

การใช้ภาษาแม่เป็นสื่อในการสอนในประเทศไทย: มีผลกระทบอย่างไรกับพฤติกรรมของเด็กจีนยูนนาน USING MOTHER TONGUE AS A MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION IN THAILAND: HOW DOES IT AFFECT YUNNANESE CHILDREN'S BEHAVIOR?

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บทคัดย่อ

ระบบการศึกษาอย่างเป็นทางการในประเทศไทยมีความสำคัญสำหรับคนไทยทุกคน ในปัจจุบันเป็นที่ทราบกันอย่างชัดเจนว่ากลุ่มชาติพันธุ์ต้องเผชิญกับปัญหาการเรียนภาษาไทยเมื่อเข้าเรียนในการศึกษาภาคบังคับ ซึ่งทำให้ผลสัมฤทธิ์ทางการเรียนค่อนข้างต่ำเป็นเพราะว่าผู้เรียนกลุ่มชาติพันธุ์เหล่านี้ไม่คุ้นเคยกับคำศัพท์วิชาการภาษาไทยที่ใช้ในโรงเรียน

เด็กจีนยูนนานที่โรงเรียนบ้านใหม่หนองบัว จังหวัดเชียงใหม่ ก็ประสบปัญหานี้เช่นกัน ครูที่โรงเรียนนี้จึงพยายามที่จะใช้ภาษาแม่ของเด็กในการเรียนการสอนตั้งแต่ชั้นอนุบาล 1 เป็นต้นไป อย่างไรก็ตามด้วยเหตุที่โรงเรียนเองไม่มีครูที่เป็นคนจีนยูนนานที่สามารถพูดภาษาของเด็กได้ จึงต้องหาครูผู้ช่วยที่เป็นคนจีนยูนนานและสามารถพูดภาษาเดียวกับเด็กได้มาฝึกเป็นครูสอนให้เด็ก แม้ว่าโครงการวิจัยนี้จะเพิ่งเริ่มสอนในภาคการศึกษาที่ 1 ปีการศึกษา 2554 (พฤษภาคม พ.ศ. 2554) ก็ตาม แต่ครูประจำชั้นซึ่งเป็นครูไทยและครูผู้ช่วยที่สอนเด็กชั้นอนุบาล 1 ห่วงทลอลง ได้สังเกตเห็นพฤติกรรมของเด็กที่เปลี่ยนไปในทางบวกหลายประการ ตัวอย่างเช่น เด็กไม่กลัวที่จะมาโรงเรียน มีความสุขกับการเรียน มีปฏิสัมพันธ์กับครูผู้ช่วยในกิจกรรมต่าง ๆ และกล้าแสดงออก

บทความนี้มีจุดประสงค์เพื่อเสนอผลการวิจัยที่เกิดกับเด็กที่ใช้ภาษาแม่ร่วมกับภาษาไทยเป็นสื่อในการสอนในชั้นอนุบาล 1 บทความนี้ไม่เพียงมุ่งผลของพฤติกรรมเด็กเท่านั้น แต่จะอภิปรายปฏิบัติการของผู้ปกครองเด็กด้วย

คำสำคัญ: ภาษาแม่ ภาษาที่ใช้เป็นสื่อในห้องเรียน จีนยูนนาน

Abstract

The formal education system in Thailand is very important for all Thais. At present, it's clear that ethnolinguistic minority groups in Thailand encounter mostly academic Thai language when they start their formal education. As a result, their educational achievement is rather low. This is because the minority learners are not very familiar with the academic Thai used in the classroom.

The Yunnanese-Chinese children at Ban Mai Neong Bua School, in Chiang Mai province have had to confront this educational challenge. The teachers at this school try to use the children's first language as a medium of instruction from kindergarten1 (KG1) onwards. However, at the school itself there are no Yunnanese teachers. Consequently, teaching assistants (TA) who are Yunnanese and speak Yunnanese Chinese have been trained, to teach the children. Although this project has just started in the first semester of 2010 (May 2010), the homeroom Thai-teacher and the teaching assistant in an experimental classroom at KG1 have observed that the children's behavior has changed in positive ways. For example, they are no longer afraid to go to school; they enjoy learning, actively participate in various activities with the TA, and even dare to act out.

