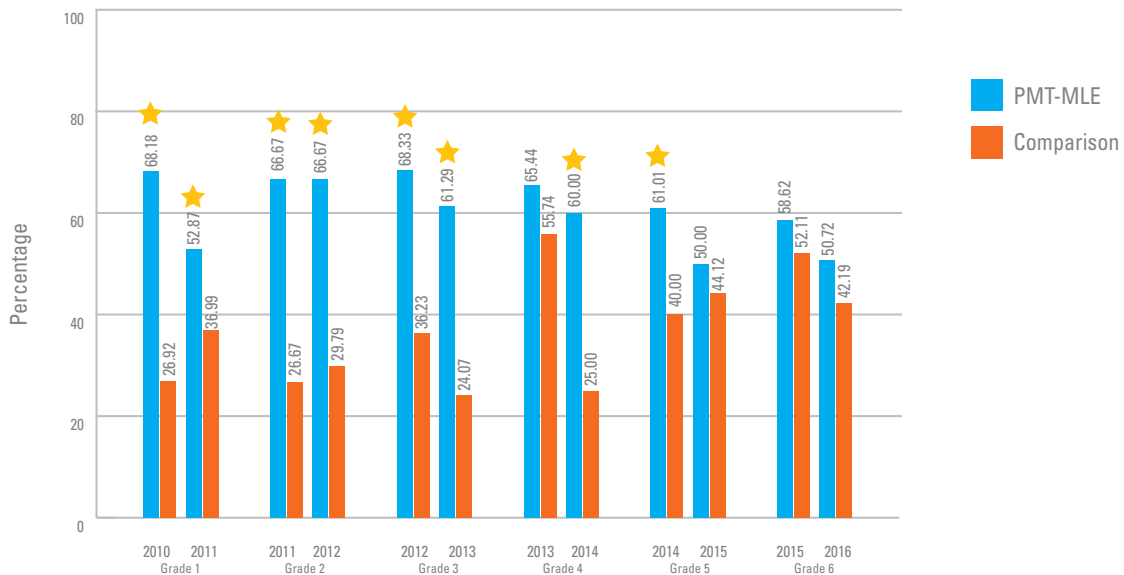


Figure 43: Passing rate, Thai language (grades 1-6, cohorts 1 & 2)



The same pattern can be observed in figure 43. The first cohort of experimental students had significantly higher results for grades 1-3 and 5. The second cohort had higher scores for grades 1-4. A post-assessment site visit revealed that for cohort 1, grade 4, there was a disconnect between the test and what the students actually studied; the test contained questions about literature and grammar that the PMT-MLE teachers had not had time to cover in class. In addition, one of the experimental schools had hired a new, non-MLE trained teacher for the cohort 1, grade 4 students. The PMT-MLE cohort 2 students benefitted from an improved grade 4 reading test, and the teacher in question received additional training.

Individual Subject Results: Reading

In figure 44, the same general pattern is observed, with PMT-MLE students outperforming the comparison students in reading skills at statistically significant levels for all grades except cohort 2, grade 3 and cohort 1, grade 6.⁸²

Figure 44: Average scores, reading (grades 1-6, cohorts 1 & 2)

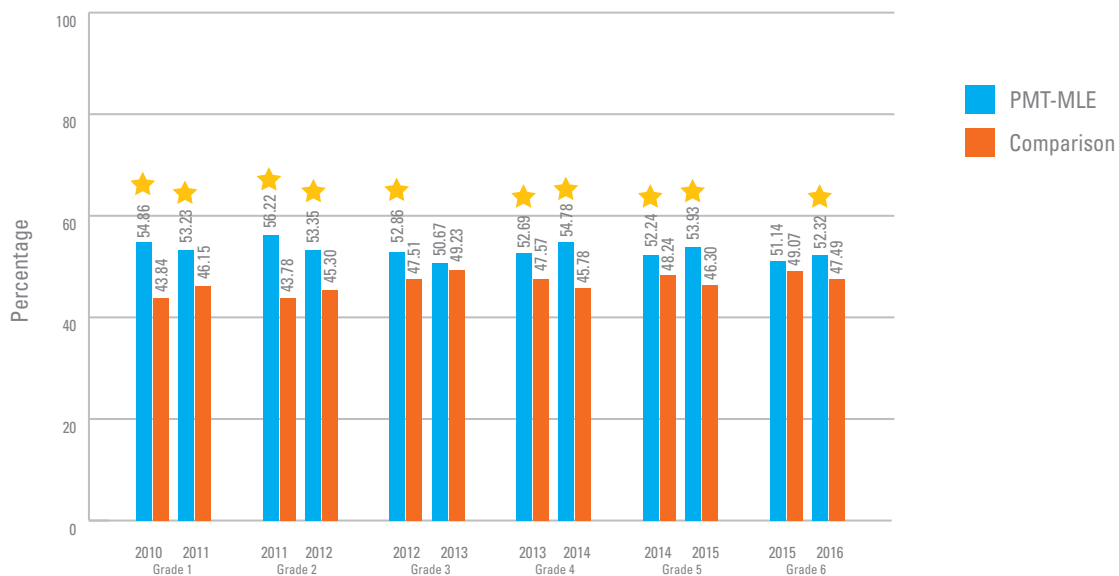
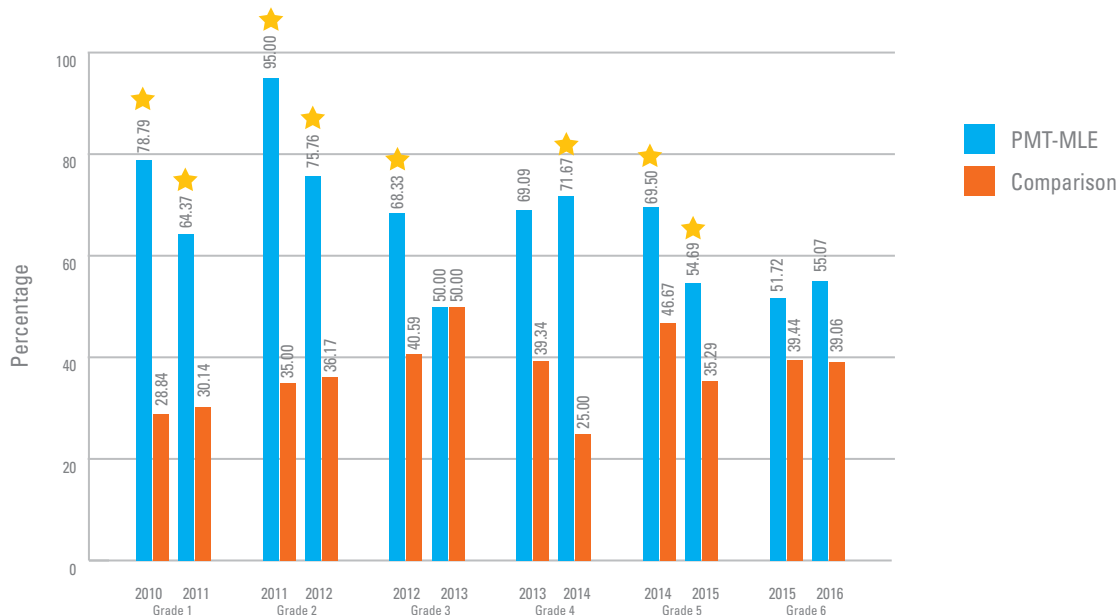


Figure 45: Passing rate, reading (grades 1-6, cohorts 1 & 2)



The passing rate in figure 45 shows the cohort 2, grade 3 PMT-MLE students in a virtual tie with the comparison students. The problem again appears to be with the test, which contained reading comprehension and analysis questions that the students were not familiar with. In addition, one of the PMT-MLE schools had hired a new, inexperienced, non-MLE trained teacher for cohort 2 grade 3, resulting in lower scores that dragged down the experimental school averages.

⁸² How were the "Reading" and "Thai Language" tests different? In grades 1-3, the PMT-MLE students' reading tests were in the Patani Malay language. Thus it was necessary to have an additional test for Thai ability. For grades 4-6, the reading test was only in Thai for both PMT-MLE and comparison students, with no Patani Malay reading assessment. The reading test for the upper primary grades focused on reading comprehension. The Thai language test, by contrast, focused on the meaning of underlined words and phrases in sentences, short passages, or poems.

Conclusions: Consistent annual evaluations carried out by the YRU research team indicate that the PMT-MLE intervention was very successful at improving student performance at statistically significant levels.

However, the gap in student performance seemed more narrow in grade 5, and was almost eliminated in grade 6. Why? The YRU researchers suggest two reasons.

First, the mother tongue component of PMT-MLE was strongest in kindergarten and grades 1-3; by grade 4, teachers were using less of the mother tongue, as most of the materials were from the standard MOE curriculum. In addition, the MOE pressured the programme to transition to Thai more quickly than originally planned (despite international research showing that "early withdrawal" from the mother tongue decreases learning effectiveness). Thus, from grade 4 onward, use of the Patani Malay language was limited to a single course, taught for only 1 hour per week: "Patani Malay Culture." In addition, the MOE compelled schools to conduct additional "special activities," which often replaced the Patani Malay Culture class hour. The decrease in the amount of time spent in the mother tongue may have reduced the efficiency of learning.

Second, the fact that grade 6 results are virtually identical for both groups reflects larger problems in the Thai education system. There is tremendous pressure on teachers and school administrators to have their students perform well on the Grade 6 National "O-NET" standardized exam. Many teachers, therefore, replace normal lessons with O-NET tutoring. This problem is not limited to the South; it is a nationwide issue. Sometimes, smaller schools bring their grade 6 students together for tutoring sessions. This was the case for 2 of the PMT-MLE pilot schools, who combined tutoring sessions with the nearby comparison schools 2 days per week. Therefore, the PMT-MLE and comparison students were receiving identical instruction for much of sixth grade! In addition, by the time that the YRU team arrived late in the school year to conduct the assessment, the grade 6 students were in "test fatigue" from O-NET practice exams, the real O-NET, a local ESAO standardized test, and the I-Net (testing knowledge of Islam); the students responded quite negatively when told it was time for yet another test, and many turned in their test papers long before the time limit.

3. "What are the attitudes of the community, especially teachers and parents, toward PMT-MLE?"

Background: As a project partner, the Thailand Research Fund was deeply interested in measuring the success of the PMT-MLE project. While the two previously mentioned assessments involved students testing, TRF focused on interviews with parents and teachers, as well as forums with project staff, local academics, and educational experts. The TRF team was headed by Dr. Virasakdi Chongsuivatwong, MD, a medical school professor with over 30 years experience in the South. The research was conducted in 2010, when the first cohort was in grade 1.

Instrument: All of TRF's interviews were videotaped. A TRF team member asked several basic questions, all in Thai, related to the interviewee's view of PMT-MLE, whether that view had changed, and what grade the interviewee would give to the project. Data on race, religion, gender and age was collected for all interviewees, as well as the percentage grade they assigned to the project.

Test Subjects: Over 100 parents and teachers from PMT-MLE and comparison schools participated in focus group and individual interviews.

Results: The evaluation found teachers and parents to be very pleased with the programme. Many told how their initial skepticism was quickly converted into enthusiastic support, and how they wished the programme had come to the South sooner. Two key benefits were mentioned by almost every teacher or parent interviewed:

- Children exhibit greater **self-confidence** in expressing themselves
- Children have acquired **stronger literacy skills more quickly** than in the past

Additional benefits mentioned included:

- **Peer learning**, as children read and comment on one another's creative stories
- **Intergenerational learning**, as children enjoy discussing their schoolwork with their parents and grandparents (some of whom do not speak Thai). Children ask their caregivers about Patani Malay and Thai vocabulary words, as well as elements of the Patani Malay traditional lifestyle they have heard about in class. This validates the life experiences of older generations.

