

CHAPTER 2

Contextual Background

This study seeks to explore the emergence of indigenous people's education issue in Northern Thailand and to examine a practical education program's implementation process through a specific case study. Thus, it is necessary to detail contextual backgrounds about the history and policy of Thai education and indigenous people. Besides, some elements which are directly related to the case study such as indigenous language, Mother Tongue Based-Multi Lingual Education (MTB-MLE) program and FAL, the target NGO, should be explained before an analysis of these elements in the next chapter. For this reason, in this chapter, these issues are briefly introduced in hopes of enhancing one's understanding.

2.1 Development of Thailand Modern Education and Education Reform

The beginning of the Thai modern education system was in 1871, during the reign of King Rama V. Before this time, traditional Buddhist monasteries were in charge of education for Siam (Uthai, 1991; Jones, 2008; Park et al., 2009). The nascent Thai education system was designed to build a nation-state while legitimizing the power of the new kingdom in its newly designated territory. Moreover, the goal of education was to formulate modernized citizens in western ways. It was primarily designed by the major personages most responsible for its establishment including King Chulalongkorn and the ruling elites who had studied abroad in western countries and were aware of the situations existent within Siam's colonized neighbor countries (Jones, 2008; Baron-Gutty, 2009). During this process, a curriculum emphasizing the use of central Thai language was decreed but the function of traditional monastic schools were still allowed. However, the rulers believed that modern education should be carried out by qualified teachers trained by nation state, not monks. Finally the state-managed compulsory education system began in 1921 during the reign of King Rama VI based on the "Primary Education Act" (Keyes, 1991; Uthai, 1991; Baron-Gutty, 2009; Kwanchewan

and Prasit, 2009). Since this Act, every child, both boys and girls aged from 7 to 14, were able to attend schools.

As times passed, in the 1950s, Thailand moved toward the export-oriented development model and simultaneously education became a tool for training workers and producing better human resource (Baron-Gutty, 2009). The development of Thai education was quantitatively expanded on a large scale. The number of students and teachers increased even under the military governments that ran from 1957 to 1973 (Waraiporn, 2007). Finally, the 1980 National Primary Education Act officially recognized that all villages should have primary schools. However, the teachers' salaries, working condition and the quality of education were not considered much. During this time, the rise of communism in the world after 1949 made Thailand afraid of its spread. The Thai military government even made efforts for better education in remote areas to prevent people from joining the communist party. It is explicitly proved from the existence of Border Patrol Police (BPP) Command Office and their efforts to establish schools in border areas; particularly in indigenous villages (Park et al., 2009) (see section 2.2).

As Thai education has developed, it has been widely criticized due to its avowed aim to inculcate "Thai-ness" and a nation-state controlled type of modernity in its students (Kwanchewan and Prasit, 2009). As Keyes (1991) indicated, the state-sponsored school has played a major role in shaping the cultural orientation which replaced traditional values and knowledge. Schools have functioned as a means to orient people to a world beyond their local communities. State sponsored education focuses only on "global knowledge" and "[does] not fit for the needs of the community" (Baron-Gutty, 2009: 24). Besides, Keyes even expressed that "more schooling means more state-determined education" (1991: 11) to explain the negative impact of compulsory education in Thai rural area. In this sense, Chayan evinced the other criticism about the Thai education system. He conducted research at a formal school in rural area and said that it was just a tool to "produce docile citizen who accept the expanding Thai capitalist economy and remain loyal" (1991: 172) to the Thai state without considering whether it is to their advantage or not. Moreover, it is a major factor in the reproduction of social inequality through the unequal educational opportunities inherent in its structure, determined by families' economic status.

With these kinds of criticism, strong demands for changes in Thai education arose in the 1990s. It resulted in the enactment of the 1999 National Education Act (NEA) and the Second National Education Act in 2002, both of which were affected by the social and economic crisis facing Thailand at this time. Thailand was hit with a fiscal crisis in 1997 and there was an embarkation of social and political reform which led to the enactment of the Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand 1997. As many researches have mentioned (Hallinger, 2012; Waraiporn, 2007; Jones, 2008; Poschanan, 2013), this political reform influenced education reform too. The government judged that reviving the Thai identity and fostering the global citizen were necessary to recover from the crisis thus considerable changes in the structure of management and administration have taken place in order to support the key teaching and learning changes stipulated by the NEA. The NEA indicates that all children have the right to a free education for twelve years and the compulsory education period was expanded from six to nine years (Park et al., 2009). The fifteen-year National Education Plan also enacted during this period advocates as its major goal an “integration of all aspects of the quality of life, including comprehensive and balanced human development and the forging of a society of morality, wisdom and learning” (OBEC, 2006: 17).

