AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY OF LANGUAGE
USE IN A MULTILINGUAL EDUCATION
PROGRAM IN THAILAND

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Janice J. Hillmer
ABSTRACT

This thesis assesses the quality of a mother tongue-based multilingual education (MTBMLE) pilot project in its 4th year. Ethnographic research was conducted at Ban Pui Elementary school, in the province of Chiang Mai, Thailand. Students at the school are all native speakers of Pwo Karen, a non-dominant language group in Thailand.

This study focuses on the use of language in G1 and G2 classrooms at Ban Pui Elementary school, both of which were following a MTBMLE curriculum. In each class, students were under the tutelage of a Thai teacher and a local Pwo Karen teacher, and taught in both languages. In an attempt to evaluate the quality of the program delivery, answers to the following two questions were sought: (1) Does the language use observed in the classroom support or undermine the objectives of the MLE program? (2) How does language use in the classroom affect the learning environment of Pwo Karen children at Ban Pui Elementary School?

Qualitative analysis was employed to answer these questions using a combination of detailed field notes and observations, 17 hours of video and audio data, and 48 interviews with community members, parents, and educators. It was determined that the use of the mother tongue in the classroom greatly enhances the learning environment of the students, but that the purposes for which language is used when not delivering curricular content may have an unforeseen impact.
บทคัดย่อ

วิทยานิพนธ์ฉบับนี้เป็นงานวิจัยเชิงชาติพันธุ์วรรณนาโดยมีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อประเมินคุณภาพการใช้ภาษาของโครงการการศึกษาแบบพหุภาษาโดยใช้ภาษาแม่เป็นหลักซึ่งดำเนินการมาแล้วเป็นปีที่สี่ในโรงเรียนประถมบ้านปุย จังหวัดเชียงใหม่ ประเทศไทย โดยนักเรียนมีภาษาแม่เป็นภาษากะเหรี่ยงและโปว ภาษาของชนกลุ่มน้อยในประเทศไทย

งานวิจัยชิ้นนี้มุ่งศึกษาการใช้ภาษาของนักเรียนของโรงเรียนประจำปีชั้นปีที่ 1 และ 2 ของโรงเรียนบ้านปุยซึ่งสำคัญในการศึกษาแบบพหุภาษาโดยใช้ภาษาแม่เป็นหลักในการศึกษาตามหลักสูตรนักเรียนแต่ละชั้นจะได้รับการสอนจากครูคนไทยและครูกะเหรี่ยงประจำโรงเรียน ซึ่งจะมีภาษาไทยและภาษากะเหรี่ยงโปวปั้นในชั้นเรียน เพื่อประเมินคุณภาพการศึกษาในโครงการดังกล่าวผู้วิจัยได้ตั้งคำถามวิจัยดังนี้ 1)การใช้ภาษาในการสอนลักษณะดังกล่าวช่วยส่งเสริมและบันเทิงนักเรียนของโครงการการศึกษาแบบพหุภาษาหรือไม่ 2)การใช้ภาษาลักษณะดังกล่าวในชั้นเรียนส่งผลกระทบต่อรูปแบบในการเรียนของเด็กกระเหรี่ยงโปวที่โรงเรียนประถมบ้านปุยอย่างไร

ในการตอบคำถามข้างต้น ผู้วิจัยใช้วิธีการวิเคราะห์เชิงปริมาณโดยการเก็บข้อมูลจากบันทึกวิดีโอความยาว 17 ชั่วโมง และการสัมภาษณ์สมาชิกในชุมชน ผู้ปกครอง และนักการศึกษา แยกกับข้อสงสัยและผลการดำเนินงานในโครงการการศึกษาแบบพหุภาษาโดยละเอียด ผลการศึกษาชี้ให้เห็นว่าการใช
ภาษาแม่ในชั้นเรียนช่วยส่งเสริมให้บรรยากาศการเรียนในชั้นเรียนดีขึ้นอย่างยิ่ง แต่ก็ชี้ให้เห็นด้วยว่าเจตนาในการเลือกใช้ภาษาใดภาษาหนึ่งนอกเหนือจากการสอนเนื้อหาตามหลักสูตรอาจก่อให้เกิดผลกระทบบางอย่างที่ไม่อาจคาดเดาได้ด้วยเช่นกัน
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND SYMBOLS

CBO = Community Based Organization
EFA = Education for All
EGIDS = Expanded Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale
FAL = Foundation for Applied Linguistics
L1 = First language, or mother tongue
L2 = Second language
LoI = Language of Instruction
LWC = Language of Wider Communication
MDG = Millennium Development Goal
MLE = Multilingual Education
MoE = Ministry of Education
MTBMLE = Mother tongue-based multilingual education
NDL = Non-dominant Language
NGO = Non-Governmental Organization
NLP = National Language Policy
OBEC – Office of Basic Education Commission
SEAMEO = Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization
TPR = Total Physical Response
UNESCO = United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF = United Nations Children’s Education Fund
Chapter 1
Introduction

In 1990, members of the international community met in Jomtien, Thailand for the World Conference on Education for All (EFA). They agreed that education is a fundamental human right, and pledged to meet the basic learning needs of children and adults in their respective countries by 2000. A decade later, realizing the ambitious goals would be unmet, Thailand, along with 163 other countries, agreed on the Dakar Framework for Action. They made plans to achieve this modified set of EFA goals by 2015. In so doing, they committed to achieving a revised set of EFA goals by 2015 including “a holistic vision of education spanning learning from the first years of life through adulthood” (UNESCO, 2005a:3). The goals set forth in this sweeping document include the stipulation that signatory countries will strive to provide quality education for young learners. The issue of what constitutes quality education is a particularly salient issue for children who speak non-dominant languages (NDLs) in low- and middle-income countries, and was the impetus for this thesis.

Since adopting the EFA goals, programs have been developed in Thailand to give children from NDL communities access to education in their first language (L1). However, agencies involved in program planning and development have little opportunity to observe the day-to-day interactions between key participants in the classroom. Of necessity, they rely on occasional site visits, teacher feedback and student test scores to evaluate the program. This thesis seeks to provide more detailed insight into the operation and implementation of one such program.

1.1 Background

The Kingdom of Thailand has a population of 67,312,000 people and is home to 76 living languages. The de facto national language is Central Thai, spoken by an estimated 50% of Thais as their first language, and by millions of others as a second, or other language (Lewis, Simons, and Fenning, 2013; Kosonen 2013). Although Thailand boasts a 94% literacy rate, according to a 2005 World Bank estimate, the literacy rates in many NDL communities are much lower than the national average. For Northern Pwo Karen (also known as Phlong), the language used by participants
in this research, the literacy rate in L1 is below 1%, and between 25%-50% in their second language (L2), which in this case is Central Thai, well below the national average. This thesis looks at one of the ways this issue is being addressed through a mother tongue-based multilingual education (MTBMLE) program.

1.1.1 Pwo Karen Language
Pwo Karen is a member of the Tibeto-Burman language family, and has four identified sub-groups: Phrae Pwo Karen, Eastern Pwo Karen, Western Pwo Karen and Northern Pwo Karen (Lewis, Simons, and Fenning, 2013).

![Figure 1. Karenic Language Family](image)

At least three Pwo orthographies are known to have been developed, including a Buddhist monastic script, a Christian script used in Myanmar, and the Thai-based script used by the Northern Pwo Karen, but “literacy is not widespread” (Dawkins and Phillips, 2009:5-6). There are approximately 60,000 Northern Pwo speakers living in Chiang Mai Province, Thailand (Lewis, Simons, and Fenning, 2013). The Ethnologue (2013) classifies Northern Pwo as a ‘developing’ language on the Expanded Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (EGIDS). This classification indicates that the “language is in vigorous use, with literature in a standardized form, being used by some though this is not yet widespread or sustainable.” Observations made during the course of this research support the accuracy of this classification. All generations use Pwo on a daily basis in almost all domains, although seeing literature in Pwo outside the classroom was uncommon.
1.1.2 Overview of Northern Pwo Karen in Thailand

Most of the 60,000 Northern Pwo speakers in Thailand live in approximately 75 villages in the districts Hot, Chom Thong, Doi Tao and Omkoi in the north-western province of Chiang Mai (Dawkins & Phillips, 2009: 59-61).

![Figure 2 Four Districts with Northern Pwo Villages in Chiang Mai Province](www.thailandmaps.net) ![en.wikipedia.org](en.wikipedia.org)

 Mostly farmers, the Pwo Karen living in their home villages in northern Thailand are predominantly Buddhist or animist, and in some areas, Christian (Dawkins & Phillips, 2009:5). According to a recent survey of Pwo Karen in northern Thailand, most Pwo Karen villages in Chiang Mai province were settled between 200 and 500 years ago (Dawkins & Phillips, 2009: 4). While there have been a large number of Karen refugees from neighbouring Myanmar/Burma entering Thailand over the past 30 years, the villages in this study are too far from the international border to attract refugees, and the residents of the villages discussed here are all long-established Thai citizens.

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1 Although respondents in this study self-identified as Buddhist, religious and customary practices in the villages are more closely aligned with an animist belief system.
1.1.3 Ban Pui and surrounding villages

Central to this study is Ban Pui Public School, a government public school located atop a mountain ridge approximately 153 km southwest of Chiang Mai. Ban Pui is a village of approximately 300 houses, with a population of roughly 1000 citizens. The school also draws students from the neighbouring villages of Ban Mai, Ban Loom, and GioLuk. The residents of all 4 villages are Thai citizens, and belong to the ethnolinguistic Northern Pwo Karen community, hereafter referred to simply as Pwo or Pwo Karen.

The journey from Chiang Mai to Ban Pui usually takes 4.5 hours by truck. The first 135km, between Chiang Mai and NaFon, are on well paved, flat roads. The final 18km of the journey (from NaFon to Ban Pui) takes two hours, over mostly unpaved, curvy, rutted dirt roads. During rainy season, the road to Ban Pui can be a treacherous path of slick mud, threatened by landslides and washed-out bridges. Even in dry season, hairpin turns on the narrow road can pose a danger to oncoming traffic. Since Thai teachers board at the school during the week, they must make this commute twice a week during the school year.

Houses in the villages are made of wood, and built on stilts. Pigs and chickens live under the houses and a hole in the kitchen floor acts as an easy conduit for kitchen scraps to make their way to the animals below. All cooking is done over a wood fire, and families share communal meals consisting mostly of rice, vegetables and chili paste. Pork is reserved for celebratory purposes, and the phrase ลี่ อาง ทุ้ li an tu, literally “go eat pork” is synonymous with going to a wedding.

The majority of villagers in Ban Pui and the surrounding villages are farmers. Rice is a staple crop, grown during the rainy season. During the other seasons, villagers maintain large vegetable gardens, growing tomatoes, pumpkin, peas and chilies. Villagers usually go to their gardens every day, leaving early in the morning, and returning around five o’clock pm. However, during the dry season, villagers may only go to their gardens every other day, and spend more time on household tasks. Some large gardens are dedicated to growing crops for a buyer in Bangkok, while others grow vegetables for personal use, or sale in Hot and Omkoi.

Until the beginning of September, 2012, the village relied on solar power for electricity. This was an unreliable and inefficient system, especially during rainy season when heavy cloud cover blocks the sun, and during hot season when the haze from burning fields does the same. Ban Pui Public School also relied on solar power,
but the school did have a computer room, and an internet connection provided by TOT, a state-owned Thai telecommunications company. After the village and school were connected to the grid, the computer room expanded and the school was able to offer full computer classes. Wi-Fi also became available on campus, much to this researcher’s delight.

1.1.4 Defining Multilingual Education
This section will provide a brief overview of what is meant by multilingual education (MLE), to provide context for the following sections in this chapter. A more detailed examination of the theories and implications of MLE can be found in Chapter 2.

Bilingual or Multilingual Education is the “systematic use of more than one language for instruction and literacy learning” (Kosonen & Benson, 2013:9). However, this definition can also be applied to programs which provide instruction in any two languages, without reference to the student’s L1. For example, offering programs in the national language, and a global language such as English, could be referred to as an MLE program, regardless of what language the students speak at home. To distinguish this form of MLE from programs which purposefully incorporate the students’ L1, mother tongue-based programs are frequently explicitly referred to as such. MTBMLE refers exclusively to “a system of multilingual education which begins with or is based on learners’ first language or mother tongue” (Kosonen & Benson, 2013:9). MTBMLE is the form of multilingual education discussed here, although the acronyms MLE and MTBMLE will be used interchangeably.

1.1.4.1 Multilingual Education in Thailand
Despite having over 70 ethnic and regional languages, until 2010, Thailand did not have an official language policy. Standard Thai (as spoken in and around Bangkok) was seen as “the de facto official and national language of Thailand, with undeniable status and prestige” (Kosonen, 2005:101), resulting in what Rappa & Wee (2006: 108) identify as a “binary distinction. [A] language is either Thai, or it is not, and if it is not, it is for all intents and purposes a foreign language.” As such, even today, only Central Thai is used in the media, public activities, and as the language of instruction in most schools.
Amendments to the Thai constitution in 1997 “provided new opportunities for ethnolinguistic minorities to use their languages” (Kosonen, 2005: 102), through a general provision for minority cultures:

“Persons so assembling as to be a traditional community shall have the right to conserve or restore their customs, local knowledge, arts or good culture of their community and of the nation and participate in the management, maintenance, preservation and exploitation of natural resource and the environment in a balanced fashion and persistently as provided by law.”

(Government Gazette, 1997 as cited in UNESCO, 2007(a):9)

The right to conserve local knowledge is often achieved in rural schools by providing room in the curriculum for local content. Up to 30% of the curriculum may be devoted to L1 instruction, or other local content (Kosonen, 2005: 102). While some schools have used this as an opportunity to promote local languages in the schools, many others are either unaware of the revised policy, or have chosen not to take advantage of this flexibility in the curriculum.

Until the early 2000s, there was no agency or incentive to formulate an official language policy, since in Thailand, “neither the nature nor the role of the national language has ever been seriously questioned” (Noss, 1984:92). Without an explicit policy, disparate government ministries and agencies either addressed or ignored language issues and promoted Central Thai on an ad hoc basis. Policies and practices often reflected the personal ideologies and preferences of individual decision makers. The Ministry of Education promotes Central Thai through its exclusive use in teacher training, textbooks, syllabus design and, until recently, prohibited the use of alternate languages in schools (Rappa & Wee, 2006; Kosonen, 2005).

In 2010, a growing awareness of a broad range of language issues prompted Thailand to adopt its first National Language Policy (NLP). The NLP was the result of 4 years of effort by the drafting committee coordinated by the Royal Institute of Thailand (Kosonen, 2013) and deals with a myriad of language issues. Areas of particular relevance to NDLs and education are noted in Kosonen, 2013:46 and state:

[V]arious ethnic groups … 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. (NLP, 2010, Section 4, emphasis added)
[The NLP] … support[s] the use of the ethnic languages, or the mother tongue, as the first language of children in the education system. (NLP, 2010, Section 4, emphasis added)

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. (NLP, 2010, Section 5, emphasis added)

While the first two points provide explicit permission for the use of a child’s L1 in the education system, it is the two phrases in the third point which are particularly worth noting. First, is the stated aim of using MLE to “strengthen the study of the Thai language,” and secondly, to “support the cognitive development” of young learners. These two clauses speak directly to the concerns of parents of children at Ban Pui School, and will be discussed at greater length in Chapter 4.

While government schools become more open to minority language use in the classrooms, non-formal educational initiatives have already been in place for a long time. Unofficial basic literacy classes in NDLs have been initiated and sustained through churches, monasteries, non-governmental organization (NGO) projects and community based organizations (CBOs), but “none of these initiatives actually amount to multilingual education” (Kosonen, 2009:34). Until Thailand adopted the NLP, the use of mother tongue in education was neither prohibited nor supported, leaving fledgling programs susceptible to shifting bureaucracies. Although it is still too early to know how the new NLP will shape MLE practices in Thailand, it does provide a measure of security for developing MLE initiatives. Even before gaining official support from the NLP, “more minority groups [were] becoming active in the development of their languages for educational use” (Kosonen 2005:102). The MLE program in Ban Pui School is one such example.

1.2 Scope and Focus

At the time of this research (2012/2013) MLE pilot projects support by the Foundation for Applied Linguistics (FAL) in cooperation with the Office of Basic Education Commission (OBEC) were operating in six government elementary schools in Western and Northern Thailand. The first began in 2007 in a Mon community in Sangkhlaburi district, Kanchanaburi province. The following year, 2008, Ban Pui School in a Pwo Karen community in Hot district, Chiang Mai province initiated an
MLE program. As the 2009 school year began, four schools in Hmong communities in Theong and Wiang Kaen districts in Chiang Rai province adopted the MLE curriculum. In addition to the MLE pilot projects at government schools, six Pwo Karen and two Lahu communities introduced MTBMLE programs at the early childhood level in 2010.