Most parents gave the programme a "grade" of 90 per cent or higher, while teacher "grades" of the programme averaged 80 per cent. Several teachers commented that PMT-MLE employed new interactive teaching methods which, while definitely benefitting the students, were tiring for teachers!

Conclusion: The TRF evaluation found high community support for PMT-MLE. This was especially important in the early years of the programme, when some were not fully convinced of the validity of the MLE approach. TRF also found that the people who had been publicly critical of the programme had no personal connection with it.

COMMENTS FROM TEACHERS, PARENTS

"My first son is in grade 5. There are so many Thai words he cannot read. My second son is in grade 1 in the PMT-MLE programme and can read fluently. I recently gave them a book—and the younger one was teaching the older one how to read it!"

Mrs. Somawan Waehajee, mother

"The children get to school before the door is open. They like to ask questions and try to read things. They spell out words and try to pronounce them. It's very different from the past. I'd give it a grade of 100 per cent."

Mother (not identified)

"My daughter can read and write. She is a persistent reader, and can write all by herself."

Wisu Ya-ngo, father

"The children are learning much faster."

Wemina Wala, K 1 teacher

"We parents want MLE to continue, even if we have to pay for it!"

Father (not identified)

"Even if my school was to leave the MLE programme, I will continue teaching this way."

Teacher (not identified)

4. "What are the attitudes of all stakeholders now, and what progress has been made in institutionalizing MLE in the teacher production process?"

Background: In 2013, RILCA and Yala Rajabhat University received a grant from the Delegation of the European Union to Thailand entitled, "Institutionalizing Mother Tongue Based Multilingual Education in the Deep South." As will be discussed in a later chapter, this project was aimed at building the capacity of YRU

staff to train current and future teachers and school administrators in MTB-MLE principles. The EU contract required a project final external evaluation. Simultaneously, the Thailand Research Fund was interested in conducting a follow-up to their 2010 evaluation. Once again, Virasakdi Chongsuvisatwong, MD, was asked to form a research team to produce two separate but related reports.

Methodology: As with the 2010 project, the 2015-16 research included desk review and individual and focus group interviews with 165 stakeholders, including government officials, school directors, teachers, parents, professors, student interns, and primary school students.

Results: Both reports concluded that all stakeholders continue to be supportive of the programme. A key finding was that Yala Rajabhat University had gained a true sense of ownership of PMT-MLE, demonstrating that the desired knowledge transfer and capacity building had indeed occurred. There was great enthusiasm for PMT-MLE among students of Yala Rajabhat University's Faculty of Education; indeed, in 2016 some 169 students volunteered for 30 MLE teaching internships! Although none of the past 88 student interns were able to gain permanent positions in the 15 PMT-MLE schools, many reported using PMT-MLE teaching methods in the non-MLE government or private Islamic schools where they now work. Thus, the programme is having a "ripple effect" in improving education in non-programme schools. The reports called on the Thai government to continue to support and expand PMT-MLE, once there is a clearer view of which schools could benefit from this approach.

FROM EVALUATORS TO SUPPORTERS

Dr. Suppaluk Sintana is an educational researcher; Dr. Virasakdi Chongsuvisatwong a medical doctor. Both became strong supporters of PMT-MLE through their programme evaluations.

Dr. Suppaluk says, "In 2010 the president of the university ordered me to assess a multilingual education project. I had never heard of this type of education, and had no idea what it was. I visited Mahidol University, where I learned that it was a way to solve the illiteracy problem. Also, one of my assistants heard Dr. Suwilai speaking about the project, saw the Patani Malay alphabet chart, and met some of the project staff, so she was very excited about helping. The evaluations were very hard to conduct, since much travel was involved, and we had to make sure that the tests were developed properly—especially since, for grades 1-3 they had to be in two languages. We learned a lot about teamwork and time management. And as I saw the positive results, I realized that this was really helping the children. And I committed myself to help."

Dr. Virasakdi, who headed the Thailand Research Fund and European Union assessments says, "As we began our work, and I saw the positive impact of PMT-MLE, I realized that I could not be just a neutral evaluator. I had to support the programme, and encourage the government to support it. An anthropologist on my team suggested we produce a DVD of our interviews with parents and teachers, so that people could see the programme's impact for themselves."

"As a doctor, I believe that PMT-MLE is the medicine to cure the disease of illiteracy."

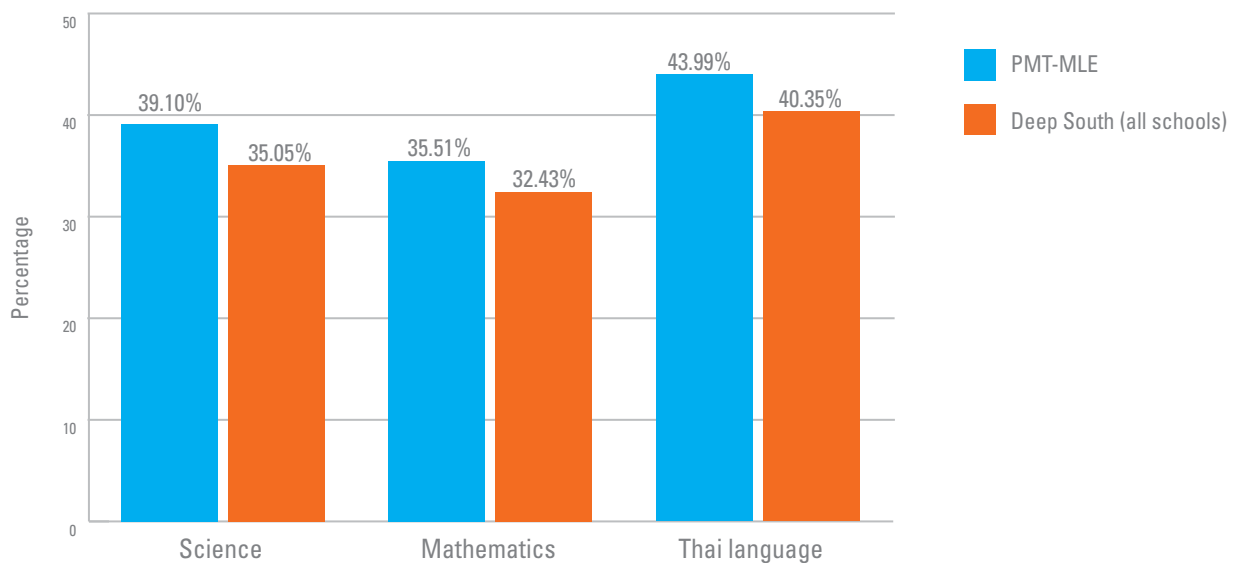
5. "How do PMT-MLE students perform in comparison to students nationwide?"

Background: Thailand's Ordinary National Education Test (O-NET) is given to children in grades 6, 9, and 12 (NIETS, 2015). O-NET results are tied to budgetary incentives, including school director and teacher raises, leading many schools to "teach to the test."

Development of Instrument: The O-NET was developed by the National Institute of Educational Testing Service (NIETS), an independent government organization charged with developing evaluation systems for students and teachers at all levels.⁸³

Results: PMT-MLE students' O-NET scores were above average for the three Southernmost provinces in science, math and Thai, as shown in figure 46.

Figure 46: O-NET scores of PMT-MLE students (cohort 1) compared to regional averages (YRU, 2016)



In interpreting the PMT-MLE scores in relation to the average for the three Southern provinces, it should be noted that roughly 20 per cent of the Southern population are mother tongue speakers of Thai. In addition, urban Patani Malay children typically speak Thai better than their rural cousins, as they are more likely to attend school with Thai children and have more opportunities to hear and speak Thai in daily life. Indeed, some Patani Malay urban youth no longer speak Patani Malay, or speak a "mixed language" dominated by Thai grammar and vocabulary. By contrast, the PMT-MLE and comparison children come from rural areas, and rarely interact with native Thai speaking children. It is thus reasonable to infer that, if the provincial averages included only rural children from Patani Malay speaking households, the differences between PMT-MLE and "normal" Thai only schools would have been even more pronounced.

MATH AND LANGUAGE

Math deals with numbers, not words. But we need words to understand mathematical concepts. International research demonstrates the importance of teaching math in the mother tongue. Nigerian students who learned math in their mother tongue outperformed peers who were taught in English (Oginni Omoniye & Owolabi Olabode, 2013). Similarly, G1 girls in PMT-MLE were 155 per cent more likely to pass their math exam than girls in the comparison schools (Walter, 2011).

83 National Institute of Educational Testing Service, 2012

Summary of the Results

Quantitative assessments found that PMT-MLE students consistently outperformed the comparison students across all subject areas. The "gap" between the two groups was most pronounced during the lower primary grades, indicating that the intervention had the greatest impact on younger children. PMT-MLE students acquired superior Thai literacy skills much more quickly than the comparison students, indicating that the use of the mother tongue does not "waste time" that could be better spent learning Thai, but rather contributes to a more efficient acquisition of language skills that then transfer to Thai. A narrowing of the gap during primary 4-6 was likely the result of "early withdrawal," as use of the mother tongue was reduced to a single "Patani Malay Culture" class period while teachers focused on preparing students for the grade 6 O-NET test.

Qualitative assessments demonstrated high support for PMT-MLE among parents, teachers, and some government officials. Almost every teacher and parent interviewed reported "increased self-confidence/self-expression" and "ability to read and write" as the major benefits of the intervention. Many parents commented that their younger children were reading and writing better than their older siblings. Students and faculty at Yala Rajabhat University have become enthusiastic supporters of the programme; in 2016, 169 YRU students applied for 30 internship positions in PMT-MLE schools. Past graduates have carried MLE teaching techniques into non-MLE government and private Islamic schools.

The programme has thus succeeded at raising the academic achievement of Patani Malay speaking children while improving school-community links and institutionalizing PMT-MLE in the teacher production process.



© RILCA

Baan Bon School Assistant Director Mohammed Yamin Waram and parents discuss mother tongue big books.

LESSONS LEARNED BY THE YRU EVALUATION TEAM

- A multi-disciplinary team is necessary to develop good tests (professors specializing in Thai language, math, and science working with primary school education experts)
- Although the tests were based on MOE indicators, they had to be screened by experienced local teachers (in non-programme schools) who knew how much material was likely to be covered in a school year (usually less than the MOE desired!)
- It is important to ensure that the students are familiar with the type of questions asked; this was a problem for the cohort 2, grade 4 reading test.
- Field visits can be difficult and time consuming (due to weather and civil unrest); clear communication, teamwork, and flexibility are crucial.
- The tests were developed in Thai, then translated into Patani Malay for the programme children in grades 1-3. The translators had to be very careful to use the same Patani Malay technical terms used by the PMT-MLE teachers, as these terms had not yet been standardized.
- It is important that the test administrator speak with the same accent as the students, so that the communication is clear. Thus, YRU students who grew up near the programme schools were trained to administer the tests.
- "Test fatigue" can be a problem. The cohort 1, grade 6 students had taken many standardized tests toward the end of the school year, and were unhappy at having to take another one. Some completed the tests very quickly—and did not seem to read the questions carefully.

TESTING THE TEST

Evaluations should not be about grades; they should be part of the quality assurance process, to see what the students are learning and determine how to improve the programme. However, evaluation instruments are often developed by outside consultants who are not familiar with the daily classroom routine, including the technical vocabulary of the students and teachers and the ways in which the teachers ask questions. For this reason, MLE evaluation tools should be developed with input from teachers, and tested on students similar to those in the target group, to make sure that 1) the test content reflects what the students were actually taught in the classroom 2) the vocabulary of the test matches that used by the teachers and 3) the students understand the questions.



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POLICY MATTERS: FROM SPECIAL PERMISSION TO NATIONAL POLICIES

"Are we willing to let the truths from research guide the drafting of a language plan for Thailand?" Mohammad Abdul Kadir, Yala Provincial Non-formal Education Centre⁸⁴

Chapter Highlights

- **Why special permission and/or supportive national policies are needed for MLE initiatives**
- **What type of policies are needed for successful MLE programs**
- **How Thai education and security plans for the South created space for PMT-MLE to begin**
- **How PMT-MLE contributed to and benefitted from Thailand's draft National Language Policy**

Why think about policies?