The other remarkable aspect of these changes is the decentralization movement, led by the Royal Thai Government (RTG) in 1997, that directly and indirectly influenced education (Jones, 2008). They promoted decentralization, empowerment of local wisdom and requested the cooperation of the local community. The rationale of this movement toward community or local democracy came from the historical roots of Thai political and economic structures that existed before today’s capitalistic structure (Chatthip, 1999 cited in Baron-Gutty and Supat, 2009). The emphasis on the decentralization of education brought as a result of more authority and responsibility to the education administration. For example, they established 185 Education Service Areas (ESA) in 2008 which is a new structure within the Ministry of Education (MOE, 2008; UNESCO, 2011). ESA offices cover each area and have sovereignty and flexibility to decide several educational directions such as choosing the contents of textbooks that best suits the local contexts. Not only were these structural changes notable but so were the subsequent substantive changes. The contents of lesson and/or curriculum in the public school system were criticized for their lack of connectivity and consideration of the

diverse learners' background and specificities (Kwanchewan and Prasit, 2009). However, the new NEA stressed that all schools should develop the curricular contents according to need, aptitude and interests of their students. In this sense, it created, for all practical purpose, a subject in the school curriculum called 'local curriculum', a kind of symbol of empowerment of local wisdom and cooperation with the local community. They designated nine components as part of Thai local wisdom such as agriculture, industry and handicrafts, Thai traditional medicine, natural resources and environmental management, community trusts and enterprises, fine arts, language and literature, philosophy, religion, and tradition. The local curriculum policy indicated that the core curriculum designed by MOE shall combine with a local content provision of up to 30% from 2004 all over Thailand (Baron-Gutty and Supat, 2009). The new NEA direction proves that the Thailand government has tended to reconsider the practical value of education in their diverse students' level or conditions and has attempted to expand out of the problem of its Bangkok centralized curriculum. The MOE (2008) evinced that the ESA offices and local curriculum should lead to the successful improvement of educational quality and it has become an example of how Thailand can improve itself through its policy-based tasks. However, like many other policies in Thailand, very few of new education policies have been clarified and implemented due to political interference.

Due to this process, the current basic education in Thailand consists of nine years of compulsory basic education which include six years of primary education and three years of lower secondary education (UNESCO, 2011). There are about 13 million students and 650,000 teachers in the formal school system sector and 2.8 million students and 15,000 teachers in the non-formal education sectors (MOE, 2007 cited in MOE 2008). Thailand quantitatively carries out the international goal of 'Education for All (EFA)' and the government has allocated the most of any category in its budget to the Ministry of Education since 2008³ with gradual annual increases (The Thai

³ According to the Office of Permanent Secretary source of 2014, the budget allocation for education in 2008 and 2014 were as follows; 301,437,400,000 baht (about 8,362 million USD) or 18.2% of annual total budget in 2008 and it increased to 482,788,585,900 baht (about 13,392 million USD) or 20.5% of annual budget in each year (The Thai National Commission for UNESCO and Ministry of Education, 2015: 76).

National Commission for UNESCO and Ministry of Education, 2015). Even though the Thai government has made a great effort to improve education implementing international standards and national specificity, it still has many problems to solve. These include the gap of education provisions or opportunities by regions, economic status or ethnic discrimination, the lack of rights for the disabled and also the high drop-out rate. Furthermore, the practical change within NEA is weak when viewed in terms of the reform process. However, the attempt at reform offers new room for discussion about locality and alternatives in education and it might give the chance for indigenous groups to reconsider their own indigenous knowledge and about how to negotiate with the public school system.