Constraints of both time and geography necessitated limiting the research for this thesis to only one of the schools running an MLE program. The Pwo Karen school in Ban Pui was selected as the site for this thesis, due primarily to the relative accessibility of the location and the availability of a Pwo Karen language assistant.

1.2.1 Classroom Demographics

Ethnographic observations for this thesis were carried out at Ban Pui Elementary School, in Ban Pui village, Hot district, Chiang Mai province, Thailand. While typical day-to-day activities at the school were observed, the primary focus was on the students and teachers in the first two years of Elementary school. Ban Pui Elementary School provides two years of kindergarten education before beginning the first of six years of basic elementary education. For the purposes of this thesis, the first two levels of elementary education will be referred to as Grade 1 (G1) and Grade 2 (G2). With the permission of the principal and the teachers, the G1 and G2 classrooms constituted the primary research location. Each class was led by a government certified teacher, assigned to the school by the education system, and a teacher’s assistant, selected from the local community. Both the certified teachers and the local teacher’s assistants received MTBMLE specific training from FAL. Although the education and professional qualifications of the teachers and teacher’s assistants differ, each brings valuable expertise to the classroom: government teachers through their education and training, and local teachers through their extensive knowledge of the local language and community. Both are of equal value in providing a quality education to the students in the MLE program, and for that reason, instead of labeling them as teachers and the more diminutive sounding teacher’s assistants, henceforth they will be referred to as Thai teachers and Pwo teachers.

In G1, there were 21 students, ages 6 and 7. Seven students were from Ban Pui, eight from Ban Mai, four from GioLuk, and two from Ban Loom. All students speak Pwo Karen as their L1, and have limited exposure to Central Thai before entering school. The Thai teacher was a 32 year old female from Maenajorn, Chiang Mai,
who had been teaching at Ban Pui School for 1 year and 10 months. She had 6 years of teaching experience before coming to Ban Pui. She speaks both Northern and Central Thai. The Pwo Karen teacher was a 23 year old female from GioLuk who had been teaching at Ban Pui School for 3 years. She had no previous teaching experience before coming to Ban Pui School. She speaks Pwo Karen, S’gaw Karen, Northern Thai and Central Thai.

In G2, there were 18 students, 7 and 8 years old. Two of them were from Ban Pui, seven from Ban Mai, five from GioLuk and four from Ban Loom. Like their counterparts in G1, they all speak Pwo Karen as their L1, and were introduced to Thai through the school system. The Thai teacher was a 32 year old female from Saraphi, Chiang Mai. She taught at a high school for 3 years before starting at Ban Pui School, where she had been for 1 year and 6 months when the observation period ended. She speaks both Northern and Central Thai. The Pwo Karen teacher was a 30 year old female originally from Omkoi, but currently living in Ban Pui. She had also been at Ban Pui School for 1 year and 6 months, and had no previous teaching experience.

In addition to ethnographic observations in the classrooms, interviews with villagers, and the parents or caregivers of 30 students were conducted to add a broader depth of understanding to the collected data.

1.2.2 Background of MLE in Ban Pui

At the time research was conducted for this thesis, the MLE program in Ban Pui had been running for four years. Before launching the program, a team from the FAL met with people from villages in the area, seeking parental support to start an MLE program at the local government school. The MLE program was rejected in some neighbouring communities, but parents in Ban Pui opted to accept the offer. Many villagers were initially skeptical of the program, wondering why their children should learn Pwo, since they already know it. Prevailing local attitudes assumed that the purpose of going to school was to learn Thai well. Program coordinators and several interviewed parents recall that at first, most parents felt that students should be learning Thai at school, and that learning Pwo would be a waste of time. However, despite some initial hesitation, parents in Ban Pui chose to support the MTBMLE program. Teaching assistants were selected from the local community, and

2 The official roster lists 21 students; however, 3 of them study at MaeTien, a Non-Formal Education (NFE) sister school which was not observed, and has not been included in the results of this study.
received training from FAL before the start of the 2008 school year. The project began that year with the children entering the youngest kindergarten class, KG1. For the first time, children entering Ban Pui School were learning their lessons and interacting with their teacher in their own language.

The following school year, as the first class advanced to KG2, the program advanced with the students, and continued with a new group of students in K1. In 2011, the inaugural class began primary school, G1 and the MLE program provided the curriculum for all three classes. When this research began, the inaugural MLE students were in G2, and students in KG1 and 2, and G1 and 2 were studying the MLE curriculum. Plans were also in place to continue the MLE program into Grade 3 in the 2013/2014 school year.

1.2.3 Scope
There are a myriad of factors at play in any given social situation or interaction. A classroom full of rambunctious elementary school students is clearly no exception. It was therefore necessary to limit the scope of this research. While observations and interviews collected outside the classroom, around the school and in the villages were drawn upon to provide insight and clarification, the scope of this research is limited to the role of language use inside the classroom. To that end, it will examine how, when and for what purposes language is used in the classroom as Thai teachers, Pwo teachers and students interact with each other.

1.2.4 Research Questions
Language in education is a serious concern for the achievement of the EFA goals. It therefore behooves stakeholders to take a close look at how language is used in MLE classrooms seeking to make progress towards providing quality education for speakers of NDLs. To that end, this research seeks to answer the following questions:

1. Does the language use observed in the classroom support or undermine the objectives of the MLE program?
2. How does language use in the classroom affect the learning environment of Pwo Karen children at Ban Pui Elementary School?
1.3 Benefits
As linguistically diverse countries continue working towards the EFA goals, and MLE pilot projects have the opportunity to expand and alter the way NDL communities access education, it is helpful to take a serious look at how language is being used in the classroom. The quality, success or sustainability of a program hinges on its implementation. By analyzing how participants make use of learner’s L1 and L2 in the classroom, it is hoped that conclusions and recommendations drawn from this study may be of benefit to those involved in teacher training, curriculum development, and/or delivery of MLE programs operating in similar contexts.
Chapter 2
Theoretical Overview

In this chapter, key terms and concepts relating to this thesis will be defined and discussed. Particular attention will be paid to terms which are often misunderstood or misapplied.

2.1 Terms and Concepts
Many terms surrounding education, multilingual education and language can be found in literature. The following pages seek to clarify and define the terms that will be used in this thesis.

2.1.1 Education for All and Millennium Development Goals
In 2000, when Thailand subscribed to the revised EFA goals in Dakar, they were there as part of a larger meeting of 192 member states of the United Nations, and 23 international organizations. The EFA goals were part of a plan to meet eight larger developmental goals, known as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to be achieved by the year 2015. These goals covered a broad range of international concerns, including halving extreme poverty and halting the spread of HIV. The second goal, and one which, in the long term, will be instrumental in achieving many of the other 7 goals, is providing universal primary education. It has long been established that a quality education is closely associated with human, cultural and economic benefits (UNESCO 2005(a):16-17).

As mentioned in the previous chapter, when Thailand subscribed to the EFA goals, it committed itself to providing “quality basic education for all children, youth and adults by 2015” (Pinnock and Vijayakumar 2009:7). The EFA goals make a subtle, yet important statement by expressing the need for quality education. Nations that have agreed to work towards the EFA goals recognize that simply going to school does not automatically qualify as receiving an education. Years of lackluster academic achievement in schools in minority areas show that attendance does not guarantee learning. It is clear that attendance is not synonymous with education, but there is as yet no consensus on what exactly does constitute a quality education.
This distinction between education and quality education is applicable to the situation in Thailand. For years, students from NDL communities have fallen well below the national average in academic outcomes. The regions in Thailand with the lowest literacy rates correspond to the regions with the highest number of linguistic minorities (UNESCO, 2008:98). In an effort to increase literacy and improve education in these regions, the Thai Ministry of Education (MoE) has been sending Thai teachers to some of Thailand’s most remote regions since the 1970s. However, the results have remained “less-than-hoped-for” (UNESCO, 2007(a):148). Clearly, the problem is not simply one of access to education – the problem lies in the quality of education provided.

2.1.2 Mother Tongue or L1
Several terms, including mother tongue, first language (L1), vernacular, native language and home language are often used interchangeably when referring to the first language(s) a child learns. Confusion arises, especially for non-native English speakers, when deciphering some of these terms. For example, is the mother tongue literally the language spoken by a child’s mother? Is the home language only spoken at home? Does the word vernacular correspond too strongly to slang, making it unsuitable for academic purposes?

For these reasons, the term L1 is preferred here, and mother tongue is used exclusively in the context of the common acronym MTBMLE which distinguishes mother tongue-based MLE from other forms of MLE as discussed in section 2.3. Although this distinction in terminology is deliberate, the definition used here for L1 adopts the Skutnabb-Kangas (2000:105-108) definition of a mother tongue “as a language that one (a) has learnt first; (b) identifies with; (c) knows best; and/or (d) uses most.” In addition to this definition, the extension adopted by Benson and Kosonen (2012: 112) is also adopted here: “(e) speaks and understands competently enough to learn academic content at the appropriate age level”.

2.1.3 National Language
A national language, according to Crystal (1999:227) is “a language that is considered to be the chief language of a nation state.” In Thailand, the national language is Central Thai, and carries a great deal of cultural significance:
Standard Thai is not only the official language, but is also the national language, a symbol of identification for the Thai nation. Next to the King and along with the Buddhist religion, standard Thai may be the strongest such symbol, even for those who speak it as a second language, or barely speak it at all. (Smalley, 1994:14)

The Thai language is a strong cultural and national identifier, even for members of NDL communities within the nation. As a result, until quite recently, there has been neither agency nor incentive to formulate an official language policy, as “neither the nature nor the role of the national language has ever been seriously questioned” (Noss, 1984:94).

2.1.4 Language of Wider Communication (LWC)

A language of wider communication (LWC) “- also called a lingua franca, regional language or trade language – is a language that speakers of different local languages use to communicate with each other” (Kosonen, 2005: 133; Kosonen and Benson, 2013: 7). For the participants in this research, Northern Thai is the LWC. It is spoken in the market in Hot, where Pwo Karen villages do business, and as the L1 of the Thai teachers at Ban Pui Elementary school. Although the use of Northern Thai was not a focal point of this thesis, readers should be aware of its use and presence in the broader linguistic context of the participants.

2.2 Language in Education

The importance of language choices in education should not be underestimated. The definition of language in education here is quite broad, and refers to any language(s) used in the context of formal education. This definition equally encompasses the language(s) used in official curricula and teaching materials, and the informal oral use of local language(s) in the classroom. For policy makers, language choices can reflect positions of power and control. For educators, language used in education can be indicative of anything from an unconscious reflection of individual sociolinguistic attitudes, to a conscious disregard of policy in favour of expediency. Regardless of the rationale, or motivating factors, language choices in education have a lasting and demonstrable impact on a child’s education.
2.2.1 Language of Instruction (LoI)

Language of instruction (LoI) is “a language through which the contents of the curriculum in a given educational system or a part of it are taught and learned” (Kosonen and Benson 2013:8). In Thailand, Central Thai has been used as the sole language of instruction for nearly a century (Prapasapong, 2009:104). Until recently, the practice has remained unquestioned, and progress in introducing an NDL as a LoI has met some strong opposition, due in part to the deep cultural identity associated with Central Thai.

In some NDL communities, elementary teachers may choose to use the local language orally, to help students understand the curriculum. However, even this limited oral use is dependent upon the teacher’s knowledge of the local language. In many cases, Thai teachers assigned to schools serving NDL communities do not speak the local language, so classes are conducted exclusively in Central Thai, posing a significant barrier to comprehension.

As Benson (2005:2) points out, “language is clearly the key to communication and understanding in the classroom.” Using a language the student does not know well as an LoI makes it extremely difficult for students to develop literacy skills, gain knowledge, and have access to accurate testing practices. The cognitive acumen required to learn academic content in another language is the first barrier children face:

Requiring any child to learn abstract or academic concepts through a process which expects them to first link new second language to the corresponding points in their first language, and then to process, retain and use that academic knowledge – all in the same amount of schooling time that another child would be given simply to learn the academic content in their first language – involves a huge cognitive demand. (Pinnock & Vijayakumar, 2009:13)

Even as children struggle with the joint task of learning academic concepts whilst learning a second language, they face the additional task of developing literacy skills. Since literacy comes from drawing meaning from the arbitrary symbols of an orthography, children need to be able to link those symbols to something they already know. “If a child does not understand the meaning of a word because it is in an unfamiliar language, learning to ‘read and write’ that word does not constitute literacy: it is simply repetition” (Pinnock & Vijayakumar, 2009:13).
Furthermore, when both the academic material and the L2 are new to the student, it is difficult for teachers to “determine whether students have difficulty understanding the concept itself, the language of instruction, or the language of the test” (Benson, 2004:4). Far too often, children risk being labelled as ‘slow learners’, or feeling like they lack the mental facilities necessary to succeed academically. However, “[t]he problem does not lie with mental facilities, but with language abilities” (UNESCO, 2007(a): 156).

When the above challenges are compounded by external factors such as poverty, poor nutrition, or parents who are also illiterate in the LoI and unable to assist students with their coursework, it is little wonder that children in these communities fall so far behind the national academic averages.

### 2.2.2 Multilingual Education (MLE)

The pitfalls of submersion education in students’ L2 have been laid out in the above section. MTBMLE has been espoused as a remedy for such obstacles, yet the idea of Multilingual Education is often misunderstood. The distinction between MLE and MTBMLE is important. Since, in the broadest sense, the term could refer to any instances of more than one language used in the classroom, the term has been misappropriated and applied to programs with even the merest whisper of a second language used in a classroom. For example, a teacher could teach children a folk song in a language other than the LoI, and believe it qualifies as multilingual education. Perhaps a school could advertise an MLE curriculum, using the national language as the LoI, and provide daily lessons teaching a global language. Again, simply using any two languages, in any capacity in the classroom seems to qualify as multilingual education. However, multilingual education is more than simple exposure to a different set of lexemes. It aims to produce students who are completely literate and academically proficient in two or more languages. The Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO) defines MLE as “the use of more than one language for instruction and attaining literacy” (Kosonen & Young, 2009:11). This definition goes far beyond the occasional use of a second language, or even teaching a second language as a subject. Instead, more than one language should be used to teach academic content. In addition to literacy, core subjects such as science, math, or geography should also be taught using more than one language as the LoI. In this way, students gain both academic and linguistic proficiency in each language used.
2.2.3 Mother Tongue-based Education

Even if the definition of MLE is fully comprehended and supported, the idea of MTBMLE adds a new dimension to the discussion. Especially for native speakers of dominant languages, the value of teaching and learning in a NDL is often dismissed, overlooked or underappreciated. Providing early education in a student’s mother tongue (L1), is a key element in quality education. Students who begin school in a second (L2) language are faced with the dual task of learning new concepts and a new language simultaneously. In a MTBMLE program, the students’ L1 is used to teach early literacy skills, along with academic content. The L2 is gradually introduced, allowing students to transfer their learned skills from a familiar language to an unfamiliar one (Benson, 2005). “Use of a familiar language to teach beginning literacy facilitates an understanding of sound-symbol or meaning-symbol correspondence; [furthermore], since content area instruction is provided in the L1, the learning of new concepts is not postponed until children become competent in the L2” (Benson, 2005:3). The clear distinction here, and the one of greatest importance for NDL learners, is that it does not simply incorporate two or more languages in the classroom. Instead, the learner’s L1 is used as an LoI in all subjects, and the L2 is systematically introduced until students are both bilingual and biliterate, and should be able to participate fully in an L2 LoI environment.

2.3 Summary

According to a UNESCO Education Position Paper (2003:15), “[l]earning in a language which is not one’s own provides a double set of challenges, not only is there the challenge of learning a new language, but also that of learning new knowledge contained in that language”. However, this is the reality for thousands of schoolchildren around the world who do not have access to education in their mother tongue. Developing strong and sustainable MTBMLE programs will play a central role in providing quality education for children in NDL communities.
Chapter 3
Methodology

3.1 Preliminary Research
Initially, my intent was to analyze empirical data as a way to evaluate an MLE program. It quickly became apparent that both the sample size and available data would be insufficient for those purposes. I had access to a total of 39 students in 2 classes. The oldest students were still in G2, and had not yet taken the comprehensive national tests which are administered in Grade 3. In addition to the problems presented by a small sample size and a pilot project still in its early years, a statistical analysis of quantitative empirical data could only provide limited insight into the functionality of the MLE program. By shifting focus from an empirical analysis to an ethnographic study, I was able to incorporate a broader range of influencing factors in my analysis. Ethnographic research, using qualitative inquiry methods allowed me to draw on observations and descriptions of activities, interactions, and behaviours that are the breath and life of a program – all of which would be excluded using exclusively quantitative research methods.