Just as a seed contains all the information needed to grow a huge tree, so MLE pilot projects should consider all the factors needed for later expansion.⁸⁵ While many MLE practitioners are comfortable working with communities, it is important that they consider how national policies can impact current and future MLE projects. To be sustainable and successful, MLE programmes need special permissions and specific policies.

What policies are needed?

Education policy makers are often tasked with creating new policies to match the goals of an ever-changing group of high ranking officials and politicians. Often, these policies are good. Sometimes, however, a policy that is helpful to some students could be damaging to others. For example, a policy targeting urban students could have a negative impact on their rural peers.

⁸⁴ Kadir, 1989

⁸⁵ Lo Bianco, 2016

Ethnic minority language policies can be strengthened by connecting them to a larger national policy framework.

English language policies are an example. Ministries of education in Asia and elsewhere are compelling children to study more hours of English beginning as young as age 4—despite international research showing that delaying school-based foreign language instruction to age 11 may actually be more effective.⁸⁶ Such policies can be detrimental for ethnic minority students who are not yet fluent in their national language, since more English means less time to study other subjects—including the national language. It might thus be necessary for MLE schools to request special permission to delay the introduction of English, to focus on the mother tongue and national language first.

Testing is another example. Many countries rely on nationwide standardized tests to evaluate progress; children who do poorly may be forced to repeat a grade, and their teachers may be penalized. MLE schools should request that testing be in the students' mother tongue, so that they can show their true knowledge. Otherwise, very intelligent students could have low scores merely because they could not understand the language of the test, leading officials to conclude that MLE was not effective. In a worst case scenario, perfectly normal students could be forced to repeat a grade, needlessly damaging their self-confidence.

National language standards may also be problematic. Some countries require all students to know a certain number of vocabulary words in the national language, or to have read specific books, each school term. Once again, MLE schools may need to request special permission to meet the national language standards on a different timeline that is more realistic for ethnic minority students, or to read mother tongue translations of required books.

Centralized teacher hiring and placement policies can also have a huge impact on MLE projects. Some countries deliberately assign ethnic minority teachers to schools far from their home communities, thinking (erroneously) that the students will learn the national language better if the teacher cannot speak their mother tongue. This often results in misery for both the confused students and the homesick teachers! Thus MLE schools may need special permission to hire local teachers or at least teacher assistants able to speak the needed languages.

Creating Space for "Bilingual Education" in Thailand

On his first day in office in August of 2005, Minister of Education Chaturon Chaisang met with Southern Muslim leaders and announced that improving education for all of Thailand's ethnic children would be one of the five key goals of his administration.⁸⁷ Soon thereafter, he visited Thailand's first pilot MLE project, conducted under the Office of the Non-Formal Education Commission (ONFEC) in Northern Pwo Karen villages in the Om Koi District of Chiang Mai. The minister declared the project a "miracle" that should be expanded to hundreds of ethnic minority hill villages.⁸⁸ As a result, several delegations of Ministry officials, including some from the Deep South, visited Om Koi. Thereafter, brief mention of "bilingual education" as a suitable model was included in the Ministry's series of three-year plans for the "Special Southern Border Region."⁸⁹

Similarly, the National Security Council's five-year plans for the South issued in 2006 and 2011 accepted the use of Patani Malay as a peace building strategy, since respect for the Patani Malay language signaled respect for the ethnic identity of the people. As mentioned earlier, the National Security Council became a key partner for PMT-MLE, sending a representative to the annual Steering Committee meetings and consulting frequently with the programme implementation team.

86 Lambelet & Berthele, 2015

87 The Nation, 2005

88 Person & Siltragool, 2007

89 Office of the Education Council, 2005, 2009, 2013

Although neither the MOE nor the NSC plans explained how bilingual education should be implemented or which agency would be responsible for oversight, these plans did create official space to initiate the PMT-MLE programme. These plans also showed that, while some government officials were adamantly opposed to allowing the Patani Malay language to be used in government schools, others took a more pragmatic view—seeing inclusion of the language in education as a crucial step towards building social cohesion and improving learning outcomes.

Does Thailand need a language policy?

The question of whether Thailand needed a national language policy was the subject of a conversation between Thai and international scholars during the First World Congress on the Power of Language, held 22-25 May 2006 in Bangkok.⁹⁰ Dr. Udom Warotamasikkhadit, an internationally known linguist and a fellow of the Royal Institute of Thailand, felt that if a newly established country such as Timor-Leste had a national language policy, Thailand should too. Dr. Udom promoted this idea, securing the approval of Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra to appoint a National Language Policy (NLP) drafting committee, to be chaired by Dr. Udom. Inspired by the Australian National Policy on Language (1987), six subcommittees were formed to address specific language related issues, as follows:

1. Thai for Thai Students and Thai Nationals
2. Regional Languages (including ethnic minority languages)
3. Languages of Commerce, Neighboring Languages, and Working Languages
4. Teaching Thai to Migrants Seeking Employment in Thailand
5. Language Needs of the Visually and Hearing Impaired
6. Translation, Interpretation, and Localization Standards⁹¹

Ethnic language policies have been controversial in many countries. Majority ethnic groups can resent the "special" treatment given to a minority, while minorities sometimes do not like being "singled out" in a way that might lead to more discrimination. It was thus wise of the Royal Institute to attach the regional/ethnic policies to a larger policy framework, designed to help all the citizens of Thailand

To develop the policy, the Royal Institute hosted 17 conferences and public forums throughout the country.⁹² Guest speakers included businesspeople, translators, diplomats, teachers, politicians, security officials, information technology specialists, United Nations officials, and ethnic minority people. Many of these forums were broadcast nationally via radio or live video internet feed. These events gave the committee members a clearer view of language situation in Thailand and raised public awareness of the language policy drafting process.

The NLP and the PMT-MLE programme were developed during the same time period. Because of Dr. Suwilai's involvement in both, the positive results coming out of PMT-MLE were shared with the Royal Institute, helping committee members understand how focusing first on the mother tongue was helping Patani Malay students achieve better scores in Thai, math, science and social studies.

⁹⁰ Warotamasikkhadit & Person, 2011

⁹¹ Warotamasikkhadit & Person, 2011

⁹² Kosonen & Person, 2014

"States shall, in conjunction with indigenous peoples, take effective measures, in order for indigenous individuals, particularly children, including those living outside their communities, to have access, when possible, to an education in their own culture and provided in their own language."

United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Article 14, Section 3

KEY STATEMENTS FROM THE NLP

The languages of all ethnic groups should be valued as a treasure of the human race.

Thai society is comprised of no fewer than 70 languages. These include languages of the Tai family and other language families.

In terms of human rights problems, particularly in regard to language rights and access to information, international human rights organizations affirm that various ethnic groups and disabled people have language rights and information access rights. Such people have the right to use their mother tongues in their homes, in their communities, and in public places. This includes the use of their mother tongue in the education system for their young people.

...in declaring 2008 as the "International Year of Languages," the United Nations emphasized that all local languages from all ethnic groups should be valued and their importance recognized.

The new national security policy invokes a concept of peaceful co-existence which accepts a multicultural society. It is therefore compatible with the policy of supporting the Thai language alongside local languages. This is because the heart of national security is love and harmony between the people of a nation, coupled with the giving of honor and respect to one another.... The acceptance of the fact that Thai society is multicultural—with a diversity of cultures, lifestyles, languages, and ethnicities, a place where every person can have pride in their own dignity, local identity, and equal honor—this is a principal that can be a point of strength for national security.

It is the policy of the government to promote bilingual or multilingual education for the youth of the ethnic groups whose mother tongue is different from the national language (Thai) — in order to strengthen the study of the Thai language and to support the cognitive development and education of children.

Draft National Language Policy of Thailand (2010)

The importance of strong mother tongue skills resounded with other NLP subcommittees. The Subcommittee on Languages of Commerce connected Thai students' low English abilities to how Thai is taught in the early years. The Subcommittee on Thai for Thai Nationals concluded that, rather than banishing non-standard Thai regional dialects from the classroom, they could be used as tools to help their speakers master Standard Thai. The Subcommittee on Language for the Hearing Impaired concluded that deaf students should be fluent in sign language—their mother tongue—before starting Thai reading and writing. Thus, all the subcommittees recognized that Thai teaching pedagogy needs to adjust to the unique needs of the students.

During the development of the NLP, the Royal Institute became connected to the Asia-Pacific Multilingual Education Working Group (MLE-WG), a coalition of UN agencies, international development organizations, and academics committed to improving education for ethnic minority children by including their mother tongues in formal schooling. The Royal Institute cooperated with the MLE-WG to bring a language policy focus to several conferences, and to translate key United Nations documents about language into Thai. The Royal Institute's language policy efforts gained greater credibility through connections developed with UN agencies in the MLE-WG.

Although most of the NLP drafters were academics, members of ethnic communities and high ranking officials from key government agencies were invited to participate. These included representatives from the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Defense, Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, Ministry of Information and Communication Technology, National Social and Economic Development Board, and the National Security Council.

The NLP has been approved by two Thai Prime Ministers: Abhisit Vejjajiva (2010) and Yingluck Shinawatra (2013).⁹³ Both commissioned the Royal Institute to develop a NLP implementation plan, coordinating work with relevant government ministries.⁹⁴ As of this writing, the implementation plan is nearing completion.

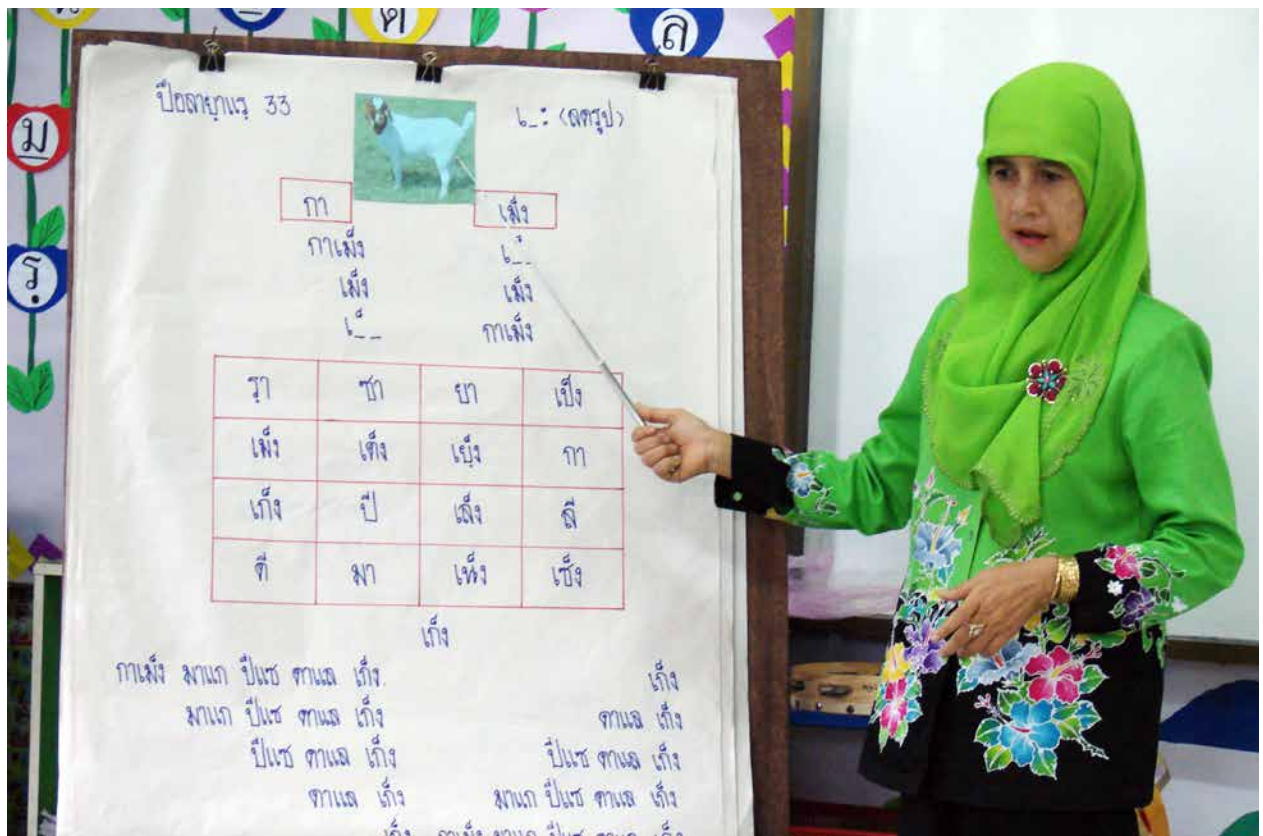
93 Both Prime Ministers also met with UNICEF Thailand while in office, to learn more about key child development issues nationwide, including PMT-MLE.