2.2 Ideology and Policy for Indigenous Education in Thailand

When focusing on the education issue of indigenous students in Thailand, it is ineluctably linked with the historical perception of indigenous people in Thai society. The detail explanation about this subject goes far beyond the scope of my study but can be briefly explained with some official facts which reflect the historic unconcern and prejudice towards indigenous people in Thai society. Thailand is generally divided into three geographical regions of indigenous population; “fisher communities and a small population of hunter-gathers in the south of Thailand, the many diverse highland peoples living in the north and north-west of country and a few groups in the north-east” (Erni, 2009: 443). However, the government declares in their official survey that “there are 923,257 hill tribe people living in 20 provinces in the north and west of the country” (Erni, 2009: 443) and publishes no figures about indigenous people in the south and north-east. Even though there are several others, only ten groups have been granted official recognition as *chao khao* meaning hill or mountain people (Erni, 2009; Nannaphat, 2015). It shows that the Thai government hasn’t admitted to or tried to encompass the indigenous people who were “native of the area well before the creation of the modern Siamese nation-state” (Kwanchewan and Prasit, 2009: 42). Furthermore, there have been misconceptions about them such as backward from a modernization standpoint or being involved in deforestation, opium cultivation, and communism and so on. This negative prejudice in the society has made the public regard indigenous people as ‘non-Thai’ and caused the indigenous people to hide their identity, thus the

below statement might be applied to the case of Thailand as well.

“It was by such means that the indigenous person came to be seen as the ‘other’ primitive, barbarian, and savage: in short, not a whole human being. Simultaneously their identity, their cultural values, their language and their vision of the world were negated.” (Dussel, 1995 cited in Sonia and Petronilha, 2009: 541).

This situation has not changed much, thus the groups working for the indigenous peoples’ movement still delineate in official paper that;

Article.5 “[And] so far in Thailand, there is no fixed definition of indigenous people that applies to all ethnic groups equally, there are several criteria that can serve to define who we are, but with specific state-recognized identities in different terms as: languages, cultures, traditional territories as defined by customary law, systems of self-governance and/or management, historical continuity, limited ability to participate in the national society economy and political systems, discrimination, and human rights abuses. Therefore officially speaking, Thai State firmly undertakes the blanket concept and avows that there is none of indigenous peoples in Thailand” (IEN and NIPT, 2015).

This kind of social historical background has affected profoundly education for indigenous people and they have had to struggle for it. Many scholars point out that the crucial problem for indigenous education is their lack of citizenship in legal system. Most indigenous people are qualified to get Thai citizenship under Thai law because they were born there and even their parents or grandparents were born in Thailand. However, most of them (around forty to sixty percent)⁴ still live without citizenship (Park et al., 2009). Without citizenship, they are marginalized from the rights and benefits inherent thereof and, often have difficulty accessing health care system, endure travel restrictions, lack employment opportunities and suffer from low incomes. They also face many barriers and risks from economic exploitation such as human trafficking, abusive labor practices, being lured into prostitution and so on. Above all, indigenous students without citizenship have severe difficulties advancing or improving their life because of the obstacle of access to basic and good quality education (Park et al., 2009). The situation has become better with increasing number of

⁴ According to UN working paper, there are approximately 400,000 stateless people in Thailand and UNHCR comments that the exact number of stateless persons is unknown and the statistics are difficult to compile (Park et al., 2009).

students now attending school. However, even the attending students with citizenship have faced other difficulties in public school, too.

The population of indigenous children who are in Thai basic education i.e., 6 years of primary schooling is estimated to be “about five percent of the eight million students” (Park et al., 2009: 536). It implies that even though there are still many indigenous children who cannot receive the benefits of the public education system because of a lack of citizenship, there are large number of indigenous students who are attending public schools. Historically, since the 1960s, the Thai government has intensively tried to set up schools and state agencies for indigenous children and youth (Kwanchewan and Prasit, 2009), but their initial rationale was from a security standpoint in order to control them. The beginning of the school system for indigenous people is the BPP schools⁵ patronized by the King and royal family members in the 1950s, because the Thai government feared the spread of communists and cultivation of opium in remote border areas at that time (Park et al., 2009). School system for indigenous people which were promoted during this time gradually influenced the indigenous students and forcefully tried to change them into adopting a more Thai identity in the forms of compulsory education (Kwanchewan and Prasit, 2009). These pressures within compulsory education to indigenous people have lasted for a long time and some of the major ensuing struggles are as follow.