The purpose of this paper is to describe the results after the learners' mother tongue, in addition to Thai, has been introduced as an auxiliary medium of instruction. The focus is not only on the children's behavior, but the paper also discusses parents' reactions.

Keywords: Mother-tongue, Medium of instruction, Yunnanese Chinese

Introduction

The Yunnanese Chinese in Thailand are considered to be people who were born in or whose ancestors originated from Yunnan province in China. There are two subgroups of Yunnanese people according to their different religions; namely the Han and the Hui. The Han believe in Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism while the Hui are Muslims. However, both Han and Hui speak Chinese in a Yunnanese dialect which is classified to one dialect of Northern Chinese which is called southwestern Mandarin [1]. The Yunnanese Chinese came to settle in Chiang Mai in the early nineteenth century and most of them were Muslims at that time. Ping [2] writes

“Great waves of Yunnanese immigration to Thailand started in 1873 after the Muslim Rebellion in Yunnan. When the Qing government started to persecute the Muslim rebels, some escaped to Burma, then to northern Thailand”.

Another wave of the Yunnanese immigration occurred in the first half of the twentieth century, especially during World War II and the Civil War in China. After 1949, when the defeated Kuomintang soldiers (KMT) escaped from Yunnan, the Yunnanese soldiers stayed in Burma for years before moving to Thailand [2]. These KMT soldiers were often also mistakenly called Kongphon 93, in reference to the ninety third division of the KMT. Because the

ex-KMT soldiers had close linked with the government in Taiwan, they received regular financial aid from Taiwan up until ten years ago. A Taiwanese journalist reported that, by the year 2000, Yunnanese people in Thailand numbered around 70,000 [2-3].

The Yunnanese Chinese at Ban Mai Neong Bua [4]

The Yunnanese people of Ban Mai Neong Bua village are the descendants of former soldiers in the Chinese Nationalist Army or Kuomintang of which General Li was the first commander. Ninety-five percent of the population in this village are Yunnanese Chinese, and only five percent are from other ethnic groups such as Lahu, Lisu, Tai Yai, and Burmese. The population is around 9000, and most of them are elderly and children because the adults have left the village for jobs in towns or elsewhere. So, the Yunnanese Chinese still use the Yunnanese dialect in daily life. When the Yunnanese children start learning in the formal education system in the Thai school, they are challenged in communicating with Thai teachers using the Thai language. Apart from the Thai school (Ban Mai Neong Bua), there is another Chinese school in this village. That means the Yunnanese children have to study in both Thai and Chinese schools at the same time. In the day time, the children go to the Thai school, and to Chinese school on weekday evenings and daytime on Saturdays. In the Chinese school the teachers teach the children by using the Taiwan curriculum because they have special ties with Taiwan which has provided many textbooks to these

villagers. Like other Chinese dialects they use the same Chinese writing system which means standard Chinese or Putonghua. However, the Yunnanese children do not have difficulty learning standard Chinese because their language is similar to standard Chinese. Most Yunnanese parents want their children to learn Chinese as well as Thai so that their children will have better opportunities to find good job in the future, and some even hope to work in Taiwan. The Yunnanese children speak Yunnanese with their family, study standard Chinese in the Chinese school, and learn Thai within the formal education system. As a result, their educational achievement in Thai is rather low. Although the homeroom teachers try to solve this problem by hiring Yunnanese speakers as language helpers, it seems unsuccessful. What can they do?

Objectives

1. To present the results of a program using Yunnanese Chinese as a medium of instruction in kindergarten 1 class at Ban Mai Neong Bua school especially with respect to the children's behavior.
2. To share the opinions of parents and reactions from the community.

Methods

In this study, we use an action research with multiple steps as follows:

1. Arranging a meeting with parents to explain the objectives of using children's mother tongue (Yunnanese Chinese) in the classroom during the first semester of KG1.

2. Plannings two-year model for a non fully-fledged bilingual education program.

3. Arranging curriculum writing workshop for teachers at Ban Mai Neong Bua School.

4. Cooperating with Yunnanese scholars and youth in the community to create teaching materials such as cultural pictures, picture stories and others.

5. Arranging teacher a training workshop for teacher assistants on how to use the teaching materials.

6. Homeroom teachers act as facilitators. They observe, evaluate and record the children's reactions.

7. The target group is one class of kindergarten1 students (23 in total) in the first semester of the year 2010, and parents.