94 Kosonen & Person, 2014

CONSTITUTIONAL GUARANTEES

"A person and a community shall enjoy the right to conserve, restore, or promote wisdom, art, culture, tradition and custom of good value in the locality and the nation....The State shall promote and protect the rights of Thai people of different ethnic groups to live voluntarily and peacefully without disturbances in the society according to their culture, custom and traditional ways of life, in so far as such livelihood is not contrary to public order or good morals of people, or does not harm the security of the State or health."

*Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand (2017),
sections 43 and 70*





TEACHERS OF TOMORROW: TRAINING A NEW GENERATION

"A significant question is how to keep educational development sustainable in the area after the research phase is completed." Kessaree Ladlia, Yala Rajabhat University

Chapter Highlights

- **Why involvement with teacher training institutions is crucial to sustainability for MLE (and other innovations)**
- **How cooperation between the European Union, the Thailand Research Fund, Yala Rajabhat University (YRU), UNICEF and RILCA resulted in the first university level MLE teacher training/internship programme in Asia**
- **How YRU education graduates are having a "ripple effect" by producing teaching materials and sharing MLE teaching techniques in non-MLE schools**
- **How YRU's PMT-MLE teacher training programme received "Honorable Commendation" from the 2017 UNESCO Wenhui Award Secretariat for Innovations in the Professional Development of Teachers**

Teacher Training Institutions: The Missing Link

Recent years have seen an explosion of innovative education projects worldwide, as donor organizations, domestic NGOs, and international agencies experiment with new ways to deliver "Education for All." Many of these projects have 2-3 year timelines and, while detailed reports on project impact and lessons learned are produced and advocacy activities carried out, the findings rarely make their way into the teacher production system. Teacher training curriculums tend to be "set in stone," with many administrative barriers standing in the way of new course development. Further delaying implementation of new practices is the strong (and very human) tendency among new teachers to "teach as they were taught" as children. Thus the potential for sustained innovation is diminished.

Teacher Training in PMT-MLE

As mentioned earlier, the programme provided in-service training for teachers in the pilot schools through workshops and site visits. Although the workshops led by RILCA staff met the needs of the moment, a sustainable training system was lacking. Teacher attrition was a major problem (as it is in all of Thailand's remote border regions), and the programme was constantly called upon to train replacements. Programme staff wondered how to make teacher training more sustainable, recognizing the need to transfer MLE knowledge to a local partner.

As mentioned earlier, YRU researchers were contracted in 2010 to conduct annual assessments of students in the programme and comparison schools. News of the programme's positive results programme spread to YRU's Faculty of Education. YRU produces more teachers than any other educational institution in the South, and YRU professors had long mourned the low educational outcomes of Patani Malay children. Could MLE be the answer they were looking for?

YRU Education Dean Kessaree Ladlia and her team decided to find out.

Support from the European Union

In 2012 the Delegation of the European Union to Thailand became aware of the PMT-MLE programme, and wanted to learn more. After several meetings with Dr. Suwilai and her team, EU staff suggested RILCA and YRU apply for a grant from the "Non-State Actors in Development" programme to lay the groundwork for PMT-MLE expansion.

The timing was perfect. RILCA had long recognized the need for a sustainable source of teachers. YRU was keen to learn more about MLE, and had begun cooperating with the Thailand Research Fund to conduct in-service teacher training. The EU Delegation saw bilingual education as a component of ethnic reconciliation. Thus, in 2013, a three-year joint project was created: "Institutionalizing Mother Tongue Based Multilingual Education in Thailand's Deep South."

PMT-MLE @ YRU

YRU traces its history to the Yala Teacher Training College—the first teacher training institution in the Deep South. It became a university in 2004. YRU is a leading local option for Patani Malay students pursuing secular degrees.

Two overall objectives guided the project:

1. To transfer MLE knowledge from the programme to the teacher production process at YRU
2. To institutionalize MLE in Thailand's Southernmost provinces

From the outset, the YRU team expended tremendous energy to create the administrative structures needed to fulfill these objectives. Key results included:

Result 1: Establishment of the MTB-MLE Center

Housed in the YRU Education Faculty Library, the MTB-MLE Center serves as an archive for MLE materials and a resource center for teachers, university students, and school directors. The MTB-MLE Center organizes training and awareness raising events, and administers a website to disseminate MLE news and information.

Result 2: Development and approval of an MLE Curriculum

As a preliminary activity, YRU researchers visited PMT-MLE schools to conduct a needs assessment. Interviews with community members, teachers, school administrators, and parents were conducted to determine how YRU could best address current and future MTB-MLE related needs. YRU then established the "Committee for MLE Curriculum Development," tasked with developing draft MLE curriculum for YRU undergraduate education students, as well as in-service training modules for current teachers and school directors. These courses were subjected to a rigorous internal evaluation prior to submission to the YRU Board of Governors for final approval. Seven teacher handbooks were produced, including:

- *Introduction to Ethnic Languages and Education*
- *MLE in Pre-Primary and Basic Education*
- *The Patani Malay Language and Orthography*
- *Producing Materials for MLE Classrooms*
- *Mother Tongue Teaching Techniques that Foster Cognitive Development*
- *Methods for Teaching Thai to Ethnic Children*
- *Evaluation in the PMT-MLE Framework*

In 2016, elements of the "MLE Principles and Practices" elective course designed for fourth year students interested in MLE internships were included in a new compulsory course for all second year education majors.

Result 3: Capacity Building and Professional Development

In the first year of the project, 15 YRU staff joined RILCA staff, school directors, and teachers for a series of 6 workshops (21 days total) on MLE principles and teaching techniques. A smaller number of YRU and RILCA professors participated in a weeklong study tour of bilingual education in Europe, where they visited schools, universities, teacher support offices, and language planners in Basque Country (Spain) and Wales (UK).

Result 4: MLE Internship Programme

All YRU 5th year education students are required to complete a faculty-supervised, year-long student teaching internship. YRU created a special MLE internship programme in which 30 students per year would be trained in MLE principles and teaching techniques and assigned to one of the 15 pilot or expansion MLE schools. These students would be required to create new MLE materials, as well as to keep a journal of their experiences and conduct research on how MLE was impacting children and their communities. Because the MLE schools were generally located in remote regions, the students received a small stipend for travel and lodging. YRU faculty made site visits once per semester. At the end of each school year, the interns created displays of their experiences to show in a university exhibition. After three years, 88 YRU students had completed MLE internships.

MOTHER TONGUE SPECIALISTS?

Primary school teachers in Thailand can have specialties that are recognized by the government, including mathematics, science, English, etc. YRU has suggested that "Mother Tongue Specialist" be added to the list of specialties, to open job opportunities for MLE teachers.

QUOTES FROM YRU MLE INTERNS

"MLE opens up opportunities for children who speak Patani Malay. When I was in school, I was ok because I already understood Thai. But I wondered why my friends did not like school, and they told me it was because they couldn't understand Thai."
Sakina Waeerong

"The students learn faster because we teach using Patani Malay, which is their mother tongue. So they are able to understand and respond to us faster."
Alissa Masan

"The kids are interested in studying. They are able to create imaginative stories from pictures. They understand what we say right away and don't need us to translate for them. If we asked them things in Thai they would be confused and wonder what we were talking about."
Suhaima Sanaehadi



© RILCA

YRU MLE Interns discuss their experiences with their faculty mentor during a site visit.

The MLE interns shared their experiences with their younger classmates, causing the programme to go "viral"; in 2016, 168 YRU students applied for the 30 internship slots. Due to a lack of MLE schools, YRU decided to give most of these applicants a few days' experience in an MLE school before moving on to a "normal" school for the remainder of the year.

Despite a lack of vacancies in the MLE schools, almost all of the past interns quickly found positions in other government or private Islamic schools. Many report that they continue to use some MLE methodologies in these schools, even though these schools have not yet adapted the full PMT-MLE paradigm. Thus, former YRU interns are having a "ripple effect" in education throughout the South.



© RILCA

MLE Interns pose with big books they created



RILCA and YRU delegation to Chiang Rai Rajabhat University

Impact

The YRU MLE programme is having an important impact on education in the South. As noted in the Thailand Research Fund's 2016 external assessment:

Yala Rajabhat University has adopted ownership of the Bilingual Education Project from Mahidol University. Bilingual education has become a university strength, which will be further developed in order to enhance the university's potential and strengthen the academic performance. The institution will be a resource for the public. The government, therefore, should continue to support this project fully.⁹⁵

YRU staff have become confident advocates for PMT-MLE; Muslim staff in particular are in an ideal position to address concerns raised by local skeptics. YRU alumni serve in virtually every school and educational district office in the South; awareness raising among this network could lay the groundwork for programme scale up. Because YRU education professors know the inner workings of the education system better than the RILCA linguists, they have identified possible pathways for some aspects of the MLE approach, such as the "Thai for Ethnic Children" curriculum, to become mainstreamed in government and private Islamic schools, even in schools not yet ready to adapt the full MLE paradigm.

YRU's unique approach to MLE teacher training was featured in a plenary session presentation at the Fifth International Conference on Language and Education (2016).

In 2017, YRU received "Honorable Commendation" from the UNESCO Wenhui Award for Innovations in the Professional Development of Teachers.

PASS IT ON!

YRU faculty from the Deep South have had several meetings with professors and staff from the far north at Chiang Rai Rajabhat University to discuss cooperation in developing MLE courses for students from hilltribe groups, through a knowledge sharing project coordinated by RILCA with support from the National Research Council of Thailand.

95 Chongsuivatwong, 2016



© UNICEF Thailand/2012/Jingjai N.

REFLECTIONS ON PMT-MLE'S FIRST DECADE

PROGRAMME CHALLENGES

"Education has a vital role to play in building resilience against violent conflict. Schools in the twenty-first century need above all to teach children what is arguably the single most vital skill for a flourishing multi-cultural society – the skill of living peacefully with other people....Awareness of religious, ethnic, linguistic and racial diversity should not be banished from the classroom. On the contrary, diversity should be recognized and celebrated." *Education for All Global Monitoring Report* ⁹⁶

Chapter Highlights

How PMT-MLE addressed key challenges including:

- **The Fear of the New**
- **Teacher Training and Supervision**
- **Teacher's Job Security Fears**
- **The "Two Language School" confusion**
- **Violence**
- **The Script Issue**

The Fear of the New

Innovation makes (some) people uncomfortable. MTB-MLE is a new concept for Thailand. It contradicts the widely held language myth: "The best way for children to learn a new language is to submerge them in a classroom where their mother tongue is never used." Parents, teachers, and school administrators find it difficult to understand how using the mother tongue could possibly help the child learn Thai or other languages.

Many teachers, parents and school directors in programme schools once shared these fears. Over time, however, their fears were allayed and many became enthusiastic supporters.