First of all, the compulsory education system and its curriculum doesn't admit and accept indigenous people's own knowledge such as language, history and culture in the context of the public curriculum. The worse fact is that the misconceptions about indigenous people are published in the public textbooks and presented as if they were the truth. These factors have influenced indigenous students, not only through their failure to adapt and learn, but also by producing a loss of self-identity or self-esteem. Because most indigenous children learn and use their mother language at home and in their community before going to school, when they enter a school it must be like a totally different world, a world in which only the Thai language is spoken and only a

⁵ Kwanchewan and Prasit (2009: 47) specify that the number of BPP schools were ultimately “713 schools” in total, but the numbers decreased because many indigenous people moved out of remote places or the places become accessible to other people so some schools were transferred to be under the responsibility of the MOE. Thus, “only 191 schools remained under its control in 2005”. Among the 191 remained schools, there are 189 primary schools and 2 secondary schools.

forced Thai cultural identity is acceptable (Keyes, 1991; Chayan, 1991). It is linked with the second problem: the status of the average teachers who are assigned to certain ethnic communities, usually in rural area. Most of the teachers in indigenous villages are not native indigenous people and they don't receive any education about the basic background of indigenous people in Thailand when they study at teacher's college. Thus, the teachers who have never been trained or educated how to teach indigenous students make a bad situation worse in the actual classroom and cannot improve any quality of the indigenous students' education (Keyes, 1991; Chayan, 1991; Baron-Gutty, 2009). Thirdly, the government has over emphasized compulsory education as a modern system applicable for every child in Thailand. This has led to problematic results not only for indigenous children but for everyone in Thai society. If a student doesn't attend public school or cannot get a good grade on the standard national test, the society regards him or her as a stranger or a deficient person. This atmosphere impacts indigenous parents to pressure their children to go to public school, even when they cannot adapt, feel depressed or lack self-confidence (Jones, 2008). This compulsory education and social pressure has threatened the indigenous students' identity, culture and knowledge. As Kwanchewan and Prasit mentioned (2009: 53) "The more children attend school, the less they learn about their indigenous knowledge and culture", most indigenous groups face problems retaining their own group identity.

To sum up, Thai indigenous people who have struggled from social prejudice and inequality have faced educational hardship and problems. Even though the Thai government currently follows the international agenda 'Education For All' and has tried to take special care of disadvantaged students, including indigenous students, in terms of quality since 1990s, the difficulties of indigenous students in or out of schools have not been solved. Thus, some groups of people and NGOs have made special efforts to fill this need and to ease some of the most urgent issues for indigenous students.

2.3 Indigenous Knowledge and Indigenous Language

"Our language is like a pearl inside a shell. The shell is like the people that carry the language. If our language is taken away, then that would be like a pearl that is gone. We would be like an empty oyster shell" (Yurranydjil Dhurrkay, Galiwin'ku, North East Arnhem Land; cited in Furniss, 2014).

As described in section 1.5.2, indigenous knowledge covers diverse elements such as cultural practice, resource management, social interactions, ritual, spirituality and indigenous language. The correlation between indigenous knowledge and indigenous language is regarded in two ways. The first one is that it is a necessary and sufficient condition because the knowledge is composed and explainable by its own language. Even though there are different elements which can be shown by acting or by giving a specific feeling through atmosphere, the crucial factor of sharing specific knowledge is done by language. Another thought is that indigenous language is a key component itself under indigenous knowledge and is similarly endangered like other kinds of indigenous knowledge. Predominantly, indigenous language is regarded as a representative element for / of indigenous knowledge. However, languages continue to be lost and their speakers face the process of “the subsequent loss of traditional culture and assimilation into mainstream society” (Klein, 2011).

This issue is actively discussed in a school context because language is essential as a medium of instruction and becomes a big barrier for some learners. Studies by international agencies (Save the Children, 2007; UNESCO, 2005; World Bank, 2006) have emphasized the fundamental importance of the learner’s first language for learning and have claimed a special concern for the learners from minority linguistic communities, who need to receive education through a second language (generally the official language of their country). Scholars estimate that over five years of exposure is necessary for a child (Save the Children, 2007) to develop sufficient language ability for use in an academic setting. In light of this fact, it is not difficult to imagine the struggle these children have in a totally different language environment, learning not only a new language but also different subjects. There are other reports which indicate that “when the language of learning and the language of instruction do not match”, it leads to “lower levels of learning” (World Bank, 2006: 3), early drop-out rate and high out-of-school rate⁶.