I used Spradley (1980) and Patton (2002) as primary sources for planning and conducting an ethnographic study, focusing on the kinds of qualitative data it would be possible to collect, and determining what my role as a participant observer would be.

3.2 Preparation for Field Work
Before setting out to collect data, it was imperative to procure the necessary permissions and support. I was fortunate to be able to travel to Ban Pui with representatives of FAL when they made a site visit early in the school year. The director of FAL introduced me to key individuals, and secured permission for me to return to the school in September to begin my research. On that first visit, I was part of a group that included the FAL director, the Pwo Karen program coordinator, the supervisor from the regional education office in Hot, and an FAL MLE program advisor. We stayed in a hotel in Hot, and traveled to the village early each morning on the 21st and 22nd of June, 2012. Before leaving Hot, we stopped at the market and
picked up a wide selection of vegetables and other items. In time, I learned that it is
customary for both teachers and visitors to stop in Hot to load up on foodstuff and
other supplies for the school before making the trip to the village.

It was rainy season, and the roads were incredibly slick. The truck skidded
alarmingly on several occasions, creating some nervous tension in the vehicle as I
eyed the height of the drop-off on the side of the road. When we arrived at the
school, the constant drizzle put a chill in the air, and the lack of electricity added to
the impression of overall dimness. My Thai language skills were limited, and my
Pwo vocabulary non-existent. I relied on the director of FAL to make the necessary
introduction and arrangements, and on the program advisor to provide translations,
and insights into how the program operated. By the end of the second day, I had
received an invitation from the principal to come back and stay at the school in
September, and the promise of assistance from people in the village.

Upon my return to Chiang Mai, I divided my time during the next 2 months between
intensive Thai studies, continued reading of Patton and Spradley, and designing
sociolinguistic survey questions.

### 3.3 Data Collection

In September, my plan was to collect data during a single 4-week visit. I arranged to
stay at Ban Pui School with the teachers during the week, and travel back to either
Hot or Chiang Mai on the weekends. In actuality, data was collected during 4 site
visits including the introductory trip with FAL. Each visit posed unique challenges
and necessitated adapting my research methods. For this reason, each visit is dealt
with individually in the following sub-sections. However, some similarities existed in
each visit. I always got a ride from Chiang Mai to Ban Pui with the principal and/or
Thai teachers from the area. Once in Ban Pui, I had my own accommodation in one
of the school buildings where I could retreat for some privacy when necessary, but
ablution facilities were shared with others. Female teachers resided in two locations
on the school grounds, each with their own kitchen facilities. I split my meals
between the two, sharing with both.

Over the course of the four site visits, classroom observations were carried out every
day that school was in session. A total of 17 hours of video and audio recordings
were collected to complement manually recorded field notes. In addition, a total of
43 interviews, 27 of which were the parents or guardians of children in Grades 1
and 2, were conducted in 4 villages: Ban Pui, Ban Loom, GioLuk, and Ban Mai.
Interviews were conducted differently on each visit, for reasons detailed in the following sections, but the questions asked were all based on a modified sociolinguistic questionnaire used by language surveyors in Northern Thailand. The English version of the questionnaire is included in Appendix A. Collected data during the site visits also included formal and informal conversations with the Thai teachers, Pwo teachers, and the school’s principal.

While in the classrooms, I set up my camera at the back of the room, angled to capture as much of the space as possible. Both the G1 and G2 classrooms were arranged in a configuration closely resembling what is illustrated in Figure #3. During each visit, some of the students had been shifted to new desks within the configuration, but with the exception of the first day of visit #3, and during activities when the desks were moved to the periphery, the setup itself remained the same.

![Figure 3 Classroom Setup Grade 1]
Not shown in the diagrams above are low bookshelves that run the length of the windowed wall, and along the back of the classroom. The diagrams are not to scale, and are intended only to illustrate how students and teachers are situated within the classroom, along with the usual placement of my desk and camera.

3.3.1 Site Visit #1
As indicated in section 3.2, the first site visit was primarily to make necessary introductions and secure the permissions and support that I would need to conduct my research. I also used that time to do begin the first step in Spradley’s (1980) participant observation research sequence. For Spradley, any social situation is enclosed within a framework comprised of Place, Actors, and Activities. Every social situation can be connected to related social situations through: a cluster of social situations, linked by physical proximity, a network of social situations, linked by the same actors in different situations, or similarity of social situations, wherein similar activities are carried out with different actors in different locations. With these
relationships in mind, I focused on how and where participant interaction occurred, and attempted to identify frequently occurring activities within those interactions. At this point, I was attempting to identify potential areas of interest, which would provide ample observation opportunities for further research and analysis.

Although 92 minutes of video were collected during my initial site visit, I was cognizant of the fact that it was collected during a scheduled visit of authority figures. The classes I observed were showcase lessons, and I was interested to see if there would be any noticeable differences during subsequent observations. Due to the truncated length of the visit, and its introductory purpose, no interviews were conducted during the first visit.

3.3.2 Site Visit #2
The second site visit began on Tuesday September 11th, 2012 and ended on September 21st. I drove up to Ban Pui with the school principal and a teacher who was new at the school since my last visit. I was pleasantly surprised to discover that the principal spoke more English than I expected, and the new teacher was an English teacher. Over the course of my research, their assistance, insights and friendship were greatly appreciated. Although it is theoretically possible to make the trip from Chiang Mai to Ban Pui in 4 hours, I never made the trip without stopping for supplies, groceries, additional passengers, and meals. As a result the journey was always an all-day affair, sometimes taking upwards of 7 hours.

I slept in a sectioned off corner of the main building, and began my observations in earnest on Wednesday, after the principal had me introduce myself to the student body, and explain the purpose of my visit. I also explained to the teachers that I was just there to observe, although I did agree to teach the English lessons, as thanks for allowing me unlimited access to their classes. From here on, my observations followed a similar pattern. I set up my video camera and a small desk at the back of the classroom, and watched, recorded and made notes as the days’ lessons unfolded, paying particular attention to who was speaking when, and for what purpose. Although I couldn’t understand the Pwo being used, and only a smattering of the Thai, most of the time, participant behaviour provided the necessary context.

On my first visit, the school didn’t have electricity, and I came armed with a 4-week supply of batteries, notebooks and back-up recording devices. Most of these proved to be unnecessary, as power lines had recently been installed, and the entire village, including the school, started getting reliable electricity the week before I arrived.
During this, and subsequent visits, I was aware of my role as a participant observer. I had determined that I would engage in *passive participation*, described by Spradley (1980:59) as an ethnographer who is “present at the scene of action but does not participate or interact with other people to any great extent.” As Spradley suggested, I set up an observation post at the back of the room, and apart from smiling and greeting teachers and students as they walked past, set out to observe classroom patterns and routines. However, it soon became apparent that in actuality, I would be engaging in *moderate participation*, wherein the ethnographer, “seeks to maintain a balance between being an insider and an outsider” (Spradley 1980: 60). Despite introducing myself as an observer, the teachers introduced me to the students as another teacher, and the students henceforth addressed me as “Kruu Janice”, using the Thai honorific for teachers. As I had also agreed to teach some of the English lessons, the line between teacher and observer was understandably blurred, and was cause for confusion on some occasions.

In addition to classroom observations, I arranged to travel into the surrounding villages to conduct sociolinguistic surveys. Two difficulties were immediately apparent. One was simple enough to remedy, the other required a complete re-evaluation of the interview questions. A local man, a friend of the Pwo MLE coordinator from FAL, who often assisted the coordinator, offered to act as my driver/translator while I conducted my surveys. My interview questions were in Thai and English, and I provided my translator with a copy of the Thai questions. We set off one afternoon when he was available, and started approaching people in the community. He conducted the interviews in Pwo, based on the Thai questionnaire, while I recorded the exchange. By the end of the afternoon, it was clear that the only people in the village during the day were elderly men and women, too old to work in the gardens. While their responses were valuable and provided a good introduction to the linguistic backdrop of the village, their children were long past school age. It was determined that all subsequent interviews would be conducted in the evenings, after the parents of young children had returned from their gardens. This meant that the window for conducting interviews shrank to the three hours between 5-8 pm, between villagers returning from the gardens, and turning in for the night. The second problem stemmed from the questionnaire itself. Although I had tested it in Chiang Mai, a large number of questions, especially referring to domains of language use, and languages spoken by family members, were pointless in the village context. Before conducting any more interviews, I decided to revamp my questionnaire, making it more appropriate for the realities of language use in Ban Pui. The English version of the adjusted questionnaire can be found in
Appendix. I pre-tested an early revised version of the questionnaire with three Pwo parents before leaving the village that week, and produced more copies upon my return to Chiang Mai.

During the first week at Ban Pui School, I learned that teachers were busy preparing for an exhibition in Chiang Mai on the 28th of September. As a result, normal classroom procedure was interrupted as one of the other teachers gathered video footage of MLE course components. The G1 and G2 Thai teachers would be away for the next two weeks, preparing for the exhibition, and the Pwo teachers would be teaching the full curriculum. Since I would be unable to observe interaction between the Thai and Pwo teachers in the classroom, I briefly considered shifting my focus to village interviews for the next 2 weeks, until the wife of my translator/interview assistant had a baby on Monday night. At this point, I realized that prolonging my visit would be futile, and arranged to return to Chiang Mai with the teachers on the weekend, planning to come back to Ban Pui again at a later date.

Between visits 2 and 3, I revamped my questionnaire, and reviewed my collected data in order to narrow down my focus, and plan what to concentrate on in my next visit.

### 3.3.3 Site Visit #3

My third site visit ran from January 21st through January 25th, 2013. I drove up with the principal on Monday, and had the opportunity to speak with her about her experiences at the school, with the staff and students. We arrived late in the afternoon, and this time, I stayed in a newly appointed nurse’s station instead of in the main building. In addition to the nurse’s station, other changes at the school were immediately evident. New bathrooms and playground equipment had been constructed for the kindergarten area, teachers now had computers and printers hooked up in their classrooms, and in the absence of rain, some students and teachers were playing volleyball together in the schoolyard. Perhaps it was the change in weather, improvements to the school grounds, my increased familiarity with my surroundings, or the warm reception I received from teachers and students upon my arrival, but I already had a much cheerier outlook on this visit.

In the morning, I reprised my role as an observer, and collected several hours of video footage. In the evenings, one or more teachers came with me to conduct interviews in the village, as my translator from my previous visit was unavailable.
During this visit, I collected about 12 hours of video in the classrooms, plus the additional audio recordings. However, despite reconfiguring my survey, I was still running into problems gathering data from parents in the village. Conducting the interviews with the help of the Thai teachers from Ban Pui was posing unforeseen difficulties. I noticed that their presence made some of the parents a little more cautious about answering questions relating to the school, its programs, or the use of Thai. I decided to see if there was any way my Pwo translator, who was raised in Ban Pui, would be free to come with me on the next trip. I thought her presence would make the parents more comfortable.

On Wednesday, when I set out for my 2nd round of interviews, I had an hour of tape in my camera and a full battery. At some point during the 1st interview, which I felt was going very well, the camera shut off. I was unable to retrieve any of the data from it, and even after returning to Chiang Mai, I was unable to salvage any of that particular interview. I recorded the rest of the interviews that night on my iPod before its batteries died. The video camera remained inoperable, so on Thursday and Friday; I had to rely on detailed field notes and several short audio recordings during the day to gather data during my classroom observations.

In addition, conducting closed interviews was nearly impossible. Since most of the interviews were conducted outside on the porch, other villagers and family members frequently dropped by, and participated in the interview. Also, since the children were usually present during the interview, when I asked a parent about what their child likes or dislikes at school, they turned and asked the child. For that question, the only thing I could clearly ascertain was that the students really like pencils. They always responded that they like everything about school - especially since their teacher was right there to hear their answer. Some parents seemed nervous to speak with me or with the Thai teachers.

Furthermore, communication was hampered since neither I nor the Thai teachers spoke Pwo. I did not have this adapted questionnaire translated into written Thai, but I had learned the questions and could ask them in passable Thai. I would ask the questions in Thai, and if the parent understood my question, she would answer in Thai, and the Thai teacher would translate her response into English for me. If the parent did not understand my question, the Thai teacher would repeat it in Thai to a nearby student, who would then translate into Pwo, and the response would come back to me through Thai and English. Later, when working with my translator, we listened to these interviews again, checking the accuracy of the responses. In several
interviews, the Pwo response to the question, “What are the most important things for children to learn at school?” was translated through Thai as ‘knowledge’. However, upon reviewing the recordings, it was discovered that in Pwo, parents had been differentiating between ‘book knowledge’, ‘general knowledge’ and ‘social knowledge’.

Before driving back to Chiang Mai with several other teachers on Friday afternoon, I scheduled another trip for February 18th-22nd. A team from the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) would be visiting the school on the 18th, and the principal invited me to come up especially for that day. I planned to stay on at the school for the rest of the week, after the UNICEF team left, and continue collecting data.

3.3.4 Site Visit #4

Unfortunately, illness kept me from traveling during the week that the UNICEF team was in Ban Pui, and I had to reschedule my visit for the end of the school term, March 18th-22nd. Since it was the end of the term, and classes were winding down, this final visit was the least productive of my site visits in terms of classroom observations. However, my language assistant was free that week, and met me in the village. With her help, it turned out to be the most productive and informative visit for observations and interactions with the students’ families.

I got a ride to the village with teachers from Chiang Mai, and by the time we had stopped to pick up other teachers along the way, there were a total of 10 of us in the pick-up truck, along with our luggage and groceries for the week. I had taken motion-sickness medication, which made me drowsy, but I was still able to ask the teachers some questions about their experiences to add to my understanding of how the school functions. I also discovered that the school would only be in session for the first half of the week. Since lessons were finished, the G1 and 2 classrooms would not be having regular classes on Monday or Tuesday. Wednesday was a graduation ceremony for the oldest students, and Thursday and Friday were work days for the teachers.

Instead of focusing on the classrooms, I spent time on Monday and Tuesday at the school interviewing the teachers, and with my language assistant in the village interviewing a few parents who were not in their gardens. Since this was the low season, some people were only going to their gardens every other day, and it was easier to find some at home during the day than it had been on previous visits. My language assistant asked all the questions in either Pwo or Thai, depending on the
parent’s preference, and translated the responses directly into English for me. Conducting interviews with my language assistant proved to be fortuitous, as parents were more relaxed, and happy to chat with her about the MLE program. I was able to obtain more detailed answers to my questions, as well as additional information not included in the official survey. Unlike my previous survey attempts, which were fraught with both technical and human difficulties, only one interview was interrupted and needed to be cut short, for reasons explained below.

The week before I arrived, a young man from Ban Mai had gone missing. Some villagers believed that spirits in the forest had blinded him, and were preventing him from finding his way home. I conducted my interviews in Ban Mai during this time, while the man’s whereabouts was still unknown. As we sat down for our final interview of the evening, the interview subject’s phone rang with news of a body found in the woods near Omkoi. We continued to talk with her about the phone call, but decided not to carry on with the interview. As we left, word had spread and a group of villagers was already preparing to travel to Omkoi.

On Thursday and Friday, the school was closed as teachers went to Ban Pui’s NFE sister school in Mae Tieng to help clean up the grounds and make repairs. I moved into my language assistant’s mother’s house near the school, and we continued conducting interviews in Ban Mai and GioLuk.

3.4 Data Analysis

After returning to Chiang Mai, my language assistant and I worked together full-time for the month of April translating and transcribing the collected data. We watched all the collected videos, and listened to all the audio data. The transcriptions we came up with were a combination of broad topical transcriptions which were condensed using amalgamated language (ie “The teacher asked who was finished their seatwork”), and more detailed interlinearized transcriptions using the verbatim principle. This seemed like the most efficient way to ensure we had a complete record of what was happening in the classroom at all times and gave us time to focus on instances of language use which were salient to the focus of this study.

As we watched the videos together, conversations with my language assistant were invaluable in providing further insight into the MLE program at Ban Pui School. Since she had graduated from Ban Pui School herself, she was able to compare her experience as a student to what she was observing in the videos. Early on, she noted how active and confident the students were, and that the degree of participation she
witnessed in the MLE classroom far surpassed the level at which she and her classmates had participated during their early elementary years.