96 UNESCO, 2011

MORE COMMENTS FROM PARENTS, TEACHERS

"At first I was confused why the children were writing Melayu instead of Thai, but then I saw that the first graders were able to read and write Thai automatically, so it was an advantage for the kids. They were able to compare Patani Malay and Thai, and know how words are pronounced differently."

Assistant Headman, Ban Bon Village, Pattani

"In the beginning, I was very worried about MLE. But as time passed, I saw that the children were able to write their own creative stories in Patani Malay—and that other children could read their friends' stories. The classroom looks chaotic at times because the children understand and participate. In the past, we didn't really teach—we just had the students copy things. In the past, the children couldn't write their own stories, but with MLE they can. They can also explain the details of a picture. But we teachers get tired keeping up with them!"

Tuanyaw Nisani, K2 teacher

"In the past, the students only studied in Thai. My children in the MLE programme are different from my older children. They can communicate in both Thai and Patani Malay. When they get home they like to talk to the family in both languages. I'm very satisfied."

Sianung Wehayi, mother

"My older son never learned to read or write at school—his mother had to teach him how at home. But my younger son reads and writes all by himself. He writes things and reads them to us. I think this method is better. I'd give it a 99 per cent."

Father (not identified)

"If we were talking to other parents, we would tell them about the benefits of MLE, especially that the children learn to read and write. And also that the children enjoy telling the family about the stories they've heard at school—they could not do this if everything was only in Thai."

Mother, Ban Bon School

Challenges of Teacher Training and Supervision

Strong MLE programs require teachers to master new teaching techniques and methodologies. This places a heavy burden of training and class preparation on the teachers. Some of MLE's key assumptions, like the idea that children's creative stories should not be graded for spelling and grammar, seem to be against "common sense," feeding on fears that if a child's errors are not corrected immediately he or she will continue to make those errors forever. Some new Patani Malay teachers lack confidence in their own mother tongue abilities, worrying that they would not be able to manage the children or learn to use the Thai-based script themselves. Pre-service training helps to alleviate these concerns.

Workshops alone are not sufficient to produce confident, skilled MLE teachers. Site visits and classroom observation by programme staff are vital to ensuring proper implementation of MLE teaching practices, while providing an opportunity for encouragement and problem solving. Finding the time and opportunity for site visits was a challenge; local programme staff had many responsibilities, and travel to remote areas in the South can be hampered by security concerns and weather problems. Similar challenges were faced by the YRU assessment team and the YRU teaching intern supervisors. Thus, ongoing supervision and mentoring must be a part of future expansion plans.

Job Security Concerns

Teachers in the Deep South face many challenges, living and working in an area where they are sometimes targets. Many have transferred to other parts of the country, but some remain, and are concerned about their future job security. In the past, it was assumed that mother tongue Thai speakers were the best for the job of compelling Patani Malay children to adjust to the Thai-only school environment.

The MLE paradigm reverses this, insisting on the importance of mother tongue speaking teachers, especially in the pre-primary and early primary grades. In a few schools, this meant that ethnic Thai teachers were moved to upper grades. However, this led to feelings of insecurity on the part of some ethnic Thai teachers. Some were born in the South, and feel a deep connection to the area. All had faced risks to remain in the Deep South, especially in more remote schools. Were their sacrifices no longer appreciated? Would all ethnic Thai teachers be replaced by ethnic Patani Malay teachers? Would Thai teachers be required to learn Patani Malay fluently and

use it in their classrooms? Such fears, coupled with the arrival of a new school director, caused one of the original (and strongest) pilot schools to announce that they would leave the programme at the end of the 2016-17 academic year.

Ethnic Thai teachers thus need to be reassured that they have an important role to play in the PMT-MLE paradigm, and that they may find it more professionally satisfying to have their Thai skills used strategically to teach older children. After all, it can be very frustrating for ethnic Thai teachers to work with younger Patani Malay children who do not understand Thai and are largely unresponsive in class. Would it not be more enjoyable for them to work with enthusiastic older students who already speak Thai well?

Confusion with the "Two Language Schools"

One complicating factor for PMT-MLE has been a similarly named MOE programme started shortly before PMT-MLE in 12 government schools. These are called "Two Language Schools"—"Song Pasaa" in Thai. PMT-MLE is called "Tawi Pasaa," with "Tawi" being a sophisticated word meaning "two"—or, in Thai, "Song." And the confusion does not end with the name!

The "Two Language Schools" allow kindergarten 1 and 2 teachers to use the Patani Malay language for oral interaction only; they do not teach Patani Malay literacy. The purpose of this approach is to ease the children's transition into Thai-only classrooms in grade 1. To become a "Two Language School," teachers must attend a 3 day workshop. In addition, they are expected to create 2 teaching materials each year, suitable for sharing with others.⁹⁷ Due to strong budgetary and parental support, plus ease of implementation, the "Two Language" approach expanded quickly. As of 2016, there were 153 government "Two Language Schools," compared to 15 MTB-MLE schools.

In the "Two Language Schools," K1 teachers are to split classroom time 50-50 between Thai and Patani Malay, while K2 teachers are to speak Thai 80 per cent of the time in the first term, and almost 100 per cent in the second term. While researching this report, the author observed the "Two Language" method among second semester K1 and K2 students at a school in Pattani Province. The K1 teacher alternated between languages, often saying a complete sentence in Thai then translating it into Patani Malay, while the K2 teacher only translated a few words. In both cases, Thai was spoken first. The programme director for Pattani ESAO 1 stated that, while contained in books identified as "Two Language School" lesson plans, the lesson plans themselves are not different from standard MOE lesson plans. Rather, it is up to the teacher to mix the two languages however she feels will benefit the students. In a post-class interview, one teacher stated, "The two language approach is really no different from what we did before. We always had to translate for the small kids."

Education Officials from Pattani ESAO 1 have confirmed that, while the "Two Language School" approach makes the children (and parents) feel better about coming to school and reduces stress, their academic achievement has been *lower* than in neighboring Thai-only schools.

Although "Two Language School" teachers are not permitted to teach mother tongue reading and writing, they sometimes resort to transcribing Patani Malay words into the Thai alphabet in an effort to help their students learn Thai. In 2016, the Ministry of Education produced a karaoke-style DVD of Thai songs translated into Patani Malay, using an informal and inconsistent Thai-based transcription to help the students as they sing along. This particular transcription can create confusion for the students because it does not have letters for the eight Patani Malay consonants not found in Thai. Both /k/ and /g/ are written with the Thai letter /k/, /z/ and /s/ are written with the Thai letter /s/, and many final /h/ are missing entirely. Two of the song titles use Standard Malay instead of local Patani Malay words. When critics protest that there is no way to write Patani Malay properly with Thai letters, perhaps this is what they have in mind! The melody and rhythms of these songs were originally Thai, and thus fit the Thai language well. When sung in Patani Malay, some words need to be rushed or unnaturally stretched in order to fit the melody. This contrasts sharply with the PMT-MLE programme, where over 100 original songs were composed, checked for naturalness, and incorporated into the lesson plans.

⁹⁷ Prachan, 2016



"Two Language School" Karaoke DVD Cover and Table of Contents. Three song titles (2, 4, 6) are missing letters, while two other song titles (7, 10) use Standard Malay words instead of the Patani Malay words. Thus 5 of 11 song titles do not match the students' everyday language. The karaoke-style transcriptions in the videos contain even more errors. This illustrates the need for the standardized Thai-based Patani Malay script developed by the programme.

Privately, some "Two Language" teachers admit to frustration with the approach. Some have borrowed PMT-MLE materials to use with their students! One teacher, who had received PMT-MLE training before moving to a different school, admitted that she uses PMT-MLE methodology in her "Two Language" classroom.

This is not to say that everything about the "Two Language Schools" is negative; the fact that the students' mother tongue is permitted in school is a good start, and the teachers and local staff responsible for these schools have created some useful mother tongue games and songs. Perhaps PMT-MLE and the "Two Language Schools" could share experiences and learn from one another, with additional training and materials development programmes.

Violence

Southern Thailand is a conflict zone where teachers and schools have been singled out as targets. That fact alone presents a challenge. However, none of the pilot or extension schools or teachers have been attacked during the programme (although some of the schools were attacked prior to PMT-MLE). But the violence has impacted the programme in other ways.

Training is an example. During its first eight years, the programme organized 106 training workshops. Due to safety concerns, most of these workshops had to be held at locations outside the Deep South. This resulted in higher costs for transportation, lodging, and food, as well as more time away from home and work for all involved. At the conclusion of a workshop, participants would need to be home before nightfall, meaning that the final day of a workshop could usually only be a half day.⁹⁸

⁹⁸ Since Yala Rajabhat University is now running training workshops on their campus in the heart of the Deep South, the costs are much lower, with less travel involved.

PMT-MLE teachers learned many new teaching techniques in their training workshops. Nonetheless, as is the case with many educational innovations, programme organizers relied on site visits to ensure that the teachers were using the techniques properly, as well as to provide encouragement and receive feedback. On many occasions, site visits had to be postponed or cancelled due to security concerns, such as bombs or ambushes on the roads leading to the schools. However, programme staff say that, in the end, more site visits were postponed due to heavy rainfall and flooding than violence.

Another impact on the programme teachers (and teachers throughout the South) was the need to rely on military escorts to and from school. This was most pronounced in the early years of the programme, when insurgent attacks on educational personnel were more frequent, but continues to be an issue for some teachers today. The military required precise timing, even if the timetables and routes were sometimes changed in hope of avoiding ambushes. As a result, many teachers in the South spend less time at school than teachers elsewhere in Thailand. For example, they may not be able to stay after school to give extra assistance to their students. When the soldiers say "Go!" the teachers must go.

The violence in the South magnified a nationwide problem: teacher transfer and attrition. In the early years of the unrest, thousands of ethnic Thai teachers and school directors requested transfer out of the South. Local Patani Malay teachers followed this trend, requesting transfer to schools closer to their family homes, or out of especially hazardous areas (more Muslims than Buddhists have died in the conflict). This is partly due to MOE personnel policies; new teachers often find themselves needing to serve for two years in a remote school before transferring to positions in more desirable locations. For the programme, this meant that teacher training was a never-ending process, as new teachers replaced transferring teachers in the programme schools. School directors are also likely to move often; one of the lessons learned from the programme was that school directors need to have a strong understanding of MLE if they are to provide the administrative support needed for the teachers. In some cases, replacement school directors did not support MLE as strongly as their predecessors; in one case, a new school director arrived in 2016 and promptly withdrew from the programme.⁹⁹

As a byproduct of civil unrest, mistrust, gossip and misinformation abound. It was thus necessary to develop strong trust between all the partners, and to maintain good relationships with Thai security forces and Patani Malay community leaders alike. Trust grew as the stakeholders worked together.

The Script Issue

The high levels of mistrust endemic to the Deep South explain, in part, the intensity of the script issue.

For over a century, Patani Malay people have been deeply suspicious of the Thai government. As journalist Don Pathan points out, the Thai government perceives its actions as efforts to bring peace, stability, and prosperity to Thai people who happen to be Muslims living in a less developed region of the Thai nation. The widely held Patani Malay narrative, by contrast, sees the Thai government as a colonial power promoting assimilationist policies designed to erode the Malayu language, culture, and religion.¹⁰⁰

"The school director's mother called him and begged him not to start MLE, because it would destroy the Patani Malay language. We are lucky that he and the other community leaders understood the truth. MLE preserves Patani Malayness."

Mother, Ban Bon School

⁹⁹ This is connected to policy issues. Promotions and raises are connected to "innovations" introduced by school directors. There is thus little motivation for a new school director to continue the "innovations" of a predecessor, even if the results were good.

¹⁰⁰ Pathan, 2017

MORE KEY FACTS

PMT-MLE AND THE THAI LANGUAGE

PMT-MLE uses the mother tongue as a foundation to teach the Thai language. Patani Malay and Thai teachers work together to do this. Each language is used at different times during the class day. In the early years, the mother tongue is the main language used in the classroom, but by grade 3 Thai is the main language of instruction.