8. The final step is to obtain parents' opinions by way of interviews and to discuss the program. A conclusion, based on results, is made after completion of the first semest

“Using mother tongue” What does it means in the Yunnanese children? [5]

As mentioned earlier, Yunnanese is one dialect of northern Chinese or Mandarin. It has only colloquial language for communication and uses the standard writing system. When the children enter the Thai school system kindergarten at the beginning, they are not familiar with Thai teachers and the Thai language. Thus, the children study in Thai school using a second language for them. It is too difficult for them to understand the academic language. They should start with spoken or colloquial language and then transfer to written or academic language. Another

problem is that there are no Yunnanese teachers in Ban Mai Neong Bua School. On the other hand, Thai teachers at this school cannot speak or understand the Yunnanese dialect. If one ethnic group continues to use their mother tongue actively, they need to start their education using their mother tongue and then follow with the dominant or national language as soon as possible. Some teachers at Ban Mai Neong Bua School have realized this and are trying to solve this problem. They heard from other ethnic groups that the Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia (RILCA) at Mahidol University is conducting a language revitalization project. Some ethnic groups such as Chong, Nyakur, and So (thavung) can teach their ethnic languages as a subject at the formal education system. Linguists at RILCA act as consultants so the teachers at Ban Mai Neong Bua School are interested in using Yunnanese teaching in the classroom. Unlike other endangered ethnic groups, Yunnanese children do not need to revive their language but need to improve their Thai language (dominant language) skills instead. A situation like this is similar to Malayu-Patani people in southern Thailand which a bilingual education project from kindergarten level has been running. Therefore, teachers at Ban Mai Neong Bua School would like to try to arrange a bilingual education program at the kindergarten (KG) level. Unfortunately, they lack financial and personnel resources which are important factor for developing the curriculum. So, they only use non full-fledged bilingual education program with kindergarten level one and two.

Using mother tongue as a medium of instruction for Yunnanese children means using the Yunnanese dialect which is the language that they speak in everyday life. It does not equate with speaking and writing in Mandarin Chinese. The purpose for using Yunnanese in the classroom is for communication between teachers and

students, and to explain academic language based on the children’s existing knowledge leading to new knowledge. This means they use the Yunnanese dialect only for speaking. So, the model for a non fully-fledged bilingual educational program is something like this:

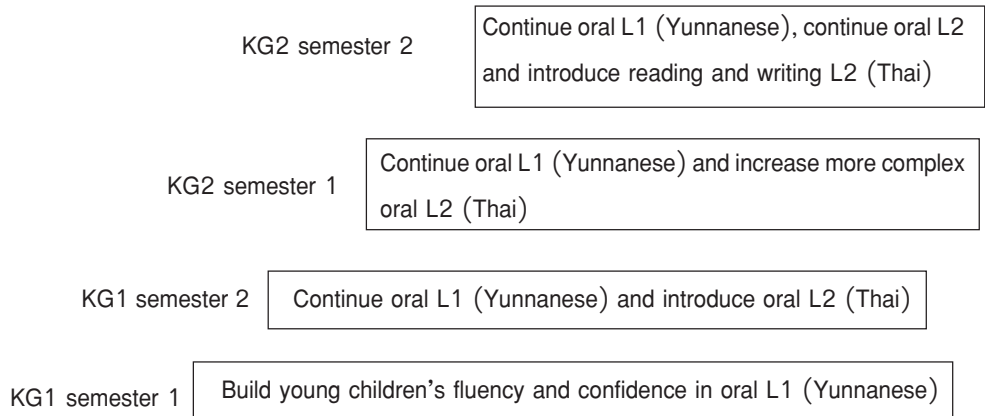


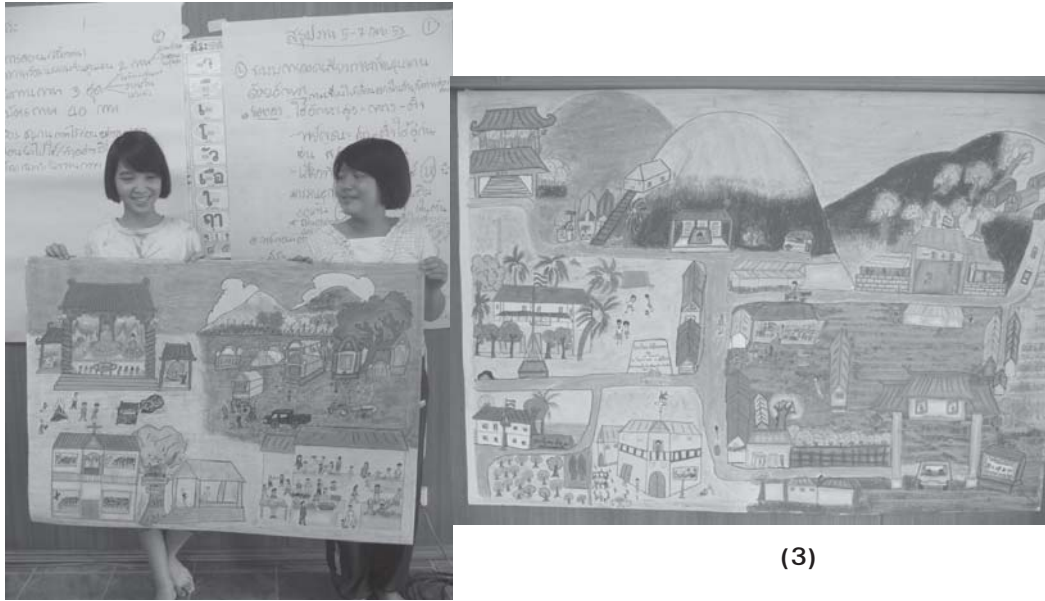
Figure 1 Steps in the two-year model for a non full-fledged bilingual educational program that builds a strong foundation and good bridge to Thai language [6].

Teaching materials and methods

Teaching materials used in KG1, semester one are listening stories, songs, cultural pictures or big pictures, and picture stories [7]. These teaching materials are used by teacher assistants (TA) who are alumni of Ban Mai Neong Bua School. They finished Grade 9 from this school and have been hired as teacher assistants, so they know both Yunnanese and Thai. The homeroom teachers and TAs were trained how to use the teaching materials and teaching methods by RILCA staff before the school opened.

The content of the teaching materials is mostly composed of local community knowledge

[8], and has been produced by local scholars with pictures drawn by Yunnanese students. Examples of cultural pictures are as follows:



(2)

(3)

Figure 2-3 Cultural pictures of Yunnanese community drawn by Yunnanese students (took pictures by Siripen Ungsitipoonporn).

The TA speaks Yunnanese with the children to encourage them to talk about pictures with scenes familiar to the children. Then, the TA asks open and closed questions, and lets the children talk more and more.

Another item of teaching material is the picture story, composed of four or five scenes of one event or one situation. For example, a picture story about Chinese festivals celebrated throughout the year, or many occupational activities in the community.

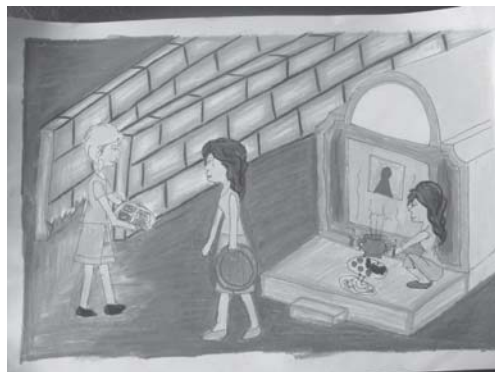
Examples of picture story as follows:



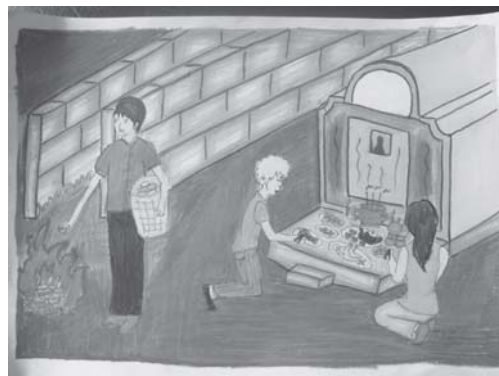
(4)



(5)



(6)



(7)



(8)

Figure 4-8 a series of picture stories related to the period around April 4th or 5th when Chinese descendants pay respects to their ancestors at their graves (Qing ming festival) (took pictures by Siripen Ungsitipoonporn).