After viewing the video footage with my language assistant for topical content, I watched the videos again to summarize how much classroom time was spent in Pwo Karen, and how much was in Thai. I also noted how much time was spent on three specific educational processes in each language, and a fourth category for other interactions. These four categories were: teaching, classroom management, seatwork and other activities. Teaching as a process included time a Thai or Pwo teacher spent in front of the whole class presenting a lesson, and time teachers spent with individual students or small groups answering questions, assisting in seatwork or listening to students read. Classroom management included instances of volume control, behaviour modification, desk arrangement or other steps taken to keep children on-task. Seatwork included time spent working individually on assigned curricular tasks. This process was perhaps the most fluid, and often overlapped with some of the other processes. The fourth category was used to account for observed behaviours and interactions which are not directly related to the curriculum, and included, but were not limited to, interactions surrounding lunch time, conversations about village activities, or student haircuts. Often referred to as interactions in the third space, these interactions do not fall neatly into any of the three defined processes, but are an integral part of shaping a child’s educational and developmental experiences. In most instances, identifying each process was straightforward, although some situations were difficult to classify. These cases will be discussed further in the appropriate sections.

After the time spent in each language and activity had been calculated, I watched the videos again, and listened to the collected audio recordings to analyze the linguistic utterances occurring between participants in each of the processes. Using conversational analysis techniques and ethnographic principles, I began to identify evidence of recurring themes and linguistic behaviours. In transcribing the dialogues, I provided both the original Thai or Pwo orthography whenever possible, along with a simplified pronunciation guide, an English gloss in italics, and a free translation in bold. As tones are inherent in the Thai and Pwo orthographies, they were not included elsewhere, unless required for clarity. In those cases, tones were indicated with the following symbols: ˥ (high), ４ (mid), ˩ (low), ˩ (rising) and ４ (falling). Additionally, abbreviations were used for question particles (QP) and politeness particles (PP). In the transcriptions, parentheses (·) indicate additional or elided information, single square brackets [ · ] reveal pertinent but non-linguistic
information, double square brackets [[ - ]] indicate interruptions and subsequent overlap, chevrons < - > surround non-lexical utterances, and bold or underlined segments underscore salient points and are addressed individually in the relevant discussions.

3.5 Limitations

Setbacks and limitations are unavoidable and an expected element in ethnographic fieldwork. Since it is impossible to plan for every contingency, it is imperative to recognize and adjust for limitations as they arise. This section acknowledges limitations encountered in both fieldwork and analysis, and indicates how each was addressed. It is my belief that none of the limitations proved to be either catastrophic or insurmountable.

The most obvious limitation was my lack of fluency in either Thai or Pwo Karen. My Thai skills were basic at best, and my Pwo Karen non-existent. As a result, there was often a delay between collecting data, and having that data translated. It was difficult to ask relevant follow-up questions during some interviews, and not always possible to ask for clarification or feedback from teachers in situ.

While conducting interviews in the village, a wide range of inconsistencies in the process made the data collected statistically unreliable. Nonetheless, the responses gathered from local parents provided insights and possibilities which may otherwise have eluded me. The different individuals who accompanied me from house to house, and acted as translators or interpreters made a noticeable difference in the comfort and demeanor of the respondents, making it a strong possibility that responses were also affected. When accompanied by Thai teachers from the school, some respondents appeared nervous, or adopted what seemed to be a formal attitude, similar to what I had seen when teachers visited families on official school business. In these interviews, respondents rarely volunteered information beyond bare answers to the questions. However, when my local translator was able to accompany me, respondents appeared to be more relaxed and talkative, and curious about my presence in the village. They were also more comfortable responding in their L1, and often chose to do so. For these reasons, data collected from the interviews was not subjected to rigorous statistical analysis. Instead, it was used to provide a contextual backdrop to the collected classroom data.

Collecting audio and video data from the classrooms also had some limitations. First, the audio was not always able to pick up conversations of interest. Sometimes, this
was due to high levels of background noise from other classrooms or the school yard. Other times, conversations between Thai and Pwo teachers were conducted quietly, and not in close proximity to the microphone. Occasionally, it was simply impossible to follow a thread of conversation through the cacophony of a classroom full of excited primary school students. Secondly, during the first two site visits, a clear research focus had not yet been determined. As a result, attempts were made to collect as broad a range of school events as possible. Therefore, video footage moves from location to location, rather than being set to run continuously in one classroom during the day. This clearly had an effect on gauging times for selected processes.

Finally, the occasional disruptions inherent in the elementary school operations affected data collection. The two main obstacles were the absence of the Thai teachers during preparations for an exhibition, as discussed in section 3.3.2, and one afternoon during the third site visit when both G1 and G2 Thai teachers and Pwo teachers were detained in a meeting for an hour and a half after lunch, interrupting the planned schedule.
Chapter 4
Expectations and Observations

Different stakeholders participate in pilot projects with their own expectations. This chapter will draw on information collected through interviews, internal documents and distributed publications to provide insight into what stakeholders in the MTBMLE pilot project at Ban Pui School anticipate.

4.1 Ministry of Education Expectations

While government policies are often far removed from the realities of actual MLE program implementation, “the active support [of policymakers] is essential for the programmes’ long-term success. One of their most important contributions is in establishing a political climate that supports strong mother tongue-based MLE” (UNESCO, 2007(b):11). In Thailand, policy makers are becoming increasingly aware of the need for changes in the traditional approach to education in NDL communities, although there continues to be some disagreement as to what those changes should be.

The following quote from Kosonen (2013:46) sums up the most current core expectations of the Thai government in regards to multilingual education:

> 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*. (NLP, 2010, Section 5, emphasis added)

The primary role of MLE, in the eyes of the MoE, is to improve students’ proficiency in Thai. A secondary goal is to promote overall cognitive development. National standardized tests are administered in Grades 3 and 6 to gauge student achievement. Traditionally, students from NDL communities do not perform well on these tests. In other MTBMLE pilot projects, the MOE is using the national Grade 3 test to evaluate the validity and impact of MTBMLE programs. These tests are all administered in Thai, so proficiency in Thai language, academic areas, and familiarity with test
taking techniques are essential. Although the quantitative test results only represent a small portion of the impact of MLE, it tends to be the measure by which policy makers determine whether or not a pilot program is successful, or worth expanding.

The MoE also requires that MLE programs adhere to the national curriculum. All Thai schools are mandated to provide early elementary students with a minimum of seven hours of Thai language instruction per week, in addition to the prescribed number of hours for other subjects. While MLE programs are given the freedom to use local languages as the LoI for other subjects, the inclusion of at least 420 minutes of Thai is not negotiable.

4.2 Program Developer Expectations
FAL is responsible for developing the MLE curriculum and training national language teachers and local language teachers in its implementation, with technical assistance from SIL International. The content of the curriculum is aligned with the national Thai curriculum, so students in MLE programs are learning the same content as their counterparts in monolingual schools. There is little difference in what is taught, only how it is presented. FAL is currently working to incorporate more culturally specific material into the curriculum alongside the Thai curriculum standards.

According to recent scholarship on best practices in MLE programs, as discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, students’ L1 should be used as the LoI for a minimum of five to seven years (UNESCO, 2008), with national and/or global languages being introduced gradually, first through listening, then speaking, and finally, introducing literacy in the L2 after literacy skills in the L1 have been established. Table 1 shows the progression of introducing the L2 in Ban Pui School, which is based on the plan constructed for use in FAL’s first MLE pilot project, and has been used in subsequent projects.
Table 1 Use of L1 and L2 in MLE Pilot Programs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>KG 1</th>
<th>KG 2</th>
<th>Grade 1</th>
<th>Grade 2</th>
<th>Grade 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Language of Instruction</td>
<td>Pwo</td>
<td>Pwo</td>
<td>Pwo: to explain &amp; summarize</td>
<td>Pwo: to test understanding</td>
<td>Pwo: to test understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Thai: to explain &amp; summarize &amp; test understanding &amp; summarize</td>
<td></td>
<td>Thai: to explain, summarize &amp; test understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Thai: to give vocabulary</td>
<td></td>
<td>Thai: to explain &amp; summarize &amp; test understanding &amp; summarize</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Language as a Subject</td>
<td>Pwo: listening &amp; speaking</td>
<td>Pwo: listening, speaking, reading &amp; writing</td>
<td>Pwo: listening, speaking, reading &amp; writing</td>
<td>Pwo: listening, speaking, reading &amp; writing</td>
<td>Pwo: listening, speaking, reading &amp; writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thai: listening</td>
<td>Thai: listening</td>
<td>Thai: listening, speaking, reading &amp; writing</td>
<td>Thai: listening, speaking, reading &amp; writing</td>
<td>Thai: listening, speaking, reading &amp; writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thai: listening &amp; speaking</td>
<td>Thai: listening &amp; speaking</td>
<td>Thai: listening, speaking, reading &amp; writing</td>
<td>Thai: listening, speaking, reading &amp; writing</td>
<td>Thai: listening, speaking, reading &amp; writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>English: listening</td>
<td>English: listening &amp; speaking</td>
<td>English: listening &amp; speaking</td>
<td>English: listening &amp; speaking</td>
<td>English: listening &amp; speaking</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When students enter G1 at Ban Pui School, they have basic oral Thai skills acquired during two years in Kindergarten. One of the students in G1 is new to the community, and did not go through the MLE Kindergarten program. All the other students completed two years of the kindergarten MLE program before starting G1, where oral Thai continues to be used to add vocabulary to lessons. By the second term of G1, students learn to read and write Thai during Thai language class. In G1, students are also exposed to oral English vocabulary for the first time. In G2, the use of Thai as an LoI increases, and literacy skills continue to be developed in both Pwo and Thai. English instruction progresses from receptive (listening) to productive
(speaking). All of the students in G2 have been in the MLE program at Ban Pui School since its implementation.

According to the class schedule as seen in Table 2, most lessons are designed to be 45 minutes long, except for English classes (25 minutes), Art (80 minutes) and Review (20 minutes).

**Table 2 Allocated times for each subject**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Minutes of study/week</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pwo Language</td>
<td>225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thai Language</td>
<td>450</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Language</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math</td>
<td>225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Subjects</td>
<td>440</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other*</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>1590</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pwo language classes and Math classes are scheduled to take place once every day. Thai classes are scheduled twice a day, with the first lesson of the day focusing on pronunciation, and the second focusing on meaning and accuracy. Two 25-minute English lessons are scheduled twice a week, while other subjects, including Social Studies, Science, History, Health, and Employment are scheduled in 45-minute segments throughout the week, but not every day. In Figure 4, the 200 minutes in the ‘Other’ category include lessons outside the scope of this study. These minutes include lessons which take place outside the classroom (Scouts - 45 minutes, and Sports - 90 minutes), an optional Review lesson (20 minutes) which was never observed, and Ethics (45 minutes), which is scheduled to take place on Friday afternoon from 2:45-3:30 pm. However, since the school adjourns early every Friday at 2:30 pm to allow the Thai teachers time to get home, this lesson fills a time slot on the schedule, but is never practiced. In addition to the instruction time, two 15 minute breaks are scheduled, one every morning from 10:00-10:15 am, and one every afternoon from 2:30-2:45 pm.
According to the MLE program plan, Thai and Pwo language classes are to be conducted almost exclusively in their respective languages, unless the lesson requires translating from one language to another. Thai and English language lessons are designed to employ the Total Physical Response (TPR) method of language instruction, although it is not always used. Other subjects are to be presented in a style referred to as a sandwich lesson, wherein students are given 20 minutes of content instruction in their L1, followed by 10 minutes of Thai vocabulary and instruction relevant to the lesson. After the Thai component, the Pwo TA returns to wrap up the lesson, usually to answer questions and assign seatwork for the remaining 15 minutes. The length of the Thai intervals does not increase between G1 and 2, but the content changes. In G2, focus shifts from providing vocabulary to building on known vocabulary and adding Thai explanations and summaries of the material.

Based on the schedule and lesson plans for G1 and G2, the distribution of time spent in each language should be similar in both grades. Pwo and Thai language use in the classroom should be similar to the distribution seen in Figure 5.

![Figure 5 Scheduled Language Use in Grades 1 & 2](image)

When program developers talk about MTBMLE programs, they tend to present L1 and L2 language use in terms of a 75:25 ratio, since the L2 only accounts for 25% percent of instruction during a sandwich lesson. However, when Thai language classes, taught as a subject twice a day, are factored in, and added to the 10 minutes of content in other lessons, Thai should actually account for approximately 45% of the language used in the classroom. Time spent in Pwo, the primary LoI, should account for over half the overall time at 52%, and the remaining 3% is accounted for by English classes. However, as shown in the following section, the actual
distribution of language use, based on the collected video data, was more heavily weighted in favour of Pwo.

**4.3 Teacher Expectations**

Once the curriculum is developed and initial teacher training has taken place, control over the output of the program rests with the teachers who implement it. Thai and Pwo teachers continue to participate in in-service training throughout the school year, but serve as the front lines of program implementation with relative autonomy inside the classroom.

Teachers have the freedom to modify the schedule, as long as they continue to meet the content criteria set by the MoE. Like the timetable proposed by FAL; Pwo, Math and Thai make up the bulk of the weekly teaching activities. When asked how much time they actually spend teaching in Thai, their responses corresponded with the proposed schedule, although they considered each 45 minute block as a full hour of teaching. By their own estimations, they teach 2 hours of Thai/day, plus 10 minutes during each content lesson. Thai teachers also self-reported spending at least an hour a day talking with students outside of teaching. This was time spent talking to students during the school day, and did not include interactions in and around the school yard outside of school hours.

Conversations with both the Thai teachers and the Pwo teachers indicate that they are satisfied with the amount of training they receive, and the teachers in both classrooms showed an appreciation for the variety of materials available for them to use. They indicated they felt well-equipped to teach the MLE curriculum. Although teaching at Ban Pui school was their first exposure to MLE and TPR methods, both Thai teachers expressed their appreciation for the resources. Both Thai teachers had previous experience teaching in other government schools in Thailand, and discussed the differences evident between the MLE students in Ban Pui School, and in other Thai schools. Both teachers reported that their students here are more assertive, want to participate in all the activities, and are more confident than students from NDL communities at their previous schools.

**4.4 Community Expectations**

As mentioned above, some community members were skeptical of the MLE program. They recognize the importance of building proficiency in Central Thai as a way to
more fully engage both economically and socially within Thailand and wanted their children to learn Thai quickly and early.

During interviews with parents and caregivers of the children in Grades 1 and 2, it quickly became apparent that their hopes and expectations for their children were not hinged on simply learning Thai. Indeed, proficiency in Thai is a necessary component to achieving the hopes parents held, but their hopes for their children require linguistic proficiency in addition to complex cognitive skills.

In total, interviews were initiated in a total of 27 households with children in G1 and G2. Of those interviews, two were incomplete due to extenuating circumstances. The remaining twenty-five completed interviews accounted for 14 children in G1 and 11 children in G2. Most of the interviews were with children’s mothers, who ranged in age from 25-45. Seven interviews were with children’s grandparents and primary caregivers. Only one completed interview was with a male caregiver, the father of one of the students. All other interviews were with mothers and grandmothers. In a few homes, fathers were present during the interviews, but chose not to participate in answering questions. While it is outside the scope of this thesis, the dearth of male participants in children’s education may account, at least partially, for the high drop-out rate among male students. Recent research in Canada has started to examine the links between father involvement and education (Ball, 2009& 2010; Allen & Daly, 2007). According to the principal at Ban Pui School, around 80% of the girls are going on to further education, but only 20% of the boys will continue on to higher education. On at least one occasion, only three boys in the entire Grade 9 class came to school.

Of the twenty-five completed interviews, 15 caregivers had never been to school, 9 had completed some elementary schooling and 1 had completed middle school. However, all of them said that they thought it was important, or very important for their children to attend school. The majority (13 caregivers) expressed a desire to see their children stay in school through university, or for as long as the families could afford to send them. Others said they hoped their children would complete middle or high school (1 caregiver), high school (1 caregiver), or that it was up to the children to decide how long they wanted to stay in school (8 caregivers).

When asked, “What do you want to see for your children in the future?” respondents gave a strong indication that their hopes for their children rested on obtaining a good education. Many respondents provided more than one answer to this question, with 22 replies showing a preference for a comfortable life or good job. 11 specified
either doctor or teacher as desirable professions. Of all the responses, those were the only two professions specified. Other responses indicated a preference for children to live close to home and care for their elders (7), while others either answered that they didn’t know (3) or that the choice of profession was up to the children (5). In one of the incomplete interviews, the student herself chose to answer this question after her caregiver had stopped answering questions. She confidently spoke up and said that she wanted to be a nurse. In order to live up to these hopes, students will require both Thai language skills, and strong academic skills. Simply learning to speak, or even read and write Thai well will not be sufficient to achieve these goals.