PMT-MLE ENCOURAGES SOCIAL COHESION

PMT-MLE gives students the communication skills to interact peacefully in both their local culture and the national Thai culture. They learn respect for community and national leadership.

PMT-MLE and the "Two Language Schools"

The Ministry of Education's "Two Language Schools," in which teachers are permitted to speak Patani Malay to K1 and K2 children but do not teach mother tongue literacy, are not connected to PMT-MLE or UNICEF, do not follow internationally recognized best practices, and have poor academic results. Perhaps the lessons learned from PMT-MLE could help improve the "Two Language Schools."

Key programme personnel now admit that they underestimated the strong emotions that would be evoked by the use of the Thai-based script. After all, the preliminary language usage survey research found most people preferred a modified Thai script over Jawi or Rumi. Too, informal Thai-based transcription systems had been used in the area for decades, most recently in social media. The first programme teachers faced a small adjustment in learning to use the Thai-based script, but they soon found reading and writing to be relatively easy. And personnel within the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Defense, already skeptical about using Patani Malay in schools, felt much more comfortable with a Thai-based script than Jawi or Rumi.

Problems began when a group of men interested in preserving local history proclaimed, on a live radio talk show, that PMT-MLE's use of "karaoke language" was a government plot to destroy the Patani Malay language by undermining the sacred Arabic-based Jawi script (and thus Islam). This accusation connected with deeply held fears and long standing suspicion of the Thai government. Senator Worrawit Baru, the well-respected Patani Malay linguist, politician, and PMT-MLE supporter, phoned the radio station and, on the air, tried to explain the pure motives of the project, as well as the linguistic and social necessity of using the Thai script due to the constraints of Jawi spelling, to no avail. Local programme staff were suddenly accused by their friends of conspiring to destroy their mother tongue!

RILCA staff responded to the criticism in scholarly conferences and public forums, insisting that the programme was really trying to preserve the Patani Malay language and culture, as well as to improve the future of Patani Malay children through education. But dialogue proved difficult, even when local programme staff used the Patani Malay language to try to explain things to critics—who refused repeated invitations to visit the programme schools.



Official Guidelines for Writing the Patani Malay Language Using the Thai Script published by the Royal Institute of Thailand, 2010.

with the Royal Institute to receive government recognition for the Thai-based script. As part of this process, the Royal Institute produced a book documenting the linguistic features of Patani Malay and explaining the modifications needed to write all the Patani Malay sounds in a Thai-based script. This was yet another historic milestone; previously, the Royal Institute had no involvement with minority languages. The Patani Malay script opened the way for other minority groups to have their Thai-based writing systems receive official recognition.

As of this writing, public criticism of the script issue seems to have diminished.

In response, the programme started to feature Jawi more prominently in learning materials. Jawi titles were added on the covers of big books and small books, and the study of Standard Malay using the Jawi script was added to the grade 3 Islamic Studies curriculum. This may have seemed redundant; all the students were already studying Jawi at the village *Tadika* on the evenings and weekends. However, the programme tried to adopt MLE principles to the teaching of Jawi, orienting the students to the phonetic differences between Standard Malay and Patani Malay and doing listening exercises prior to working on Jawi reading and writing. Unfortunately, these efforts were not as carefully documented as other parts of the programme, and there was never an assessment to see whether the approach to literacy used in PMT-MLE actually strengthened students' Jawi.

Critics were less concerned about Rumi—the English-based alphabet used in Malaysia. Many community members in the Deep South see the advantages of their children speaking Standard Malay and knowing the Rumi script, as it could open up future job possibilities in Malaysia. Thus, Standard Malay written in the Rumi script was introduced in the grade 4 Islamic Studies Course in programme schools.

RILCA linguists and other scholars worked



LESSONS LEARNED

"Assessment that is for learning, as opposed to merely of learning, looks forward as well as back." Flórez and Sammons (2013)

Given the challenges faced by the programme and the experiences of the past decade, what are key lessons learned that could be applied to this or any MLE programme in Thailand or beyond?

To address and organize these lessons, we will return to Susan Malone's "spiderweb" diagram. This was the roadmap for the programme. Was it an effective guide? To what extent did the programme follow the recommendations for each of the nodes?

Figure 47: Components of strong mother tongue-based MLE programmes (UNESCO, 2016)



Preliminary research

The programme's experience confirmed the necessity of extensive preliminary research. The original programme plan dedicated a full year to it. This gave the organizers time to conduct desk research as well as to dialogue with teachers, government officials, community members, and people with on-the-ground experience in the South. It also enabled researchers to conduct surveys involving over 1300 respondents. This gave the programme organizers a "big picture" view of the situation which helped guide programme development—even if some issues were not fully understood at the time. If less time had been allocated to preliminary research, the programme as a whole would have suffered.

Realistic implementation plan

PMT-MLE's overall implementation plan was realistic, given time constraints. The need to prepare new curriculum through the workshop approach during the October and March-May school breaks put considerable time pressures on programme staff and teachers. It was good that the programme developed materials year-by-year, grade-by-grade, as the children matured, rather than attempting to produce materials for multiple grades simultaneously. In the future, as the programme expands, minor curriculum adjustments and some additional materials may be necessary, but the truly difficult work of developing a curriculum and teacher training resources has already been done.

Awareness raising and mobilization on all levels

A key lesson of the programme is that awareness raising, mobilization, and advocacy is a never-ending process. It is not a box that can be checked off a "to do" list. Government officials change, teachers come and go, politicians propose all manner of ways to improve education. In the decade since the programme was first contemplated, Thailand has had thirteen ministers of education, six prime ministers, two coups d'état, four proposed constitutions, and one revision to the national Basic Education Curriculum.

Awareness raising for MLE must take place on all levels. The programme's original pilot schools were selected on the basis of community meetings, often held in mosques or schools and involving parents, religious leaders, local scholars and artists, and village leaders. Mahidol University's reputation as a top-tier research institution and UNICEF's convening power opened opportunities for programme staff to interface with high level decision makers in the Ministry of Education, the Thailand Research Fund, the Royal Institute, the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Interior, the Southern Border Provincial Authority, and various security organs including the National Security Council, the Internal Security Operations Command, and the 4th Army. However, programme staff found it more difficult to interface with education officials in the Deep South.

Good relationships with local and national media are also important to advocacy. Early on, the programme was very careful about contact with journalists due to the sensitivities of working in a conflict zone. Later, positive student results were communicated to the local and national media. The partners organized media visits to programme schools. Newspaper articles and nationally televised documentaries appeared. However, some elements of the local media were not adequately engaged, leading to the spread of inaccurate information about the programme reflecting the personal opinions of the presenters. A more comprehensive public relations plan, mapping all relevant local, national, and international media, as well as identifying relevant local leaders to be contacted, would have been helpful to increase awareness and raise support for the programme.

Similarly, it would be helpful for the programme to engage the local CSO movement as part of the mobilization plan.

Acceptable alphabets

As mentioned in the chapter on orthography development, the programme took orthography choices very seriously, and worked hard to create an acceptable, accurate alphabet. This should be part of any MLE project, as an archaic or inaccurate alphabet puts an unnecessary burden on learners.

Detailed linguistic study was undertaken to catalogue the sounds of Patani Malay, to determine how many letters would be needed. An easy to learn, linguistically accurate Patani Malay script could have been created by making slight adaptations to the Thai, Jawi or Rumi alphabets. However, all these scripts had negative "baggage" in the eyes of different stakeholders, leading to controversy and confusion. In the final analysis, the Thai script was probably the correct choice; most ordinary people preferred it, the teachers were very familiar with its use, and it made bridging to the national language easier for the children. However, as Uniansasmita Samoh points out, there could have been more public dialogue early on, explaining the rationale for using a Thai-based script, and explaining that the script was only for use in schools as a teaching tool and would never be used for religious materials (in competition with Jawi).¹⁰¹ A potential criticism of the Thai-based orthography could be its reliance on subscript dots and lines for the eight unique consonants; these are challenging to use on social media and some computer applications.

Curriculum and instructional materials

PMT-MLE demonstrated that teachers, community members, local artists and musicians, and outside experts can work together to create effective, relevant teaching plans and instructional materials that meet government educational standards. The outstanding results of the programme validate their work, and also bear testimony to the effectiveness of the workshop approach and "Two-Track" approach to literacy development.

Reading and learning materials

A clear lesson from the programme is that there can never be too many mother tongue books! As the programme students became voracious readers, they quickly exhausted the supply of books. In an attempt to appease children demanding more books, programme staff pasted Patani Malay captions into Thai children's books. Still, there were not enough books. In the future, perhaps the YRU education majors and teaching interns could be mobilized to write, edit and illustrate more mother tongue books, either manually or through the use of *Bloom*—a computer program designed to "help communities grow libraries."¹⁰²

Teacher recruitment and training

MLE features new teaching techniques and methodologies. It can be both challenging and rewarding for teachers to learn and apply them. As mentioned earlier, mentoring through on-site visits is necessary to ensure that the teachers utilize MLE techniques to their full potential.

The programme also exposed the need, shared in many countries, to have a more formal process for recruiting, training, and retaining MLE teachers. Most countries keep detailed records of a teacher's qualifications and accomplishments, but rarely include the teacher's mother tongue. Incorporating linguistic competencies in ministry databases could help match teachers to schools where their mother tongue abilities could make a huge difference for students. Indeed, as Dr. Kessaree Ladlia has proposed, ministry placement systems could include "Mother Tongue Specialist" alongside specialties like English, math or science, to both recognize the importance of MLE knowledge and help with job placement.

¹⁰¹ Samoh, 2016

¹⁰² <http://bloomlibrary.org>

Monitoring and evaluation

PMT-MLE demonstrated the importance of rigorous, longitudinal study of student achievement—a key value for UNICEF. Through some trial and error, the assessment team learned the importance of working closely with classroom teachers to ensure that the tests were appropriate to the content covered in the classroom, using the same mother tongue terminology as the teachers. This was true even in the upper primary grades when most of the subject matter followed the national curriculum.

The annual assessments helped the programme self-correct, as when the grade 1 assessment discovered that teachers were not using the mother tongue for teaching math because they did not know the technical vocabulary.

The programme also learned the necessity of looking at assessment scores through different analytical lenses. Merely comparing the average scores of experimental and comparison schools did not give the complete picture. Looking at the number of students scoring above or below the 50 per cent mark, or the number of words and types of sentences used in student essays, led to the realization that MLE was having the greatest impact on low and middle-performing students—a group that lagged far behind in the "Thai only" comparison schools.

Finally, PMT-MLE discovered the importance of having a single, information packed graph that would clearly illustrate the programme's success. The first grade performance graph (figure 35) played this role well, and was reproduced in conference presentations, posters, brochures, books, and even television shows. This single iconic graph was more useful for explaining the programme than many pages of complicated tables and charts.

Supportive Partnerships

Partnerships were absolutely crucial to PMT-MLE, as they are to most MLE programmes worldwide. Multiple stakeholders are needed, since any one stakeholder, whether a university, a government agency, a school, or even UNICEF, would be unable to initiate and operate an MLE programme alone.

PMT-MLE was supported by an impressive network of partners, including (at various times), UNICEF, UNESCO, SEAMEO, the Delegation of the European Union to Thailand, the National Security Council, the Thailand Research Fund, the Ministry of Education, the Southern Border Provinces Administrative Center, the Royal Institute, Mahidol University, Yala Rajabhat University, and SIL International. All of these were represented on the Steering Committee.

Supportive MTB-MLE Policies

Thai Ministry of Education and National Security Council policies calling, however generally, for bilingual education in the Deep South opened space for PMT-MLE to begin and continue its work. The draft National Language Policy of the Royal Institute, while not yet implemented, served as additional support to PMT-MLE. Simultaneously, knowledge generated from the programme was a great help to the Royal Institute, such that the writers would have access to mother tongue research in Thailand and the region, as well as to relevant United Nations documents. MLE practitioners should not merely ask for supportive policies; they should be ready to dialogue with policy makers to create them.