Besides this, there are listening stories suitable for kindergarten children with which they are well acquainted. The TA reads story and acts it out. After that, the TA lets the children play role while the TA reads the story.

During the last two weeks of first semester, the homeroom teacher (Thai teacher) gradually starts to use total physical response (TPR) technique. The teacher starts with basic words about body parts such as “stand up” “sit down” “walk”.

The result after using Yunnanese Chinese in a classroom for one semester

When the teachers started using the children’s mother tongue as a medium of instruction, there were many questions and issues raised such as:

“When will the students be literate?”

The parents worry about their children *“If the children start learning in Thai late, they will be late starters in reading and writing Thai.” “When will their children be able to communicate in Thai?” “It is not necessary to teach the Yunnanese dialect because they use it in daily life.”*

These questions and comments come from the parents or even teachers in this school. Kanyaphak Art-han is a homeroom teacher of this experimental KG1 who has observed the children's behavior in the classroom while the TA is teaching using the Yunnanese dialect. She has recorded the students' reaction and response during one semester (June-September 2010). It can be summarized as follows:

1. The students are not afraid to assert and express themselves because they have confidence in their language. The TA can use community based knowledge that children already understand to input new knowledge.

2. The students understand and can communicate with the TA. As a result, learning activities in the classroom are successful and objectives achieved.

3. The TA encourages students with questions and they compete to answer. The students do not get bored learning in the classroom. On the contrary, they enjoy learning and are interested studying new things.

4. The students are happy and want to come to school. They do not feel the teacher and TA are alien to them because they speak the same language as they use with their parents.

5. The learning process of bilingual program offers the students deeper understanding better comprehension.

6. The older siblings of the students in this project accept the positive changes in their younger brothers and sisters. The older students are willing to be volunteers to prepare teaching material for this project. Furthermore,

they can serve as representatives to help other people in the community better understand the benefit of this project.

7. At the beginning, the parents misunderstood about using the mother tongue as a medium of instruction. They did not want their children to speak Yunnanese at school and wanted their children to speak Thai. After the project started, they saw their children happy learning in the Thai school and the parents changed their mind and responded positively to the project. When the students got back home after school, they talked with their parents about the learning activities. For example, the children talked and discussed cultural pictures through which every child could share their experiences with others. After TPR, when the children got home, they acted out with Thai words and demonstrated for their parents. Such anecdotes were reported on the parents' meeting day at the end of first semester.

8. Some parents said that wherever their children have a chance to go to market or a book store in the city, they prefer to look for books, especially picture books, and then they pester their parents to buy them.

9. As for the reaction of the community, they are more confident about education management at this school and have collaborated with Thai teachers when there are school activities.

10. For the teachers involved in the project, they are fully aware and have a real enthusiasm for teaching in the experimental classroom. Other teachers accept all the changes

of KG1 in this project and give encouragement to the homeroom teacher and the TA.

Conclusions and Discussion

Using mother tongue as a medium of instruction for Yunnanese children can overcome teaching management problem in KG1. The students have made great progress that can be observed by the teachers and parents. Teachers are satisfied with this project. Although the project only began in the first semester at Ban Mai Neong Bua School, there have been many positive changes in the children that can be summarized as follows.

1. The new KG1 students have confidence in the new place (school)
2. The students feel free and dare to express their needs to the TA or teacher.
3. The students are ready physically and mentally to cooperate with others in the classroom.
4. The students are self-confident enough to talk with teachers.
5. The students are ready to learn, play, and follow school regulations.
6. They are happy to go to school and mix with their friends because it is no different from home.
7. They can make long sentences in their own language.
8. They can tell stories about their own experience.

For ethnic groups which do not speak the dominant language, it is always a challenge learning the dominant or national language in formal education which makes it difficult

for teachers to manage the class environment. If they try to use the mother tongue as a medium of instruction, it will be helpful for both students and teachers. Although Ban Mai Neong Bua School lacks the budget and other resources, teachers are not discouraged and do the best they can. Non full-fledged bilingual education is not at all bad in this case. It is far better than using only the national language in the classroom.

Acknowledgements

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