According to the self-reported language proficiency of the caregivers, 8 were monolingual Pwo speakers, while the remaining caregivers (17) could speak a second language or third language: Northern Thai, Central Thai, or both at least well enough to shop at the market in larger centers. The majority of respondents reported being proud of both their language and culture. 20 were proud to speak Pwo, 1 was not, and 4 did not respond to that question. Similarly, 20 considered themselves to be first and foremost culturally Pwo, and Thai second. 1 considered herself to be Thai first, 2 thought of themselves as equally Pwo and Thai, and 2 people did not respond to the question. All of the respondents felt that children in their villages spoke Pwo well, and most felt that the vitality of Pwo in their region was not threatened. For these reasons, most respondents (21) wanted their children to be able to read and write Pwo. Only one caregiver felt that only English and Thai ought to be taught in the school. Most respondents wanted their children to learn Pwo because they are proud to be Karen, and feel that children should have the opportunity to learn their own language.

Based on these interviews, caregivers showed strong support for their children’s education, and pride in their own culture and language. Offering an education that allows their children to develop literacy and other academic skills in their own language appeals to many parents, as long as the opportunity to learn Thai well is not compromised. At this early stage of the pilot program, no parents felt that their children in G1 or 2 demonstrated stronger Thai abilities than their older siblings, but no parents felt that they displayed lower Thai proficiency either. Most parents, when asked, felt that their child’s Thai skills would steadily improve, and did not feel that learning Pwo was hindering their progress in learning Thai.

While caregivers did not notice a difference in their child’s Thai language proficiency, they did notice a greater difference in their child’s comprehension of
lessons, and their own ability to participate in their child’s education. In part, parents’ acceptance of the program hinges on their relationships and interactions with the school. While the school maintained a monolingual Thai curriculum, communication between teachers and parents who didn’t speak Thai was limited. Furthermore, some parents could not understand what their children were learning.

Since the introduction of the MTBMLE program, parents report their satisfaction at being able to understand and participate in their children’s education. Some parents reported that they enjoy attending assemblies and events at the school now, since they can understand what their children are saying, singing, presenting and reading. Some show less hesitation in approaching teachers with questions and concerns about their children’s needs. One parent even made a point of saying how impressed she was that the principal at Ban Pui learned a few phrases in the local language. While she was visiting the school one day, the principal extended an invitation, in Pwo, to eat together. Even though the principal is not conversant in Pwo, simply taking the time to learn a few key phrases, clearly made a positive impression on the parent.

4.5 Observed Language Use
The actual observed distribution of Thai and Pwo in Grades 1 and 2 was considerably different than what is projected both by the proposed timetable and by the teachers themselves. As seen in Figures 6 and 7, the amount of Thai being used in the classroom is less than expected.

![Figure 6 Language Distribution in Grade 2](image)

The observed distribution in the G2 classroom favoured Pwo by 11% above expectations. Pwo accounted for 63% of class time in recorded data, Thai 36%, and
English 1%. The English lesson observed was only partially recorded, partially explaining the lower number. The observed language use distribution in G1 was even more pronounced, as shown in Figure 7 below.

![Figure 7 Language Distribution in Grade 1](image)

In G1, time was divided as follows: 70% Pwo, 25% Thai and 5% English. As in G2, most of the English time was the result of English lessons, but also included English testing, and the occasional English TPR directives given by the Thai teacher during other lessons.

This discrepancy in distribution has two related outcomes. The greater than expected time spent using Pwo in the classroom seems to stem from longer than scheduled amounts of seatwork. During the times when neither of the teachers are actively presenting lessons, students talk with each other almost exclusively in Pwo. This opportunity to freely process information in their L1 helps them develop their cognitive skills, and reinforces the value of their L1 and its place in an academic framework. However, the less than expected amount of time spent using Thai may impact the speed at which students build proficiency in their L2.

It is also important to note that each language shows an extreme unevenness of distribution across processes. How each language is used has greater ramifications than simply recognizing how often it is used. In the classroom, the interplay of curricular and extra-curricular activities creates different spaces for communication and learning. Entire books have been written on how interactions during these spaces impact a child’s education and development. While it is impossible to provide an exhaustive examination in this thesis, differences in language use across processes were starkly apparent, and are well worth mentioning here. For the purposes of this
thesis, classroom processes were interpreted to be Teaching (when the teacher is standing in a prominent location, delivering a planned lesson to the entire class, or assisting students in completing their assigned tasks), Seatwork (when students are given time to complete clearly assigned tasks in order to complete the requirements of the lesson), Classroom Management (communication required for the maintenance of class functionality) and Other (when participants are in the classroom, but not engaged in any of the above activities). At times, the line between Seatwork and Other was indistinct. Often, a task would be assigned, and therefore be classified as seatwork, but students would be given an excessive amount of time to complete the task, until the majority of students were either finished, or no longer on-task. Nonetheless, periods of seatwork were determined to begin when the task was assigned, and to finish when the teacher precipitated a change by redirecting the students to a new lesson, task or activity.

**Figure 8 Processes in Grade 1**

In the G1 classroom, the bulk of Thai language use in the class (79%) is used by the teacher to deliver lessons, whereas the majority of Pwo language use in the classroom (66%) occurs when students are left to their own devices to complete assigned tasks. To keep these numbers in perspective, it must be noted that the entire distribution of each activity in G1, regardless of language, is as follows: Seatwork – 52%, Teaching – 34%, Other – 11% and Management 3%. Nonetheless, the differences in distribution of how each language is used are clear.
The differences are equally pronounced in G2, as seen in Figure 7. A similar distribution is evident, with the vast majority of Thai language use being dedicated to teaching (85%), and the majority of Pwo language use occurring during seatwork (67%). The distribution of each activity in G2, language notwithstanding, is more evenly balanced between seatwork and teaching. The actual percentages are: Seatwork – 43%, Teaching – 42%, Other – 8% and Management 7%.

Figure 9 Processes in Grade 2

In both classes, there is also a difference in how much time is dedicated to classroom management. Since both teaching and classroom management are exclusively reserved for teachers speaking to students, this means that Thai teachers in Grades 1 and 2 use 88% and 97% of their communicative time teaching, admonishing, instructing, disciplining and correcting students, whereas in both classes, only 22% of Pwo language use was dedicated to those forms of communication. The relevance of this distinction will be discussed in the following chapters.

4.6 Summary

In brief, the MoE appears to be content to allow MLE pilot projects in NDL areas, so long as the curriculum adheres to the national standard. However, the future of these MLE projects may depend, at least in part, on the performance of students in the national standardized tests as students in the pilot programs approach their third and sixth years of elementary school. In the meantime, program developers continue
to encourage strong literacy skills in the L1 as a means of bridging to the L2. Although students are taught curriculum content in both Pwo and Thai, there is a demonstrably uneven distribution in the amount of time spent in classroom processes in either language.
Chapter 5
Language Use In Parallel Relationships

This chapter will examine how, and for what purposes, language was used in the classroom between peers. The term parallel relationship is used here to denote interaction between individuals who share similarities in age and social status within the classroom. Relationships between Thai teachers & Thai teachers, Pwo Teachers & Pwo Teachers, and students & students are determined to be parallel relationships. The relationships between Thai teachers & Pwo teachers constitute a quasi-parallel relationship paradigm, as differences in education, training and salaries (and thus differences in social status outside the classroom) are indicative of a vertical relationship. While Chapter 6 addresses language use in vertical relationships, the similarities Thai teachers and Pwo teachers share in terms of age and roles as professional educators are constituent elements of a parallel relationship within the confines of the classroom, and are thus included in this chapter.

The following sections will examine how language is used in interactions between participants sharing similarities in age and status within the classroom.

5.1 Thai Teacher/Thai Teacher
Since there is only one Thai teacher and one Pwo teacher assigned to each classroom, prolonged interaction between two or more Thai teachers or two or more Pwo teachers in the classroom during the school day was not expected. However, both the layout of the school, and the nature of the MLE classroom provides teachers opportunities to interact with each other more frequently than teachers in monolingual classrooms. A low wall runs along the outside edge of the classroom corridor, and when not teaching their own lesson component, teachers frequently sit on it while the other classroom teacher conducts their respective lesson, and talk to other teachers or students passing by. Amongst the teachers, these conversations cover all manner of topics, both work related and social. However, since they occur outside the classroom, these interactions fall outside the scope of this thesis, and were not recorded.

Nonetheless, throughout the school day, teachers would occasionally interact with one another inside the classroom. These interactions were not limited to the Grades
1 and 2 teachers, as other teachers would also come to the classroom for a variety of reasons. Often, direct interaction between teachers was conducted using Northern Thai, not Central Thai. Interaction between the teachers appeared to be casual, relaxed and friendly. These interactions usually occurred near lunch time, as some Thai teachers were released from teaching duties to prepare meals. If other Thai teachers could be found near the open classroom door, short personal exchanges covering a variety of topics would take place.

Infrequent exchanges inside the classroom centered on immediate school/classroom concerns. One such event occurred during the set-up of video recording equipment, as teachers discussed how best to capture an example activity in preparation for a special exhibition in Chiang Mai the following week. During this time, the children sat in a semi-circle for approximately 10 minutes awaiting further instruction, while the Thai teachers discussed practical arrangements and concerns. This conversation, as shown in Dialogue 1, was carried out in Northern Thai. (For a list of conventions employed in dialogue transcriptions, please refer to Chapter 3, section 3.4)

**Dialogue 1 Thai Teacher/Thai Teacher (Northern Thai)**

[Video 2-2, 1:11:13]

TT1 = Thai Teacher (Female)  TT2 = Thai Teacher (Male)

**TT1 01**

หนังสือเล่มใหญ่มีอยู่กี่
nong sii lem yai mii yuu goh-haa
book bind big have already question

*Do you have the big book already?*

**TT2 02**

มีๆ
mii mii
have have

*Yes, I have it*

**TT1 03**

ต้องเล่มใหม่

ดีเล่มใหม่นะ
dii lem mai na
At bind new that one

*I want a new one*
In FAL supported MLE schools, teachers are responsible for helping to make the big books used in literacy classes. Part of the process involved binding or stitching the pages together. In the dialogue above, while one teacher set up the camera to record the big book lesson, the classroom teacher sought a new book, one the students had not yet seen. While it is interesting to note that the teacher who bound the books was not one of the MLE teachers, the conversation itself is unremarkable, except that it is conducted in Northern Thai. Northern Thai, also known as Kham Meuang, is a LWC in Hot, and other commercial towns surrounding Ban Pui. It is closely related to Central Thai, but classified as a separate language. Even in lexically similar words, differences in tone make Northern Thai distinct from Central Thai. The Thai teachers encountered at Ban Pui School speak Northern Thai as an L1, and use it amongst themselves as a language of camaraderie. In the conversation above, Northern Thai tones were used throughout, along with the specifically Northern Thai question word ‘ก่อหา’, underlined in line 01. During this interaction, students were assembled in a semi-circle, waiting for the lesson to begin. As the teachers spoke to each other in Northern Thai, the students turned towards them and listened attentively, even though the teachers were not speaking to them, nor did the teachers seem to be aware of the students’ attentiveness. Until greater proficiency is gained in Thai, students listening to their Thai teachers speak Northern Thai with each other may have to work hard to distinguish Northern and Central Thai vocabulary and pronunciation, possibly delaying their acquisition of Central Thai.

**5.2 Pwo Teacher/Pwo Teacher**

Interaction between Pwo teachers was less frequent than interaction between Thai teachers, likely for the simple reason that there are only 2 Pwo elementary teachers and 2 Pwo Kindergarten teachers at the school, but 13 Thai teachers. Like the interactions between the Thai teachers, interaction between the Pwo teachers also appeared to be relaxed and friendly, but dealt more frequently with student-related concerns outside the classroom. For example, in Dialogue 2, the mother of a G1 student had approached one of the Pwo kindergarten teachers, asking if someone could take her son to the clinic for his vaccination, since he had refused to go with her. The kindergarten teacher came into the G1 classroom as students were working
on seatwork, and asked the G1 Pwo teacher if she could convince the student to go to the clinic, resulting in the following conversation:

Dialogue 2 Pwo Teacher/Pwo Teacher

[Video 2-1, 1:10:41]

PT1 = Pwo Teacher(Kindergarten)  PT2 = Pwo Teacher

PT1:  

\[\begin{align*}
01 & \text{ จ่๊เมา่ น โอ่งจี้๊ ย่๊ร์ มี่นี่ ชี อ่า} \\
& \text{ jae mei nuh angja a muh-ni [shi-ah]} \\
& \text{ she-say if you ask him maybe-agree [unsure]} \\
& \text{ She (student’s mother) thinks that if you ask him, maybe he’ll agree...maybe.}
\end{align*}\]

02 \\

\[\begin{align*}
& \text{ อยี่เว่ อยี่จ่๊ตาราง ซิ่ว ลี่ นี่ แปล} \\
& \text{ awei ang-ja wei luh-ni beh} \\
& \text{ her ask him not-agree} \\
& \text{ She (student’s mother) asked him, but he wouldn’t agree to go.}
\end{align*}\]

03 \\

\[\begin{align*}
& \text{ แบี่ดั้ ชู้้ โล่ ย่๊ร์ ลุ่่นี่} \\
& \text{ beidaw shuu lo a luh ghi} \\
& \text{ but not tell him [emphasis]} \\
& \text{ but don’t tell him (where you’re going)}
\end{align*}\]

04 \\

\[\begin{align*}
& \text{ กอง ดุ่ อี๊ร์ จ่๊า นี่ ลี่ อ่ แม่ ก๊าประ} \\
& \text{ gong du a jae nuh li uh ghe-pe} \\
& \text{ lie to him that you go to another-place} \\
& \text{ Lie to him, and tell him you’re going to another place.}
\end{align*}\]

PT2:  

\[\begin{align*}
05 & \text{ ซึ่ไว่ น่่ง นี่ ไคล่ โพลง นอ แน่ เว่} \\
& \text{ gwi neh nuh klai plong noh neh wei} \\
& \text{ just you your speak Pwo that understand it}
\end{align*}\]

\[\begin{align*}
& \text{ ซี่ ปะ} \\
& \text{ si-ba} \\
& \text{ can}
\end{align*}\]

You just spoke in Pwo. He can understand it.
The Pwo teachers laughed and gently joked together as PT1 realized her mistake, and that the student had heard the conversation. Whereas Thai teachers can be reasonably confident that the young students will be unable to fully understand their conversations with each other, whether conducted in Northern or Central Thai, the same cannot be said for conversations between Pwo teachers. Despite the intended subterfuge of tricking the student into going to the clinic, the interaction illustrates both the connection the Pwo teachers have with the wider community, and an easy friendliness with each other. Like the Thai teachers speaking Northern Thai to each other, Pwo language use amongst the Pwo teachers marks solidarity and inclusion.

5.3 Student/Student

Interaction between students, both inside and outside the classroom, is almost entirely in Pwo Karen. Unlike many linguistic minority students in the past, these students are free to interact, process and manipulate information in their L1. During the school day, many of their interactions in the classroom, even during long periods of seatwork, are focused on schoolwork. Seatwork accounted for 66% and 67% of Pwo language use in grades 1 and 2 respectively, with students speaking quietly with one another. Especially in the early site visits to G1, students would maintain an almost steady hum of speech during seatwork time. However, as the year progressed in the G1 classroom, and for the duration of the school year in the G2 classroom, longer periods of silence were recorded as students’ focused on their seatwork.

Exchanges recorded between students usually involved asking each other questions about their work, commenting on the quality of their handwriting, or the sharpness of their pencils. On several occasions, self-deprecating remarks were heard as individual students compared their work to that of their classmates. Such
statements, including “Mine doesn’t look nice” (video 3-3b, 1m56s), as one student compared her drawing to that of her classmate, or “My handwriting’s not beautiful” (video 3-5, 16m06s) were frequently heard. On other occasions, students offered each other help or advice while completing assignments.

During games and activities, students continued to communicate with one another in Pwo, regardless of whether it was a Pwo or Thai class. For example, during a Thai word game, students were divided into two teams. Using the limited number of Thai consonants, vowels and tones on the board, each team was instructed to write as many Thai words as possible in their allocated space on the board. Teams enthusiastically called out individual Thai words to write; everything else, all along the lines of, “Yes! Yes! His word is right!”,”Quickly! Quickly!” and “Yes, yes, Me! Me!” (video 3-2, 18m50s) was shouted excitedly in Pwo. Although not recorded, the same held true during outside exercise time. All forms of encouragement, trash talking and boasting inherent in elementary school competitions were tossed back and forth between students exclusively in Pwo.