It would have been very useful to have specific permissions in place to shield PMT-MLE from national policies that would be detrimental to the programme students or damage the experimental nature of the programme. A case in point was the English language policy announced in October 2016, which would have required all Thai first graders to spend 5 hours/week studying English (up from 1 hour/week). This caused tremendous concern among programme staff, as first graders in the South barely understand Thai much less English. Dedicating 20 per cent of classroom time to English would have taken away time from other subjects. If the policy had not been scrapped in March 2017, the programme would have requested special permission to introduce English later, using the same step-by-step methodology to build English listening, speaking, reading and writing skills.¹⁰³

Conclusion

MLE programmes require a multifaceted strategy, involving a wide range of stakeholders with different areas of expertise. Each node of the "spiderweb" is important, and must be adequately addressed in order to achieve positive programme outcomes.

¹⁰³ Recent research in Europe and Japan has concluded that children who begin studying a foreign language in school at a young age have no long term advantage over those who begin later, with strong evidence that eleven may be the more effective age at which to begin foreign language learning in ordinary school settings. This contradicts the widely-held belief that "earlier is better" (Lambelet & Berthele, 2015).

RECOMMENDATIONS AND THE WAY FORWARD

Education in Thailand stands at an important crossroads. As politicians and parents demand reform, the Ministry of Education must embrace research and empirically proven innovation.

Based on international research, PMT-MLE has produced excellent local results. From grades 1-6, 72.5 per cent of PMT-MLE students met basic educational criteria for Thai language, reading comprehension, science, and mathematics—compared to only 44.5 per cent of comparison students. Scores for PMT-MLE students on the grade 6 O-NET national exam were above the regional average for the Deep South.

PMT-MLE produces superior Thai literacy results quickly. PMT-MLE first graders with 200 hours of Thai language instruction outperformed comparison group students with 350 hours of Thai. Essays written by PMT-MLE third graders contained twice as many words and half as many errors as the comparison students, and used more sophisticated Thai grammar. Thus, PMT-MLE is much more efficient for teaching Thai than "normal" Thai-only submersion schooling. And PMT-MLE parents overwhelmingly support the programme.

UNICEF Thailand strongly believes that PMT-MLE can help Thailand achieve its objectives for Sustainable Development Goal #4 and fulfill its obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Therefore, UNICEF Thailand and the other programme partners stand ready to cooperate with the Ministry of Education to act on the following IDEAS and recommendations:

Integrating mother tongue-based education into national education policies, in the areas of curriculum, teacher development and assessment;

Developing mother tongue-based education programmes for ethnic children in the northern highland border regions based on the learning from this programme;

Expanding the programme's approach to other schools in the Deep South, where adapted curriculum, learning materials and proven approaches to teacher development are ready to be scaled up;

Adapting the programme's "Thai for Ethnic Children" materials for migrant children from neighboring countries studying in formal and non-formal settings in Thailand;

Setting up a system to recruit, train and deploy teachers from specific language groups to serve in their home areas, to support mother tongue programmes and improve teacher retention in remote locations.



Sustainable
Development Goal #4
Thematic
Indicator 4.5.2
"Percentage of students
in primary education
whose first or home
language is the language
of instruction."

Specific steps needed to implement these recommendations on various levels include the following:

National Level (Ministry of Education + programme partners)

- Create a unit within the Office of the Basic Education Commission charged specifically with supporting MLE for Thailand's ethnic minority groups
- Develop clear policies, guidelines and budget for implementing strong MLE programmes nationwide
- Allow MLE programmes to be exempt from certain policies not appropriate to minority situations, such as English language learning in the early grades, so that the children can have more time to focus on the mother tongue and Thai
- Cooperate with teacher training institutions to create a new preprimary/primary teacher qualification: "Mother Tongue Specialist"
- Develop non-traditional pathways for ethnic minority young people to become qualified teachers in their home areas
- Allow early grade (K1-P3) children in MLE programmes to take standardized tests in the language in which the subject was taught
- Empower the Bureau of Educational Innovative Development in the Office of the Basic Education Commission to take a more active role in evaluating pilot projects and mainstreaming key components of successful programmes
- Further develop materials for English as a Foreign Language in the MLE framework
- Study the "Two Track" methodology for use with children whose mother tongue is Thai, to develop creative thinking and critical reading skills (a significant weakness of Thai students, as shown in poor PISA performance)

In the South (Southern Regional Office + programme partners)

- Develop a plan for systematic, voluntary expansion of PMT-MLE to other schools
- Facilitate sharing of experiences and resources between the "Two Language Schools" and PMT-MLE
- Create more Patani Malay children's books in print and electronic form through workshops involving teachers, YRU interns, and community members, using computer assisted tools such as *Bloom*
- Further develop Jawi script materials based on PMT-MLE's educational principles, and design a Jawi assessment tool to check student progress
- Create additional mother tongue materials for the upper primary grades

In the North and West (Education Service Area Offices + local partners)

- Adjust job placement systems such that teachers who speak minority languages can receive special priority for vacancies in their home areas
- Provide budget and other forms of support to schools with mother tongue programmes
- Conduct school-level language surveys, to determine the languages spoken by students and teachers
- Adapt PMT-MLE's "Thai for Ethnic Children" materials for migrant children in formal and informal schools

"PMT-MLE fulfills the spirit of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. It promotes *peaceful coexistence*. It addresses the problem of *illiteracy*. It has been praised by the *United Nations*. It is recognized by *scholars worldwide*. It is based on *modern educational research and brain science*. It engages the *community*. It produces *confident children who love to read*. It models *respect for all cultures*. It prepares children for *ASEAN*. It encourages *creative thinking and problem solving*. It teaches *respect* for local and national government. It offers a *new vision* for education in the South. It will help Thailand meet *SDG #4*. The Ministry of Education must *support and expand* this successful programme."

Gothom Arya
Peace Advocate

ANNEX A: THE ASIA-PACIFIC MTB-MLE MOVEMENT SINCE 2003

"When we look at the research that has been carried out in bilingual and multilingual education, what we see over the last 10-15 years is an accumulation of evidence that has become almost overwhelming....When we look at what we know and what should inform policy makers...it is not possible to credibly deny the legitimacy of multilingual education for minority and marginalized group students." Jim Cummins, 2013

Annex Summary:

- **The positive developments in the MTB-MLE movement in Asia through the lens of the Multilingual Education Conference series**
- **How PMT-MLE contributed to and benefitted from the larger MTB-MLE movement**

The benefits of a milieu

PMT-MLE did not emerge as a single, isolated programme. Rather, it was a natural outgrowth of RILCA linguists' interest in ethnic minority languages, coupled with the opportunity to learn more about the connection between language and education through interaction with international scholars, MLE practitioners from outside Thailand and United Nations officials. Programme staff both visited MLE programmes in other countries of Asia and Europe, and hosted visitors interested in PMT-MLE. RILCA thus became a part of the Asian MLE "milieu," contributing to and benefitting from interactions with other people and organizations with similar interests. This was made possible, in large part, through the Asia-Pacific Multilingual Education Working Group and its ongoing series of MLE conferences. These conferences provide convenient signposts for tracking the maturation of the MTB-MLE movement in Asia.

The Asia-Pacific Multilingual Education Working Group (MLE-WG)

The positive response to the 2003 MLE conference convinced its sponsors of the need for ongoing cooperation. In early 2004, the conference organizing committee and key UNESCO and UNICEF staff formed the UNESCO Language Issues Advisory Group to advocate for MLE in the region (Kosonen 2013). In 2008, the advisory group became the Asia Multilingual Education Working Group (MLE-WG), under the umbrella of UNESCAP's Thematic Working Group for Education for All. The MLE-WG articulated its identity as follows:

- Purpose: Identifying the major needs in the regional multilingual education movement and coordinating human and financial resources to help meet those needs.
- Vision: Quality education for all ethnolinguistic communities in all countries of the region.
- Goal: Remove barriers of access to quality education for ethnolinguistic communities through support to multilingual education and related policy advocacy.¹⁰⁴

Founding members of the MLE-WG included UNESCO, UNICEF, Save the Children, CARE, Mahidol University, SIL International, and the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO). The MLE-WG secretariat was hosted by UNESCO Bangkok's Asia Pacific Programme of Education for All (APPEAL), which provided the opportunity for MLE to be discussed in relation to other APPEAL domains including inclusive education, Education for All, and the Millennium Development Goals.

While the MLE-WG originally coalesced around conference organization, its activities grew to include a quarterly e-Newsletter currently sent to nearly 1000 subscribers, the Asia-Pacific MLE Mapping Project (to identify MLE projects and key stakeholders regionally as a quantitative exercise), and the development of an MLE Analysis Framework (to examine the qualitative aspects of MLE). The group has also cooperated on writing and translating MLE resources, in the form of books, brochures, conference reports, videos, and newspaper articles. These have proven useful for external relations, as well as advocacy within MLE-WG member organizations such as UNICEF and UNESCO. Since MLE is counter-intuitive to popular myths of childhood language acquisition, the case for MLE must be stated repeatedly in a variety of forums.

The Second International Conference on Language Development, Language Revitalization and Multilingual Education in Ethnolinguistic Communities (2008)

The years following the 2003 conference saw a number of key developments in the MTB-MLE movement. In the Philippines, the 2006 National Test for grade 3 students showed that Kalinga speaking students in MLE schools performed 25 per cent higher in English and 28 per cent higher in Filipino than their non-MLE peers.¹⁰⁵ The process of moving MLE projects in Cambodia from the non-formal sector to government schools gained momentum, helped by positive outcomes and a 2007 education law giving local authorities the right to choose the language(s) of instruction in their areas.¹⁰⁶ Thailand had seen its first mother tongue based education pilot project in the North closed due to a lack of confidence in the concept, while witnessing the start of Mahidol University's PMT-MLE programme, the Foundation for Applied Linguistics' initiation of new MLE pilots in two languages in the North, and an initiative by the Royal Institute of Thailand to draft an inclusive National Language Policy. MLE pilot projects were running in Bangladesh, Pakistan, Nepal and Vietnam. On the international level, the SEAMEO and the World Bank had begun the first phase of a multiyear project entitled "Mother Tongue as Bridge Language of Instruction in Southeast Asian Countries: Policy, Strategies and Advocacy."¹⁰⁷ A World Bank publication which examined language-in-education policies and outcomes in several countries had concluded:

Fifty percent of the world's out of school children live in communities where the language of the school is rarely, if ever, used at home. This underscores the biggest challenge to achieving Education for All (EFA): a legacy of non-productive practices that lead to low levels of learning and high levels of dropout and repetition.¹⁰⁸

On 13 September of 2007, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Article 14 related directly to education:

104 Bang, 2013

105 Dekker, 2013

106 Nowaczyk, 2015

107 Kosonen and Young, 2009

108 World Bank, 2005

Indigenous peoples have the right to establish and control their educational systems and institutions providing education in their own languages, in a manner appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching... States shall, in conjunction with indigenous peoples, take effective measures, in order for indigenous individuals, particularly children... to have access, when possible, to an education in their own culture and provided in their own language.¹⁰⁹

These developments provided the impetus for a second conference. Once again, over 300 participants from 30 countries gathered in Bangkok to listen to 99 presentations and view 18 exhibits related to the conference goals:

- Raise awareness about the purposes and benefits of mother tongue-based multilingual education (MT-Based MLE) programs
- Share information about good practices in language development, language revitalization and MT-Based MLE in ethnolinguistic communities, especially from the people who are actively engaged in such programs
- Develop and expand networks of individuals and organizations engaged in these efforts¹¹⁰

International Conference on Language, Education and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (2010)

By 2010 the membership of the MLE-WG had grown, with the original founding members being joined by the Royal Institute of Thailand, the Asia-South Pacific Association For Basic and Adult Education, and the Asian Institute of Technology's ASEAN Regional Center of Excellence for Millennium Development Goals. With five years remaining before the MDGs were to be reached, this conference sought to bring attention to how language played a role in education as well as other MDG areas such as health and gender parity. Conference goals thus included:

- Increasing understanding of the linkages between language and achieving the MDGs and Education for All (EFA)
- Fostering connections among a broad set of actors to support activities that integrate language and education as crosscutting themes in achieving the MDGs and EFA
- Informing policy makers and development partners on good practices to effectively incorporate language and education into strategies and policies to achieve the MDGs and EFA.¹¹¹

This was the best attended of all the MLE conferences, with over 400 participants from over 30 nations. Thai Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva gave an opening speech touting his approval, eight months earlier, of the Royal Institute of Thailand's Draft National Language Policy, as well as the success of the PMT-MLE programme. Other keynote speakers reflected the worldwide interest in MBT-MLE: Professor Suzanne Romaine (Oxford University), Laurentius Sebastianus Davids (African Languages National Institute for Educational Development), Raja Devasish Roy (Supreme Court of Bangladesh), and Octaviana V. Trujillo (Northern Arizona University).