Thus, many scholars insist on the importance of indigenous language and some of them strongly argue that all levels and forms of education need to be bi(multi)-lingual based on one’s mother tongue and intercultural in the classroom. This ‘Intercultural

⁶ According to the World Bank (2006), over half of the world’s drop out school students are from the regions where their mother tongue is not used at school.

Bilingual Education (IBE)' has been developed actively in the Latin America region since the 1970s and, according to some researches (Aikman, 1995; Ortiz, 2007; Estrada, 2012), it aims for "providing useful knowledge with which indigenous peoples can defend their interests vis-a-vis the wider encroaching society and revitalizing and strengthening indigenous cultural practices" (Sampaio and da Silva, 1981 cited in Aikman, 1995: 411). Accessing to mother tongue based education is regarded as a right based issue and it is possible to find the rationale for this program from the international indigenous movement proclamations such as 'ILO Convention 169' in 1989, 'Convention on the Rights of the Child' in 1990 or 'UNDRIP' in 2007. They all mention educational linguistic rights⁷. However, the choice of language in education is complicated. Language choice is more problematic as an acceptable policy because language denotes "positions of power and control" and "individual sociolinguistic attitudes" (Hillmer, 2013: 14).

Then what about the Thailand status? In the 1940s, the Thailand government declared the Central Thai language as a national language through State Convention 9 (Fry, 2013). Linguistically, however, Thailand is well known for its language diversity – the country is home to 74 individual languages⁸ (Ethnologue, 2015). Although only Central Thai is acknowledged as a national language, it is actually used by only around 50% of the Thai people as their mother tongue (Hillmer, 2013) and other regions have their own local language (Suwilai and Malone, 2003). Millions of people speak another language as their first language and the Thai language is their second or others (Kosonen, 2013).

Even though such diverse languages exist, only Central Thai is used as a medium of instruction in the public education system and mass media (Suwilai, 2003). Therefore, minority languages in Thailand often face dangers similar to minority languages elsewhere;

⁷ These three Treaties are stressing the educational linguistic rights; 'ILO Convention 169' has Article 28 concerning the collective rights of indigenous people to an Intercultural Bilingual Education Convention on the Rights of the Child includes an Article 29 which contends the relation between education of the child and the development of respect for the child's parents and his or her own cultural identity and language and lastly UNDRIP Article 5 is about the educational linguistic rights (IEN and NIPT, 2015).

⁸ The living languages in Thailand vary from 10 as stated by the Ministry of Education (Fry, 2013) to 85 (Lewis, 2009), 76 (Kosonen, 2013) and 73(Pongrapunt, 2012).

19 languages in Thailand are in trouble, and 6 are dying (Ethnologue, 2015). In addition, the language issue and implementing a few small-scale experimental projects in Thai society would never happen without pressure from the international agencies' agenda of "world's language and cultural diversity" (Suwilai and Malone, 2003: 12) and other advocacy for the "educational quality and human rights" (Kosonen and Young, 2009; Benson and Kosonen, 2012 cited in Dooley, 2013: 8).

The impact of language barrier to students in Thailand is significant too. Busaba (2009) reported from the 10 regions which revealed that over 25% of the students couldn't read and write Central Thai. This figure is compared with 12.45%, the average rate of illiterate students.⁹ There is another study which underpins the reason of low ability of reading and writing Standard Thai in some regions is that teachers and students use different languages. It meant that many students in remote areas or who have the first language different from Standard Thai cannot understand what teachers are teaching in the class.¹⁰ Darunee (2008) pointed out that the disparity of Standard Thai language ability among children in Thailand caused other impacts of lower math and analytical skills including lower test scores, and finally less opportunity for job seeking. According to the analysis by Huebler (2009), the secondary school net attendance rates are also related with students' first language in Thailand. As table 2.1 shows, students who has household head speaking first language different from Central Thai tend to have higher school drop-out rate and the gap with Standard Thai speaking students was over 15%. Actually, there is no specific regulation which prohibits the use of other local or ethnic languages by the Ministry of Education; however they stipulate only Standard Thai as a medium of instruction in the classroom (Busaba, 2009). Therefore, the position and space of non-dominant languages in the Thai public education system is still vague.