On very rare occasions, students could be heard speaking Thai, almost exclusively in short bursts as students helped each other complete seatwork for their Thai language lessons, or talking quietly to themselves as they wrote in their Thai journals. Often, these utterances were single words or short phrases. One of the longest instances of a student speaking Thai, unprompted by the teacher, was a student slowly reciting to himself, as he carefully wrote each word in his journal:

เมื่อวานนี้ผมไปโรงเรียน
meua waan nii phom bai rong rien

Yesterday, I went to school

The basic language used in the Thai journals as students learn and develop their L2 is understandably in sharp contrast to the rich, imaginative narratives students are capable of in their L1. One such example took place moments later amongst five students in a seating group near the back of the room, arranged as seen in Figure 10. No teachers were present at the time, allowing the fantastic story to grow with the children’s imaginations.
Three students (S1, S3 and S4) are female, the other two (S2 and S5) are male. As the following conversation began, S3 and S5 were quietly talking about their work, and what they were writing in their Thai journals. Moments later, S2 asks if the other students at the table want to eat a hot dog. If they do, they should give him money, and he will go get them all a hotdog.

**Dialogue 3 Student/Student (Pwo)**

**[Video 3-5, 0:19:04]**

S2M 01 ghe-mai ye juh-ji juh muh li ghui

*give me money I will go buy*

eh-neh

*it-for-you*

*Give me the money, and I’ll go buy it for you. [waves arm in motion to give money]*

S3F 02 juh ka-da o luh bah khaw-law

*I money have one baht only*

*I only have 1 baht*

S2M 03 uh

*yes*

*Sure, (that’s okay)*
The above dialogue illustrates a level of creativity and conversational aptitude evident in students’ L1 use, both of which are unparalleled in their utilization of the L2. Students confidently share their opinions and preferences, and S2M escalates as he builds grandiose plans, and provides his rationale, for how he is going to get the desired hot dogs.

At this point, the audio in the conversation above is overpowered by a conversation taking place at a nearby table, about the relative sharpness of the students’ pencils. The conversation continues in Dialogue 4, but is inaudible as students laugh and giggle together as S2M continues to elaborate. Decipherable audio resumes as S2M responds to an unheard statement made by S1F:
Dialogue 4 Student/Student (Pwo)

[Video 3-5, 0:20:45]

S1F 01 [inaudible]
S2M 02 ah ga-bang uh khang-le luh dong law
ah airplane it wheel not same car

tho-pha neh-ni

never right?

_Ah, the wheels of an airplane aren’t the same as a car, right?_

ga-bang uh khang-le thah law
airplane it wheel stainless-steel only

_Airplane wheels are made out of just stainless steel_

S1F 03 ga-bang uh khang-le thah lo-ah
airplane it wheel stainless-steel really?

Really? They’re only made of stainless steel?

S2M 04 a ga-bang du moh naw
ah, airplane big like that

_An airplane is big like this [stretches arms out wide]_

S1F 05 [inaudible]
S2M 06 ah lohng-daeh pi na jeh ah na na dong a
ah, that-one that you say it you point it

naw-seeing

that-one

_Ah, the one you say you’ve pointed to…_

07 ah sa-leuh na ma dong a guh-weh guh
ah, before you will point it me I

ka tang weh-yaow

_drive up already_

_ah, before you can even point it out, I’ll have already flown it out of sight._
The entire dialogue is brief, lasting less than 100 seconds, before students resume their assigned journal writing, but it illustrates the creativity and imagination students are free to use as they try to make sense of the world around them. When limited to spending the school day operating in only their L2, students are substantially restricted in the vocabulary they have available to discuss their experiences. Furthermore, a perceptive teacher who is able to understand the language used by the students, would notice the enthusiasm displayed for modes of transportation, speed, and how machinery is constructed. All of these elements could be used as illustrations and examples in lessons to create and retain interest.

### 5.4 Thai Teachers/Pwo Teacher

As mentioned earlier, interaction between Thai teachers and Pwo teachers is surprisingly minimal, and is the least parallel of all relationships discussed in this chapter. Operating more like tag-team wrestlers then co-teachers, one usually exits after teaching her lesson as the other enters to begin. Even when both Thai and Pwo teachers are jointly teaching a lesson, as illustrated in Chapter 6, Teacher/Student communication occurs, but there was no evidence of speech acts between the Thai teacher and the Pwo teacher themselves. Examples of linguistic exchanges between Thai teachers and Pwo teachers are mostly limited to brief interactions as periods of instruction change from Thai to Pwo, and vice versa.

The majority of the few observed examples were related to the location of items such as books, worksheets or board erasers, and the interactions were basic and often perfunctory, as demonstrated below in Dialogue 5. Immediately prior to this dialogue, the Pwo teacher finished her portion of the lesson, then walked to the door and nodded to the Thai teacher, indicating that it was time to switch. The Pwo teacher then stood aside by the door as the Thai teacher entered the classroom. The Thai teacher walked past the Pwo teacher, without any outward form of acknowledgement. The Pwo teacher stood by the door for a few moments, wiping
chalk from her hands, then exited the room for 5 seconds as the Thai teacher began to distribute flashcards to the students. When she returned to stand in the doorway, the Thai teacher, with her back to the Pwo teacher because she was looking for the chalk, initiated the following exchange in Central Thai:

**Dialogue 5 Thai Teacher/Pwo Teacher**

[Video 3-6, 0:06:10] T = teacher; TA = teacher’s assistant

**TT 01** แปรง ลบ กราดาน มี ไหน อะใคร่ เอา ไว้

*braeng lop gradaan mii nai a krai ao wai*

*brush eraser board have where QP who keeping*

*Where is the board eraser? Where is it?*

**PT 02** อยู่ หน้าห้อง โน่น ค่ะ

*yuu naa-hong nuun kha*

*there in front over PP*

*It’s in front of the board over there [motions with arm towards the board]*

**TT 03** ลบ ได้ ไหม

*lop dai mai erase can not*

*Can I erase (what’s on the board?)*

**PT 04** ค่ะ ลบ เลย ค่ะ

*kha lop leuhi kha yes erase now PP*

*Yes, you can erase it now.*

In Central Thai, the politeness particles ‘kha’ (for females) / ‘krap’ (for males) are used to “indicate both varying degrees of deference to the addressee and/or the speaker's recognition of the formality of the occasion in which the particle is being used.” (Howard, 2009:259). As is evident in the underlined portions of the
conversation above, the Thai teacher, higher ranking in terms of age, pay and education, forgoes the use of the particle in her questions. The Pwo teacher on the other hand, uses it in her responses. The consistent absence of the particle in the Thai teacher’s speech, and its consistent presence in the Pwo teacher’s, is a Thai cultural norm, indicative of the social structure in which the teachers operate, and frequently observed in their exchanges.

In her work in Northern Thai classrooms in Chiang Mai, Kathryn Howard paid considerable attention to the standardization of respect in a Northern Thai classroom, and how the polite particle ‘kha’/ ‘krap’ was taught and modeled. Although her research focused on interactions between teachers and students, her observation that for students, “an essential part of learning how to use and understand these particles involves learning how each language variety is valued or stigmatized, privileged or suppressed, normatively expected or required in various contexts of their everyday lives,” (Howard, 2009:259) is also applicable to how students see politeness and respect modeled between Thai teachers and Pwo teachers. If an interaction like that in Dialogue 5 took place between two native Thai speakers, it would be an unexceptional example of speakers marking “their orientation to social hierarchies through linguistic and embodied practices of respect and politeness” (Ibid).

However, when the two speakers are from different cultures, one of which is the language of prestige and the other is not, the exchange adds an additional element of cultural superiority/inferiority. For the Thai teachers, and possibly the Pwo teachers as well, the language used in the exchange is normal, and does not appear to be used with ill intent or deliberate denigration; nonetheless, such an exchange serves to reinforce the predominant language hierarchy. This is especially true for students who see both teachers as equal figures of authority within the classroom, and are unaccustomed to the nuances of Thai polite/deferential behavior, and who are only aware of the cultural difference between their two teachers – not the additional differences in age, pay or employment status.

Another facet of this interaction involves language choice. Whereas Thai teachers frequently choose to speak Northern Thai amongst themselves, Central Thai is selected for exchanges with Pwo teachers. Although the Pwo teachers also speak Northern Thai, it appears as though its use is reserved for interaction between Thai teachers. Choosing to use Central Thai when speaking to each other reinforces the social distance between the two groups of teachers.
On one recorded occasion, the Pwo teacher attempted to engage the Thai teacher in conversation, also in Central Thai, as seen below in Dialogue 6. The Thai teacher was sitting at her desk, and the Pwo teacher was walking around the classroom. As the Pwo teacher approached the group of students near the Thai teacher’s desk, she picked up the hand-woven bag of one of the students, and carefully examined the workmanship.

**Dialogue 6 Pwo Teacher/Thai Teacher**

[Video 3-7, 1:02:12] PT = Pwo Teacher  TT = Thai Teacher

PT (Pwo) 01 ไนซ์ น ทอง ล พลอง ม
   nice your bag this one beautiful mmm

This bag of yours is nice. Mmm. [directed to ss]

PT (Thai) 02  [inaudible, but directed to TT, about the bag]

TT (Thai) 03 มัน เก่า ไป หน่อย
   it old look slightly

It looks a little old

The Thai teacher then turned her attention back to the class, instructing them to hurry and finish their work. The Pwo teacher returned the bag to the students and walked away, and the opportunity to build rapport was lost. Whether or not the Thai teacher appreciated the aesthetics of the bag is not of primary relevance here. Instead, what is important to note, is that when presented with an opportunity to engage in conversation beyond the minimum required for classroom management, the Thai teacher chose to shut the conversation down. This interaction exemplifies the lack of extra-curricular interaction and dialogue between Thai teachers and Pwo teachers. This is one of several examples in which the opportunity for Thai and Pwo teachers to interact or converse apart from immediate professional demands was lost.

While teachers demonstrated a functional professional relationship, the lack of extra-curricular communication between the Pwo and Thai teachers could be detrimental. For example, when the man in Ban Mai went missing (see Chapter 3), it caused a great deal of concern and upheaval in the village, and by extension, in the lives of
several students. However, there was no evidence that the Thai teachers were aware of the event, or the possible effect it could have on the children’s concentration. Although purely speculative, it is possible that comfortable communication between teachers on topics other than work, could offer Thai teachers a better understanding of what is happening in their students’ lives.

5.5 Summary
This chapter has examined interactions between participants in parallel relationships within the classroom hierarchy. With the exception of some interactions between the Thai teachers and Pwo teachers, all communication between participants appears to be casual, relaxed and friendly. As Thai teachers live at the school, far from their families and usual social ties, they are able to build and maintain friendships with other Thai teachers at the school. As in any workplace, not everyone gets along perfectly, and living together in a remote location can compound interpersonal discord during the week; teachers form their own community, and can communicate comfortably with one another. Students are able to continue communicating with each other, freely using their L1 during the school day, breaking down the barrier that once existed between home and school life. Pwo teachers, while few in number at the school, are bilingual, and are able to communicate with co-workers and students alike. While this puts Pwo teachers in a unique and valuable position, it appears as though neither the Pwo teachers nor the Thai teachers are taking full advantage of the communicative possibilities available.
Chapter 6

Language Use in Vertical Relationships

This chapter will examine interactions between participants in vertical relationships. Within the classroom, vertical relationships are those between people of unequal age and social status. Essentially, this describes the interaction between teachers and students. This would also include interaction between teachers and the principal, or visiting officials. However, those relationships have not been included in this thesis. The following chapter will deal exclusively with language used in interactions between students and teachers. The following sections will examine the language used in speech acts occurring between students and Thai teachers, students and Pwo teachers, and concurrent speech acts, when multiple participants are using more than one language in the classroom at the same time.

6.1 Thai Teacher/Student

Students consistently address their Thai teachers respectfully and politely, and demonstrate a genuine affection for them, even though the language barrier between them is still limiting. During downtime in the classroom, students were observed hugging their Thai teachers, telling them they look pretty, or bringing stories to read to them. At this stage in their education, the Thai language skills of the G1 and G2 students are approximately equal to those of previous students who had not studied in the MTBMLE program, although their confidence levels are vastly different. While some students are still shy and show reluctance to be singled out in either language, others show an unabashed enthusiasm to participate, as seen in G2, as the Thai teacher asked a question, and one male student waved his hand vigorously in the air, leaning on his desk with the intensity of a 7 year old boy desperate to answer a question. He called out in Thai:

ครู ครับ ผม ครับ
kru krap phom krap

‘Teacher, please pick me!’
When the Thai teacher chose another student to answer the question, the boy sank back into his chair sighing dejectedly in Pwo:

เอ้อ คูเว๊แด
uh khoo wae dae
“Oh, teacher” (Video 2-2, 1:02:04)

His great disappointment at not being called upon was evident in his tone, body language and facial expression.

Together, students demonstrate a desire to learn, and the ability to co-operate and work together confidently until they succeed, as can be seen in Dialogue 7. In this science class, students have been learning different types and uses of soil. In this case, the Thai teacher is trying to elicit examples of objects made of types of clay, and has just asked students to supply a second example. (Tone markers have been included for clarity in this transcription).

Dialogue 7 Students/Thai Teacher

[Video 3-3, 00:06:40]  S# = Students TT = Thai Teacher

S1 (Pwo)  01  ม๊อง
mawng
tank
**water tank**

S2 (*)  02  อ้า  *โม่ง
aa  *muong
um  *muong
**umm... (this word is neither Pwo nor Thai)**

SS (*)  03  *ม๊อง... *โม่ง... *ม๊อง... *โม่ง...
*muang... *mong... *mawng... *mo:ng...
(students call out different combinations of vowels and tones)

S2 (Thai)  04  อึง
o:ng
....water tank
**...water tank!**
In the example above, S1 confidently shouted out the Pwo word for a large water jar. This answer was met with silence from the teacher. Other students quickly recognized the error and confidently worked together to try out different combinations of sounds, collaboratively building a bridge from the familiar (Pwo) to the new (Thai) vocabulary. When one student eventually called out mong with the correct Thai vowel sound and tone, but an erroneous initial consonant, it triggered the memory of the correct word in another student, who was able to land on the correct Thai word, ong (โอ่ง). After S1 answered the question in the non-target language, the teacher could have immediately provided correction. However, “[e]vidence from child language acquisition confirms that error correction does not influence acquisition to any great extent” (Krashen, 1982:11). Instead, students learn best, and demonstrate more successful retention when they build their own cognitive connections between new and familiar concepts. Nonetheless, when S2 lands on the correct Thai word in line 04, the Thai teacher repeats it, and praises the individual student, thus privileging one participant’s contribution to the group effort.

Interaction between Thai teachers and students outside teaching or lesson time, continues to be predominantly functional in nature. Thai teacher/student interaction in the classroom almost exclusively revolves around the curriculum, classroom management, or language correction. When not teaching lessons, Thai teachers frequently speak to students encouraging them to write neatly, behave appropriately, or adjust their uniforms or haircuts in accordance with the dress code. As seen in Chapter 4, instruction and classroom management account for 88% of Thai in G1, and 97% in G2. The majority of Thai interactions clearly revolve around teaching and correction. Even when the interaction is not specifically related to the curriculum or student behavior, conversations most often involve some form of
correction, as illustrated in Dialogue 8. A few students were absent one day, and the following conversation unfolded in Thai during roll call:

Dialogue 8 Thai Teacher/Students

[Audio, 24JAN #6, 0:00:13]

TT = Thai teacher, SS = multiple students, S# = individual students

TT 01 เอ้ามีไห คน ที่ ไม่ มา วันนี้
ao mi mai khon tii mai maa waan nii?
Who people that did not come today?
Who’s not here today?

SS 02 กฤตเมธ กรวิชญ์ วีระชัย ณรงคฤทธิ์
kritthamet goh awit wirachai narongrit
Kritamet Gorawit Wirachai Narongrit
[names of absent students]

TT 03 แล้ว ไป ไหน หรอ
Laew bai nai law?
already go where QP?
Where are they?

S1 04 ไป กิน หมู ค่ะ
bai gin muu kha
[They’re] eating pork

S2 05 ไป แต่งงาน ค่ะ
bai daeng ngan kha
At a wedding.

TT 06 หา
ha
eh?
Pardon?
Eating pork.

(They’re) eating pork?

At a wedding.

You have to say where they are, don’t you?

At a wedding.

Aaah (exaggeratedly feigns understanding). At a wedding.

In Pwo, it would be natural to answer the teacher’s question, “แล้วไปไหนหรอ” ("Where are they?") with “ไปกินหมู” (“go eat pork”) and it would be clearly understood that you were talking about going to a wedding. Since pork is traditionally eaten at celebratory events, and everyone knew that there was a wedding in the village that day, the students here directly translated from Pwo to
Thai to answer the teacher’s question. However, in Thai, it is unnatural to answer such a question with ‘go eat pork’, so although the students answered in Thai, they were corrected, and prompted to answer the question with a more acceptable response.