Several countries reported new or improved language policies. In the Philippines, a coalition of universities and NGOs had formed the *Talaytayan* ("Bridge") network. Their work contributed to Order 74, 2009, which "institutionalized" MLE within the Department of Education.¹¹² Similarly, largely as a result of CARE's strong project record, Cambodia strengthened the position of MLE by promulgating the 2010 "Guidelines on the implementation of bilingual education programmes for indigenous children in highland provinces."¹¹³

A key output of this conference was a 45 page booklet published by UNESCO entitled *Why Language Matters for the Millennium Development Goals*.¹¹⁴ The booklet was distributed worldwide, along with a summary brochure of the same name.

109 United Nations, 2008

110 Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization, 2008

111 Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization, 2010

112 Dekker, 2013

113 Sophirom, 2012

114 UNESCO, 2012

Multilingual Education for All in Asia and the Pacific: Policies, Practices and Processes (2013)

The 2013 conference, also held in Bangkok, saw a greater number of cooperating organizations involved, including Room to Read, Plan International, DVV International, the Translators Association of the Philippines, the Linguistics Society of the Philippines, and 170+ *Talaytayan*. Indeed, the conference was originally slated to be held in the Philippines, until it became clear that the Philippine partners were too busy—for good reason.

Just months before the conference, President Benigno S. Aquino III had signed Republic Act No. 10533, radically altering the Philippine education system by increasing the basic education cycle from 10 to 12 years and utilizing "the principles and framework of Mother-Tongue Based Multilingual Education" nationwide. As a result, 50 indigenous languages would be included in the primary school system. This Act was the fruit of a "people power" movement involving academics, development workers, teachers, business leaders and politicians.¹¹⁵

Republic Act 10533 was authored by one of the conference keynote speakers: Congressman Magtanggol "Magi" T. Gunigundo. He was joined on stage by Cambodian Under-Secretary of State Ms. Ton Sa Im, who declared her government's intention to expand MLE to as many as 19 additional minority languages, as well as Dr. Suwilai Premsrirat, who updated participants on the Thai national language policy implementation plan and the progress of the PMT-MLE programme.

The emphasis on policy and political engagement carried on through several other plenary presentations. Law professor and Linguapax Award recipient Dr. Fernand de Varennes (Vytautas Magnus University) spoke on the legal status of various UN conventions related to linguistic, cultural, and indigenous rights. Dr. Joseph Lo Bianco (University of Melbourne) discussed progress on UNICEF's Netherlands-government funded "Language for Social Cohesion" project, which brought ethnic minority leaders and government officials in Myanmar together to dialogue about local language-in-education policies. Dr. Anwei Feng (Nottingham University, Ningbo Campus) discussed his team's China-wide research into the effectiveness of mother-tongue based programs in helping minority children acquire English—a key selling point to governments throughout Asia.

Of particular note were the opening comments, delivered via video, by Dr. Jim Cummins (University of Toronto), one of the world's premier experts on bilingual and multilingual education, who proclaimed that evidence for the effectiveness of MLE was so strong in so many countries that it is "not possible to credibly deny the legitimacy of multilingual education for minority and marginalized group students."¹¹⁶

Regardless of the encouraging comments from politicians, policy makers, and international experts, the real substance of the 2013 conference were the reports from MLE practitioners on their challenges and victories. The MLE movement had matured significantly, and long discussed questions were asked with greater urgency. When and how should English be introduced? How can we move from a model of in-service teacher training to engagement with teacher training colleges? And what about classrooms where several mother tongues are spoken? Such questions were "put on the list" for future conferences.

¹¹⁵ Dekker, 2013

¹¹⁶ Cummins, 2013

Fifth International Conference on Language and Education: Sustainable Development Through Multilingual Education (2016)

In September 2015, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Sustainable Development Goals. This prompted development agencies to re-evaluate their work in terms of the SDGs. The "Fifth MLE" conference, held in Bangkok in October 2016, gave special attention to SDG #4, which seeks to "Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all." Conference tracks, developed in part from the input of past conference attendees, included:

- Language and Language-in-Education policy and planning
- Teacher Training for MLE
- MLE praxis in early childhood and primary education
- Language and Cross-cutting Sustainable Development Goal Issues

Once again, over 300 participants from 30 countries attended. Many were by now old friends, eager to update one another on how their projects had progressed since the previous conference.

Through the years, many of the conference regulars had followed the progress of PMT-MLE. Now they packed the room for a panel discussion entitled, "Eight Years of MLE in Southern Thailand: Reflections, Results, and Future Directions." Hugh Delaney of UNICEF Thailand joined Dr. Suwilai to provide an overview of the programme. Mahidol University PhD candidate Uniansasmita Samoh presented his dissertation research on Patani Malay cultural identity as related to language and script issues in the Deep South. Mirinda Burarungrot, also a PhD candidate at Mahidol University, presented her research on the effectiveness of literacy skills transfer from Patani Malay to Thai, concluding that programme students achieved much higher Thai competencies in a shorter amount of time than children in the normal "Thai only" control schools. Dr. Suppaluk Sintana and Yapar Cheni presented the cumulative results of YRU's six years of programme assessments, concluding that the MLE approach was of great benefit to the majority of students, especially low and mid-level students. The following day, Dr. Kessaree Ladlia was featured on a plenary panel discussion on MLE teacher education, as YRU was the first teacher training institution in Asia to offer undergraduate MLE courses, as well as the only MLE teacher internship programme in Asia.

Outside the conference room stood a glass case containing the 2016 UNESCO King Sejong Award for Literacy medallion, which Dr. Suwilai had accepted a month earlier in Paris on behalf of MLE practitioners everywhere.

ANNEX B: RESOURCES FOR MLE PRACTITIONERS

Bloom Library. <http://bloom.palaso.org/>

Free computer program designed to help build big books, small books, and graded readers, in both print and electronic form, including support for "karaoke style" highlighting of audio books viewable on mobile devices.

Foerster, L., & Saurman, M. B. (2013) *Producing Culturally Relevant Language Materials for a Mother Tongue-Based Education Program*. Chiang Mai, Thailand: Payap University. <http://tinyurl.com/pyxszna>.
A how-to guide for leading curriculum development workshops.

Malone, S. (2010) *Planning Mother Tongue-Based Education Programs in Minority Language Communities*. Dallas: SIL International. <https://www.sil.org/resources/publications/entry/71156>
Resource manual for speakers of minority languages engaged in planning and implementing mother tongue-based education programs in their own communities.

SIL International (2012) Resources for Literacy and Education.
<https://www.sil.org/literacy-and-education/resources-literacy-and-education>
A repository of useful links to online MTB-MLE resources.

Stringer, M. D., & Faraclas, N. (2001) *Working Together for Literacy* (2nd Edition). Kangaroo Ground, Australia: SIL Australia.
A detailed description of the two-track approach to literacy skills development.

UNESCO (2016) *MTB MLE Resource Kit-Including the Excluded: Promoting Multilingual Education*. Bangkok: UNESCO Bangkok. <https://bangkok.unesco.org/content/mtb-mle-resource-kit-including-excluded-promoting-multilingual-education>
A series of booklets designed to help community member, implementers, and policy makers understand MTB-MLE. Includes case studies of successful MTB-MLE programmes in Asia and Africa.

UNESCO (2017) Multilingual Education: UNESCO Bangkok. <https://bangkok.unesco.org/theme/mother-tongue-based-multilingual-education>
The online home of the Asia-Pacific Multilingual Education Working Group (MLE-WG), containing links to key MTB-MLE resources in multiple languages plus past and current editions of the Multilingual Education E-Newsletter.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Like the Patani Malay-Thai Multilingual Education Programme itself, this report would not have been possible without the cooperation of numerous individuals and agencies. Some key figures are listed here, in no particular order, and with apologies to any who may have been inadvertently left out.

UNICEF Thailand: Hugh Delaney, Rangsun Wiboonuppatum, Rubkwan Tharmpornphilas, Napa Jeewan, Kongdej Keesukpan, Nattha Keenapan, Michele Schmit

Mahidol University: Suwilai Premsrirat, Gothom Arya, Mirinda Burarungrot, Uniansasmita Samoh, Siripen Ungsitipoonporn, Saranya Krisananuwat, Sarawut Nagintra, Nattamon Rojanakul

Royal Society of Thailand: Udom Warotamasikkkhadit, Nitaya Kanchanawan, Cholthicha Sudmuk

PMT-MLE Pattani Office: Sahe Abdulloh Alyufri, Jehusen Jeh-ubong, Hasanah Che'ubong, Tuan Sofiyah Alyufri, Asiyah Doloh, Baderu Awa, Oasasidik Mano, Abdulloh Longsa, Riduwan Bohok, Jehsainab Baka, Waehamidah Yamoh, Sulaikor Doloh, Imron Doloh, Rujhan Maso, Hilmi Dereh, Rattana Samahok, Aninah Jehsama, Rohani Nisani, Nurida Masari, Asnah Binsulong, Rusnah Madiyah, Salaehah Cangwang, Mariyam Saleh, Nurina Masari, Nihasnah Cheman, Rusnani Mahaming, Nuseri Awaekcek, Siryan Binhayawae, Nurmi Sa-u, Suroya Awa, Arina Cheawae, Sarawut Dolah, Nataya Busaman, Nordsila Longkunan, Najami Yiwa, Sukanya Longsama

Yala Rajabhat University: Kessaree Ladlia, Suppaluk Sintana, Fareeda Sama-arlee, Muhammadtolan Kaemah, Yapir Cheni, Pranee Lumbensa, Arminoh Deemae, Niharong Tohsu

Pattani Education District #1: Aneesah Prachan, Jutarath Arunothai, Abdullayid Benhawan, Napapha Srieiad, Prasert Waloh, Thitirat Phuripant

Ban Bon School staff and parents: Nurida Masae, Farida Jaesamae, Nasiha Baoma, Sakariya Manama, Sakri Jemae, Mohammed Yamin Waram

Prince of Songkla University, Pattani Campus: Waemaji Paramol, Rusdee Masor

Prince of Songkla University Medical School: Viarasakdi Chongsuvivatwong

SIL International: Susan Malone, Dennis Malone, Kimmo Kosonen, Stephen Walter, Wyn Owen, Jim Owen

Buan Nam Sai School: Osman Asae

Bang Bong Ta School: Preeda Chaisri

Pu Yud School: Nuraisoh Muna, Saribas Yeekhareng, Somporn Khumpasamo, Abdulla Banaweng

Special appreciation to Kittiphong na Ranong, Charivat Santaputra, Panu Uthairat, Andrew Person, Katrin Imhoff, Don Pathan

Special thanks for the work of the late Jiraporn Bunnag (National Security Council) and Waeyusoh Sama-alee (Outstanding Teacher of the Nation)

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