⁹ This survey was conducted by the Thai Language Institute, Bureau of Academic Affairs and Educational Standards in the 2006 academic year, target to students who finished Primary Grade 2 to estimate the Standard Thai literacy skills.

¹⁰ From 2006 to 2007, the Office of the Basic Education Commission (OBEC) collected data from various schools in the country's border areas.

Table 2.1 Secondary School Attendance Rate by Mother Tongue in Thailand

Mother tongue of household head	Secondary Net Attendance Rates (%)
Thai	81.2
Other language	65.8
Total	79.8

Source: Huebler (2009)

Recently, however, Thailand adopted the first National Language Policy (NLP) developed by the Royal Institute of Thailand in 2010 (Fry, 2013) and explicitly expressed that their previous monolingual education approach was “not producing satisfactory results among ethnic children” (Udom and Person, 2011: 35). They also proclaimed that “[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; cited in Hiller, 2013: 6). Therefore, it seems to have created a new space in which to discuss this issue but, due to the long period of monolithic ways of education, the major actors in the education field, the teachers and parents, regard the sole use of the Standard Thai language as a given and don’t easily understand the necessity of change or the problems associated with this issue (Dooley, 2013).

2.4 Mother Tongue Based-Multi Lingual Education (MTB-MLE) Program

To investigate my target NGO’s activities and influence, it is necessary to briefly understand the main program containing indigenous knowledge. FAL’s major program is MTB-MLE which focuses on using indigenous language in school system; thus, in this section, the basic methodology and concept of MTB-MLE will be introduced.

Linguistically, there are some key terms to explain about the MTB-MLE program. The first one is ‘mother tongue’ which is interchangeable with the terms ‘first language (L1)’, ‘native language’ and ‘home language’, etc. There are some controversies surrounding its definition but I follow the definition by Skutnabb (2000; cited in Hiller, 2013: 13) that a mother tongue is “a language that one (a) has learnt first; (b) identifies

with; (c) knows best; and/or (d) uses most”. Whereas the other concept is the ‘national language’ or ‘official language’, which is “considered to be the chief language of a nation state” (Crystal: 1999, cited in Hillmer, 2013: 13), it might be a symbol of identification for the people living within the nation state. Therefore, the MTB-MLE program particularly aims to apply for a learner who has a first language, different from the national language. Even in many countries, the MLE is becoming very general in this globalized world but the MTB-MLE program is distinct from MLE. The MTB-MLE program considers not only the number of exposed language present in a classroom but also the whole educational approach. The goal is to make learners be “literate and academically proficient in two or more languages” (Hillmer, 2013: 16), with emphasis on their mother tongue first. It means that teaching different languages only as one of the subjects in a certain grade is unacceptable in the MTB-MLE program’s pedagogy; rather the medium of instruction in all subjects should be in more than one language (Kosonen and Young, 2009) and learners can approach and understand all subjects by more than one language.

As represented in previous section, students who use non-dominant language are usually required to do the dual task of learning the official language and new concepts at the same time and they tend to have more difficulties and stress. Hence, after this situation was discovered, academia and international agencies¹¹ have suggested this MTB-MLE program for non-dominant language learners, particularly for ethnic minority people. According to many linguists and educationalists, this MTB-MLE program is designed to be applied in public school system step by step, helping indigenous children have strong educational foundations while providing a good bridge to the official language (Malone, 2007). See Figure 2.1 below.

¹¹ One of the representative international agencies for the advocacy of language diversity, the UNESCO’s Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau for Education in Bangkok office, has published about Multilingual Education since 2007. They have released an E-newsletter 19 times from March 2011 to October 2015 for sharing and informing about the MTB-MLE program.