The Thai teacher also used this opportunity to encourage the children to add the polite particle ค่ะ (kha) to the end of their utterance. Although unclear in the English translation, the questions the teacher poses in lines 06 and 10, especially the use of น่าค่ะ (na kha) indicate that she is prompting them not only to correct their diction, but also to include the polite particle. This is further demonstrated in line 12 as the teacher repeats the line, deliberately adding ค่ะ (kha) to the end of her repetition. This conversation, both with the corrections and limited student utterances, contrasts with a dialogue between the Pwo teacher and the students later in the day, revolving around the same theme, illustrated in Dialogue #10 in the following section.

6.2 Pwo Teacher/Student

Pwo teachers also admonish students frequently, along the same themes as the Thai teachers, as they instruct students to write neatly, behave well, and dress appropriately. However, a shared language and culture result in noticeable differences in the interactions between students and Pwo teachers when compared with interactions between students and Thai teachers.

A common example is illustrated in the form of address students use when speaking to, or about their Pwo teachers. When students speak to their Thai teachers, they consistently address them as ‘khru’ (teacher), likewise, when students refer to their Pwo teacher, whilst talking to their Thai teacher, they continue to use the word ‘khru’. However, when students speak to their Pwo teacher, they use more familiar terms. Students refer to one teacher as Nawng Jaeng, which literally means ‘older sister Jaeng’, and the other is called Mawng Bii Mae, literally ‘wife of Bii Mae’. While Thai teachers were observed to frequently correct lapses in classroom etiquette, these terms of reference for Pwo teachers were never addressed. This could either denote a respect for the students’ use of appropriate L1 terms, or a lack of interest in how Pwo teachers are addressed. The familiar terms are largely ignored by the Thai teachers, as seen in Dialogue #9. The Pwo and Thai teachers are talking quietly to each other about an upcoming test, when a student tried to get the Pwo teacher’s attention by repeatedly calling out the Pwo teacher’s name:
Dialogue 9 Student/Thai Teacher

[Video 2-1, 00:48:30]

SF = Female Student  TT = Thai Teacher

SF

01 nawng Jaeng... nawng Jaeng... nawng Jaeng... eh nawn Jaeng

sister Jaeng... sister Jaeng... sister Jaeng... hey sister Jaeng...

Miss Jaeng, Miss Jaeng, Miss Jaeng... hey, Miss Jaeng

TT

02 a-rai mai dong rieak thamgan bai

what not must call-out work go

What? Don’t call out. Do your work.

The student then turned around, back to her desk, and continued working. Neither teacher acknowledged the familiar form of address, and the student made no further attempt to direct her question to either teacher.

Students are able to speak freely to their Pwo teachers, and conversations progress much further than those between students and Thai teachers. In the previous section, the dialogue about a village wedding revolved primarily around correcting errors in students translating concepts between Pwo and Thai. Utterances of both the Thai teacher and students were short and repetitive. Both the style and theme of that conversation differ from what was heard in Dialogue #10. The Pwo teacher was engaged to be married, and the wedding in the village stirred the students’ interest in their teacher’s upcoming nuptials. The following conversation unfolded when one student asked the Pwo teacher when her wedding would be. The dialogue was in Pwo, except for a few Thai loan words, which are underlined.

Dialogue 10 Student/Pwo Teacher

[Audio, 24JAN #9, 0:00:55]

S#F = Female Student  S#M = Male Student  PT = Pwo Teacher

PT

01 กิ พพลัง ปัญหา แนะไทย
ki plong bit teuhm kho law

when people close term [fut]

During the school break (when people are free).
Ohh, during the school break (so faaaaar in the future).

During the term, I’m not free. I come here to teach you.

If two females get married, maybe they would be happy.

Ah! It’s not happy (laughter)

If two females get married, it’s not good. They won’t be happy.
I will surely invite all of you.

Nong Neui, maybe I will make you wash the dishes, hahahaha.

A long time ago, my teacher gave me a dinner tray to wash, and then dishes too!

Many many people will drink too much alcohol and get drunk. It’s not good.
Ah, when people get drunk, they wander around.

Kitisak drinks alcohol? Hahaha.

I've reached #2 and #3 already.

I still haven't done anything.

This conversation covers a broad range of themes, and the students clearly feel comfortable to voice their opinions freely. Instead of focusing on errors in language use, students are able to laugh together with their teacher as they explore issues of gender and marriage (lines 4-6), and alcohol consumption (lines 10-12), before bringing themselves back to the task at hand (line 13). Although the exchanges are brief, students are given the opportunity to introduce themes which are relevant to them, their experiences and their community. While the exchange may seem to be off-topic, or not pertinent to the assigned task, it is an example of how freedom to use L1 in the classroom creates a space for learning that goes beyond what is spelled out in the curriculum.
6.3 Concurrent Speech Events

On several occasions, both the Thai teacher and the Pwo teacher were in the class at the same time, often addressing students simultaneously. Sometimes, each would be addressing the whole class, while at other times, each would be addressing small groups of students or individuals. On a few occasions, both teachers were involved in teaching activities with individual students at the same time. For example, at one point, the majority of the class was engaged in seatwork, and as students finished, they returned their books to the Pwo teacher, and read their journal entries to her. At the same time, the Thai teacher was calling individual students to her desk for oral English language testing.

Most examples of concurrent speech events occurred either during seatwork or between lessons, and were almost always related to classroom management. Most often, teachers would call out relevant instructions. While interruptions were rare, when they did occur, it was almost always the Thai teacher interrupting the Pwo teacher, as seen in Dialogue 11:

Dialogue 11 Thai Teacher/Pwo Teacher

[Audio 24Jan #6, 0:00:02]

**TT 01**

ゲップ หมด เวลา เก็บ

get ready empty time get ready

Get ready, time is up.

**PT 02**

โพล้ง แหล ม เหล่า ส่าง ลิ จั้ง หน่อ

people QP will sharp by yourself pencil [for

เมื่อว้าง ผู้ ยัง gheh-khang low-eh]]

come here]]

Whoever has to sharpen their pencil,[[come here]]

**TT 03**

เอ้ามีไหน คน ที่ ไม่มา มา วันนี้

[[ao mi nai khon tii mai maa wan nii?]]

[[Who people that didn’t come today?]]

[[Who’s not here today?]]
This interaction took place as students were finishing writing in their journals, and as the Thai teacher was preparing to move on to the next activity. The square brackets indicate overlap, when both teachers are speaking at the same time, for different purposes. Examples like these, however, were rare. Most of the time, both teachers would issue similar instructions. While it may seem reasonable to suspect that since the Pwo teachers understand the Thai teachers, but not vice versa, they would be more likely to repeat instructions. However, this did not appear to be the case. Although the Thai teachers couldn’t understand the Pwo directives, there are enough non-verbal and situational cues to make collaborative communication possible, as seen in Dialogue 12, when a student was caught chewing gum:

Dialogue 12 Pwo Teacher/Thai Teacher

[Video 3-2, 0:55:54]
PT = Pwo Teacher  TT = Thai Teacher

PT 01 นั้ทริ้มแม้มีวิธีอย่าพูด
nat mei hui a puh-eh
Nat spit out it here

TT 02ห้ามเคี้ยวหมากฝรั่งเวลาครูสอนค่ะ
ham kiew mak-farang weilaa kruu sawn na kha
forbid chew gum time teacher teach right?
You cannot chew gum when I’m teaching.

Although the Thai teacher did not understand the Pwo sentence, the situation itself was easily decipherable, allowing her to collaborate with the Pwo teacher. Short, supportive speech events like the one above were not unusual, but since both teachers were not often in the classroom together, they were not frequent either.

Only one example of collaborative example of teaching was observed, and it took place in the G2 classroom. Students were instructed to read the provided sentences aloud in Thai, then translate them into Pwo. Both teachers were standing near each other in the center of the classroom, working together to ensure students understood well. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the teachers did not speak to each other, but nonetheless worked together with the students. The following example is a brief excerpt from the lengthy recording:
Dialogue 13 Thai Teacher/Pwo Teacher/Students

[Audio 25Jan, F-b 0:00:16] TT = Thai Teacher SS = students PT = Pwo Teacher

TT 01 ข้อที่ 8 ด้าน ได้ ว่า 8 ข้อที่ 8 อ่าน ได้ ว่า
kaw tii 8 an dai waa
number 8 read can that
#8 we can read thaaaaat...

SS 02 พี่และน้อง เกี่ยง กัน ทำงาน บ้าน
pii le nong gieng gan thamngan baan
siblings argue together work house
siblings argue with each other about housework

TT 03 พี่และน้อง เกี่ยง กัน ทำงาน บ้าน
pii le nong gieng gan thamngan baan
siblings argue together work house
siblings argue with each other about housework

TT 04 ภาษา กะเหรี่ยง ว่า
pa-saa karien waa
language Karen that
What is it in Karen?

SS 05 โจ้ ดี พี่ง ดีไลชี้ แม่เท่อ เด้าพา
joh dii phung ‘dti-lo’-sa’ me-tuh do-paa
brother and sister fight work house
siblings fight about housework

PT 06 แก่ง นอ แยี่ ดิ่งชู้ แต่ นุม
giang noh eh dongsu deh nuhmuu
‘gieng’ for about like see your mother

มีมากว่าล้างเท่อ
maa kwa’ langtuh
give sweep floor
Like how you ‘argue’ when your mother tells you to sweep the floor.
In the excerpt above, students read the sentence in Thai at varying speeds. The Thai teacher then repeats the sentence slowly and clearly before asking what it means in Pwo. The students reply in unison until they get to the word for ‘argue’. After a brief pause, one student supplies the word *dti lo’ sa’* (fight), and the other students repeat *dti lo’ sa’* before completing the sentence together. However, the word the students used was too strong, and conveyed a meaning more akin to fisticuffs than squabbling. The Pwo teacher catches the error, and instead of simply providing the correct word, she offers a situation in which students would use the correct word *uh neh lo’* (argue) instead of *dti lo’ sa’* (fight). However, since the Thai and Pwo teachers spoke to the students, but not to each other, the Thai teacher remained unaware of the cause of the confusion. She knew that the students were confused, and could deduce that the word ‘เกี่ยง’ (argue) was the trouble, but she never asked for further explanation, nor did the Pwo teacher offer one.

Nonetheless, despite their lack of communication between one another, the two teachers were able to work together to help students bridge linguistic gaps between the two languages. For example, students had trouble translating the following Thai sentence:

```
jong rieng lamdap jak maak bai noi
```

*You should put the sequence in order from largest to smallest*

In Thai, the phrase *rieng lamdap* implies a sequence of numbers, so the word ‘number’ does not actually occur in the sentence, but for a Thai speaker, it would be clearly understood. However, in Pwo, the meaning is not obvious, and although the students could read the Thai sentence, they were initially unable to provide a Pwo translation, because a key lexeme was missing, and students were confused about what exactly they should be putting in order.

### 6.4 Summary

Thai and Pwo teachers both demonstrate a genuine affection for their students, which is evidently reciprocated. While linguistic barriers prevent students from sharing the same thoughts and stories with their Thai teachers that they do with their Pwo teachers and classmates, the confidence that students are cultivating allows them to interact more freely and comfortably with their Thai teachers than
perhaps they otherwise would. This increased confidence may prove to be beneficial in increasing their proficiency in Thai. At the same time, students in the MTBMLE classes are provided with the opportunity to interact with their Pwo teachers in a way that other children from NDL communities are not.

Teachers have also demonstrated the capacity to co-teach in a constructive and empowering way. While teachers did not avail themselves of these opportunities often, the potential is there, and should be encouraged.
Chapter 7
Conclusions and Discussion

This thesis has attempted to shed some light on the ramifications of language use in the implementation of a MTBMLE pilot program in Northern Thailand. By examining how often each language is used in the classroom, and for what purposes, interested parties can understand how language in education impacts the learning outcomes of elementary students from non-dominant language groups. This chapter will draw conclusions based on the evidence collected, and make suggestions for adaptations to the program, and present ideas for further research.

7.1 Overview of the Study

Data for this research was collected during four multiple-day site visits to Ban Pui Elementary School over the course of a 9 month period, from June 2012 to March 2013. During that time, 17 hours of video and audio recordings were collected, and 43 interviews were conducted in four villages. Data was collected primarily using ethnographic techniques espoused by Spradley (1990) and Patton (2002). Attention was focused on two classrooms engaged in a MTBMLE pilot project. After an initial exploratory visit, the focus of this research settled on how teachers and students used Pwo Karen and Thai languages in the classroom, and for what purposes.

After the data was collected, an experienced translator, raised in Ban Pui and currently studying for a degree in Education, was employed to assist in the translation and interpretation of the collected data. As an insider, her insights and cultural knowledge were invaluable.

From the outset, this research aimed to answer the following two questions, as put forth in Chapter 1:

1. Does the language use observed in the classroom support or undermine the objectives of the MLE program?

2. How does language use in the classroom affect the learning environment of Pwo Karen children at Ban Pui Elementary School?
Both of these questions touch on the potential for meeting Thailand’s educational goals in relation to NDL communities, and speak to providing a quality education for young learners, especially if we accept that a quality education encompasses more than test scores. An analysis of the collected data has proven to be valuable in pursing an answer to these questions. Conclusions drawn from the analysis are elucidated in the following section.

7.2 Conclusions from Observation and Analysis
This study was primarily concerned with whether or not the pilot MTBMLE program, in its implementation, was aligned with the planned objectives of the program.

As illustrated in Chapter 4, the amount of recorded Pwo use in both classrooms was higher than planned, and subsequently the amount of Thai used was less than expected. Based on the curriculum provided by FAL, and the weekly schedule posted in the classrooms, it was anticipated that Pwo would account for 52% of the language used, Thai would account for 45% and English would be the remaining 3%. However, using the recorded data, Pwo actually accounted for 63-70% of language use, with Thai only being used 25-36% of the time, and English 1-5%.

Two arguments might be made to question the results of this data. First, during the first two site visits, data was not collected with these calculations in mind. As a result, some recordings may have been stopped mid-lesson, or Pwo lessons may have been favoured, in anticipation of possibly highlighting mother tongue use in the classroom. However, the fact that the initial hours of exploratory recordings were not focused on calculating the number of minutes used for each language could actually mean that the camera was shut off during prolonged seatwork activities. As a result, since students used Pwo almost exclusively during their seatwork, the percentages of Pwo language use in the calculations above may actually be higher than observed. Secondly, preparations for a special event in Chiang Mai precipitated changes to the schedule during the second site visit, and an urgent staff meeting left the students unattended for the better part of an afternoon during the third site visit. These deviations from the schedule may have had an effect on the percentages recorded. However, it could be argued that while each of those interruptions may have been unique, various interruptions to the schedule are not infrequent; subsequently, including them in the calculated data does not substantially alter the outcome.
After careful observation and analysis, it appears as though focusing on the frequency of language use alone does not adequately address the proposed research questions. A far more valuable consideration is the purpose for which each language is used. Any experienced educator knows that in an elementary school classroom, much more happens during the day than the teacher standing at the front of the room imparting a lesson. In fact, in the recorded data, actual teaching time only accounted for 34% and 42% of classroom activities in Grades 1 and 2 respectively. The majority of time during the day is spent in activities other than presenting a new lesson. It is proposed that how language is used during these times goes farther towards answering the research questions than the actual teaching time. Nonetheless, evidence of the program’s effectiveness can still clearly be seen in how the students participate during the teaching of a lesson.

**7.2.1 Student Participation**

For an observer whose mother tongue and the language of instruction were one and the same during their own years of schooling, the MLE classes in Ban Pui appear to be typical elementary school classes. Students perch on their chairs, arms straining and waving in the air, hoping to be chosen next to answer a question or write an equation on the board. As the teacher leads a class discussion, students confidently call out answers and joke with, or sometimes argue with one another. However, to someone whose experience has exposed them to elementary student speakers of one language, in a monolingual class in a language that is not their own, the scene in Ban Pui is striking.

The enthusiasm students exhibit during their lessons is uncommon in elementary classrooms in most non-dominant language communities. The Pwo Karen translator working on this project had once been a student at Ban Pui School herself. During the second day of translation work, after watching several hours of the classroom videos, she suddenly exclaimed, “Are they [the students] always this excited? Look how many of them raise their hands and want to answer the questions! Do they act like this all the time?” (personal communication, Rattana Kamtom, March 27, 2013). Her own experience in the same classroom several years earlier had been remarkably different. During her elementary education in a monolingual Thai class, she and her peers rarely raised their hands, and dreaded being called upon to answer questions. In her experience, students were silent, shy, and reluctant to participate. Rattana’s observation was echoed by the Thai teachers in Ban Pui, who remarked on the increased levels of participation and confidence of students in the
MLE program when compared to their previous teaching experience in monolingual Thai classrooms in other NDL communities. Similarly pronounced differences have also been observed in other MLE classrooms in the region (see e.g. Naw Khu Shee:2012 and Tan Hoong Yen:2012). Most importantly, the enthusiasm displayed by the students was not restricted to Pwo lesson times. In both the G1 and G2 MTBMLE classrooms, students exhibited the same level of excitement and participation during their Thai lessons as they did in their Pwo lessons. The confidence displayed is encouraging for their future academic potential.

7.2.2 Teacher Roles
The role of the teachers in the development of their students goes far beyond presenting lessons and dispensing assignments. The teacher’s interactions with both students and other teachers outside of curricular activities go a long way towards building the students’ understanding of the world around them. The cues the teachers present, either deliberately or not, provide a critical space for shaping how students learn how to function both within their own community, and within their nation as a whole. Being able to communicate freely with the Pwo teachers allows them to stretch their own imaginations, while interaction with the Thai teachers helps shape their understanding of how to function in Thai society. For these reasons, the social distance between Pwo and Thai teachers, as it spills over into the classroom, can be an important issue. Thai teachers do not often extend the same linguistic indicators of warmth or respect to Pwo teachers that they do to other Thai teachers. In turn, Pwo teachers do not readily volunteer information that may be of interest of benefit and/or interest to Thai teachers.

Furthermore, the language that teachers use with each other in the vicinity of the students will impact their linguistic and social development. When Thai teachers speak Northern Thai to one another, students are deprived of hearing Central Thai spoken in a natural context, and at a natural speed. This may not be as important now that televisions are ubiquitous in the village, and Thai programming provides an increased exposure to Central Thai. However, it is an aspect of language use in the classroom that participants should be cognizant of. Additionally, students also hear frequent exchanges in which Thai is firmly entrenched as the language of prestige when speaking to Pwo teachers.

It may also be of some concern that although Pwo teachers and Thai teachers both admonish, correct, scold and reprimand students, Pwo teachers’ instructions are
more liberally interspersed with other conversation, while Thai teachers’ are not. It may seem to students that Thai teachers spend most of their time chastising or correcting them, but with the Pwo teachers, the corrections are only a small part of a much broader spectrum of thematic interactions. Continuous correction of Thai, when not counter-balanced with other forms of communication also reinforces a message counter to the aims of the program. While the MLE program itself affirms the language and culture of the students, teachers rarely “communicate strong affirmative messages to students about the value of knowing additional languages. In the vacuum created by the absence of any proactive validation of their linguistic talents and accomplishments, bilingual students’ identities become infested with shame” (Cummins, 1996:13). This situation is further exacerbated by the social and linguistic distance observed between the Thai and Pwo teachers. Students continue to see inequality modeled in the classroom through the linguistic behaviour of the teachers. As teachers gain training and experience in the goals, methods and value of the MLE program, they should be encouraged to share with the students the importance of bilingualism, and teachers should be seen to place a high value on the students L1. While proficiency in Thai is an aim that should be encouraged, it need not be accomplished at the expense of the students’ pride in their own language.

### 7.2.3 Community Roles

As previously indicated, parents indicated an increased ability to participate in their children’s education. It would be presumptuous to assume that a previous lack of participation corresponded to a lack of interest. From observations and discussions with families in Ban Pui and surrounding villages, parents and grandparents demonstrated a keen interest in the education of their offspring. However, until the implementation of the MLE program, communication barriers, especially for caregivers who cannot speak Thai, hindered their ability to participate fully in the education process. Now, the presence of Pwo teachers, and the children’s ability to explain what they are learning to their parents in their common language, provide more opportunities for parents to engage with their child’s school experience. Breaking down the barriers between ‘home life’ and ‘school life’ makes schooling seem less foreign or intimidating to young students. Parents frequently mentioned that their older children had been frightened or nervous to attend kindergarten in an all-Thai school, but that their children in the MLE program did not show the same reluctance. The increased comfort, familiarity and integration of children with their school bodes well for future retention rates and academic achievement.
During the course of the interviews, it became startlingly clear that there was a monumental gender gap in parental involvement. Of all the interviews conducted with students’ families, only two were with male relatives. One was with a father, who was proud of his daughter’s achievements. The other was with a grandfather, who lost interest in the interview, and stopped answering questions half way through. Even when male relatives were present during other interviews, the mothers and grandmothers answered all the questions. Likewise, video of a community workshop involving the MLE program at Ban Pui school, aired on national Thai television, also showed community participants to be almost exclusively female. Considering the child-rearing role of female relatives in Pwo culture, deferring to mothers’ feedback regarding early elementary education was not surprising. However, in conjunction with the staggeringly high drop-out rate of male students in later grades, the question of male role models in academics did arise. Although outside the scope of this research, the issue of a father’s involvement in a child’s education could be a topic worth pursuing. Currently, a growing recognition of the importance of a father’s involvement in a child’s development has prompted various research and initiatives across the globe (see e.g. Ball, 2010; Allen & Daly, 2007; and Ensminger & Slusarcick, 1992).

7.3 Implications and Recommendations

Overall, this program is of visible benefit to the students at Ban Pui Elementary School. The program itself seems to be solid, and encouraging in terms of teacher support, community involvement, and student participation. Students are eager to attend school, and have a tendency to participate enthusiastically in classroom activities. Parents appear to be pleased with the education their children are receiving, and their ability to participate in school events. Teachers report satisfaction both with the level of training they receive, and the quality of resource materials available to them.

Even so, Ban Pui’s program faces the same dilemmas as other MLE schools. One of the biggest challenges is the high turnover of Thai teachers. Thai teachers rarely stay in rural schools for more than two years. As a result, teachers trained in MLE methodologies by FAL do not stay long enough to see the rewards of their efforts, and FAL rarely has an opportunity to provide in depth training to teachers with MLE experience. This is hardly surprising, since government teachers must leave their homes and families, often including young children, at noon on Sunday, and are not able to return home again until Friday night. According to some teachers, the small
monthly stipend teachers receive for teaching in rural schools is not worth the time spent far from home. However, although the Thai teachers in Ban Pui miss their spouses and children, they work hard to maintain positive working relationships with their fellow teachers and strive to build a semblance of community amongst themselves, whilst also making attempts to reach out to the Pwo community. There is no easy or short-term solution to this problem. Relatively few students from NDL communities go on to higher education, and of the ones that do, few become teachers, and fewer still return to their own communities to teach. And yet, until native NDL speakers receive government teaching qualifications, schools must continue to import short-term teachers, most of whom have applied for, and are awaiting, transfers to schools closer to home. In spite of the teachers’ short terms of service, it was encouraging to see the positive rapport between the students and their Thai teachers.

There is also a recognition that the implementation of the program hinges quite heavily on the support of the principal. At present, the principal at Ban Pui School is very supportive of the MLE program and its aims. Her concern for the welfare of the students extends beyond their academic success, and she exhibits a genuine interest in seeing them excel and celebrates their achievements. Her tenure as principal began the same academic year as the MLE program was implemented. Coming from a monolingual Thai school in another Pwo Karen community, she has been impressed by the interest students have in pursuing knowledge, and their confidence in asking about things they do not understand. She is also supportive of promoting Pwo Karen literacy in addition to Thai literacy, because she recognizes the importance of language in allowing children to recognize and express their identity. Her on-the-ground support of the MLE program is invaluable, and underscores the importance of having someone who understands and encourages MLE goals in situ.

The outcomes and encouraging practices observed in this research could change drastically under the principalship of a less dedicated educator.

The relationships between Thai and Pwo teachers has been a recurrent theme in this research and raises some degree of concern that students are absorbing a paradigm that indicates they will not have equal status in the larger Thai community despite attaining a high degree of proficiency in Thai language skills. Therefore, providing cross-cultural sensitivity and awareness training for teachers was going to be a strong recommendation. It was happily received news then, that such training workshops had already been initiated, between the time this data was collected, and the analysis begun. Similar trends had been noticed in other MLE pilot projects,
prompting the decision to include addressing these dynamics through additional training sessions. It is hoped that part of this training includes building an awareness of, and appreciation for, the value of having a native NDL speaker as a co-teacher. The Thai teachers’ government training and the Pwo teachers’ linguistic and cultural acumen should be seen as complimentary elements. Encouraging both sets of teachers to share their knowledge and experience with each other could enhance curriculum delivery. This apparent undervaluation of the NDL is not limited to Ban Pui, or even Thailand. It is a recurring issue in MLE programs worldwide (see e.g. Plüddemann et. al., 1998), and a potential problem wherever a language of prestige co-exists with a NDL in a domain traditionally unoccupied by the NDL.

In the school term that commenced after data for this thesis was collected, the MLE program was expanded into Grade 3. The teacher employed to teach the class was a native Pwo speaker from a neighboring village, and a fully qualified government teacher. As such, she is able to teach both the Pwo and Thai elements of the curriculum, without the added inconvenience of living far from home. It would be beneficial to see how language use in her classroom compares to those observed in this thesis. It would also be interesting to observe her interactions with her fellow Thai and Pwo teachers.

Time management also seemed to be a moderate issue, with unnecessarily long stretches of seatwork. While this time allows students the freedom to work and think in Pwo, and students should be given adequate time to do so, the time spent on seatwork was often out of proportion to the task at hand. Like most elementary students, the students in these classes are generally unaware of the passage of time, and have a tendency to dawdle when permitted to do so. One morning, students were given 17 math problems to complete, and after 30 minutes, some were still working. That afternoon, when students knew they would be permitted to go outside for Scouts upon the completion of their seatwork, it took the slowest student 10 minutes to complete 15 problems. There is no clock in either of the classrooms, so frequent and repeated reminders from the teachers that students have 5 or 10 minutes left to finish their work seem to be ineffectual. Transitions appeared to be most effective when teachers moved from one lesson to the next by using a short action song to get the students moving, and provide an opportunity for students to mentally transition from one language to the next.

A final recommendation, best addressed at the MoE level, would be to provide Thai as a 2nd Language training for teachers as part of the education degree. To date,
education students are taught how to teach Thai as a subject, to Thai speakers. Considering the number of NDL communities in Thailand, especially in the north, it would make practical sense to include classes in second language acquisition theory and practice as part of the education curriculum for Thai teachers.

7.4 Suggestions for Further Research

The scope of this study was limited by time and resources. Nonetheless, it provides a starting point from which other avenues of inquiry may be pursued. Since MLE programs in Thailand are still in their infancy, the possibilities for linguistic, sociological and educational research are wide open. One could delve deeper into the details, perhaps with a rigorous conversational analysis applied to various thematic utterances, such as how students are scolded, corrected or encouraged by Thai and Pwo teachers. Further research should also be conducted into the social and linguistic interactions between Thai and Pwo teachers. On the other hand, the breadth of inquiry could be expanded to encompass a comparison between monolingual Thai schools in an NDL region and MLE schools in any number of areas, including but not limited to areas of literacy, teaching Thai as a second language, classroom behaviour, student participation, parental involvement or third space interactions.

While this thesis focused on implementation, there is still much to be considered in the fields of policy development, curriculum design and pedagogy, and corpus planning. There is also always room for longitudinal studies surrounding both educational and social outcomes of students enrolled in MLE classes as they grow into adulthood. Will attrition rates for the boys enrolled in the MLE program be lower than their predecessors? Additionally, this research was carried out in a school in which the students shared a common L1. How can MLE practices best be adapted to benefit students in a multi-lingual/multi-ethnic school environment?

Informal discussions and a brief examination of related documentation have also indicated that the challenges presented here have much in common with challenges faced in other MTBMLE programs worldwide. For the truly ambitious, an international comparison of third-space language use in MLE environments, and how it affects learning outcomes could prove useful in multiple contexts.


Pinnock, Helen and Gowri Vijayakumar. 2009. Language and education: the missing link – how the language used in schools threatens the achievement of Education for All. CfBT and Save the Children Alliance.


Porter, Doris. 1995. Description of a healthy program for vernacular language development. SIL.


UNESCO. 2008. *Improving the quality of mother tongue-based literacy and learning: Case studies from Asia, Africa and South America*. Bangkok: UNESCO Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau for Education.
APPENDIX A
QUESTIONNAIRE

(Modified version used during site visits 3 and 4)

Individual Sociolinguistic Questionnaire

Oral Consent:
My name is Janice. I study at Payap University.
I am interested in learning about the Pwo Karen language.
Therefore I want to ask you some questions that I’ve prepared.
These questions are easy; they’re questions about yourself and your language.
It’ll probably take about 15 minutes, but if you don’t have time, don’t feel like you have to stay.
Do you have enough time?
If there’s a question that you feel uncomfortable answering, you don’t have to answer. It’s okay.
You can answer in Thai or in Pwo. If you would rather speak Pwo, I’ll give it to my friend to translate.
When we speak together, can I record our conversation?

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<td>A</td>
<td>Questionnaire Number</td>
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<td>Language of Response</td>
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<td>Interpreter Name (if needed)</td>
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### Subject Demographics

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<td>What's your name?</td>
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<td>2.</td>
<td>Gender □ M □ F</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>What is/was your job?</td>
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<td>4.</td>
<td>How old are you?</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>What religion do you follow? □ B □ C □ O ________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>What level of study did you complete? □ Ø □ B □ M □</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>What village were you born in? □ Ban Pui □ Ban Mai □ GioLuk □ Other (➔a.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a. [if other] How old when moved here</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Have you lived anywhere else? □ N □ Y (➔ a. &amp; b.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a. where?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b. How long?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Family Demographics

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>What village was your father born in?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>What people group is your father? □ Pwo □ S’gaw □ Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>What village was your mother born in?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>What people group is your mother? □ Pwo □ S’gaw □ Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>How many brothers and sisters do you have?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a. What village was your spouse born in?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b. What people group is your spouse? □ Pwo □ S’gaw □ Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>How many children do you have?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a. How old are your children?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b. What grade are they in? □ KG □ B □ M □ Other</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Languages Spoken

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>What language did your family speak with you? dtawn-tiibrengpdekdke, krob-kruaphuyt PS a-rai gap k’unk’a? □ Pwo □ S’gaw □ Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>Do you speak any other languages? □ N □ Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>Can you buy something in N-Thai? C-Thai? □ PSN □ PSTG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>Are there situations where it is appropriate to use PSTG? □ N □ Y (➔a.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a. When/where?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>Are you proud to speak Pwo? □ N □ Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a. Why?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Options</th>
<th>a. What parts would you like to see continue?</th>
<th>b. Why?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>21. In this village, are young people abandoning the culture of their ancestors?</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Y (a-c)</td>
<td><img src="https://via.placeholder.com/150" alt="Image" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. which ones?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. How do you feel about that?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Why?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Do you want to see your children preserve and pass on Pwo identity?</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Y (a-c)</td>
<td><img src="https://via.placeholder.com/150" alt="Image" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. What parts would you like to see continue?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For example: customs/language/dress/housing style/food/festivals/religion...</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Why?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Do you think of yourself first as Thai or Pwo?</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>T</td>
<td><img src="https://via.placeholder.com/150" alt="Image" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Would you prefer your children to marry Pwo or other people?</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>O</td>
<td><img src="https://via.placeholder.com/150" alt="Image" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Why?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. How would you feel if your child married someone who couldn't speak Pwo?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. Do the children in this village speak Pwo well?</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td><img src="https://via.placeholder.com/150" alt="Image" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. In 20 years, will children in this village still speak Pwo?</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td><img src="https://via.placeholder.com/150" alt="Image" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. What do you think about this?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. Do you think it's important for children to go to school?</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td><img src="https://via.placeholder.com/150" alt="Image" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. to what level?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. why?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. What are the most important things for children to learn at school?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. Can you read/write Pwo?</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td><img src="https://via.placeholder.com/150" alt="Image" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31. Would you like your children to read/write Pwo?</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td><img src="https://via.placeholder.com/150" alt="Image" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Why?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32. Can you read/write Thai?</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td><img src="https://via.placeholder.com/150" alt="Image" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33. Would you like your children to read/write Thai?</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td><img src="https://via.placeholder.com/150" alt="Image" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>---</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34. Is your child happy/excited to go to school?</td>
<td>□N □Y</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a. Why?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35. Does your child talk about school at home?</td>
<td>□N □Y</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a. What do they talk about?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36. What does your child like about school?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>37. What does your child dislike, or struggle with at school?</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>When your children grow up...</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>38. What do you hope to see for your children in the future (work, level of study, live)?</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39. What can the school do to make that happen?</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thank-you for taking the time to answer my questions.
RESUME

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