K1	K2	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6
Build fluency in oral L1	Continue oral L1 Begin written L1 Begin oral L2 (late in the year)	Continue oral & written L1, oral L2 Begin written L2 (late in the year)	Continue oral & written L1, L2	Continue oral & written L1, L2 Begin oral L3	Continue oral & written L1, L2, oral L3 Begin written L3	Continue oral & written L1, L2, L3	Continue oral & written L1, L2, L3
<i>L1 for teaching</i>	<i>L1 for teaching</i>	<i>L1 for teaching</i>	<i>L1 for teaching</i>	<i>L1-L2-L1 for teaching</i>	<i>L1-L2-L1 for teaching</i>	<i>L1-L2-L1 for teaching</i>	<i>L2-L1 for teaching</i>

Figure 2.1 Step of MTB-MLE Application to Public School System

Source: Malone (2007)

Malone (2007) illuminates that to reduce the education disparity between official language learners and non-dominant language users in school, schools should provide instruction for teaching new concepts through the non-dominant language in all subjects first. Then they should gradually use and teach through the official language, for instance starting around G1. It implies that the non-dominant language students, such as indigenous students have the right to start learning through their mother tongue first and only steadily be exposed to instruction in their national language or international language (Darunee, 2008).

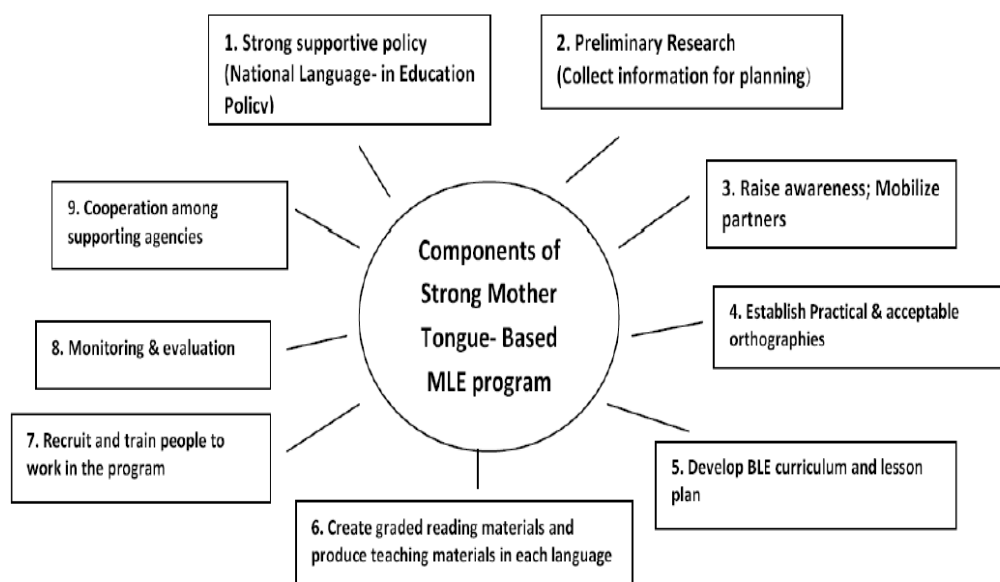


Figure 2.2 Nine Activities for Leading a Strong MTB-MLE Program

Source: Malone (2003)

This MTB-MLE program has been developed by some practical researchers who have suggested better ways to apply the program in specific language user communities. For example, Malone (2003) introduced the nine activities for making strong MTB-MLE program such as a “community participation through local scholars, religious leaders, community leaders, parents, villagers, artists, handicraft makers, performers, and designers” (Suwilai and Uniansasmita, 2012: 90).

The application of MTB-MLE in the Thai context has occurred very recently. The MTB-MLE program’s educational and social impact has been studied in other countries’ context but started in Thailand only after 2000s.¹² The small scale attempts have been led by international agencies like when the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO) and World Bank (WB) collaborated on a project entitled ‘The Use of Mother Tongue as Bridge Language of Instruction’ in the purpose of Education For All agenda from 2007 to 2009 (SEAMEO, 2010). And after NLP was promulgated in 2010, the Thai government showed a position which seemed to support the bilingual or multilingual education for indigenous children using their own first language and even appeared to accept the same concept for migrant workers’ children coming from neighboring countries (Fry, 2013; UNESCO, 2015).

The most explicit effort of MTB-MLE in Thailand is conducted by Mahidol University and a local NGO, FAL. The details of the MTB-MLE program development history by FAL will be represented in next section 2.5, so the case of Mahidol University will now be introduced briefly. The Resource Center for Language Documentation, Revitalization and Maintenance of Endangered Languages at Mahidol University has conducted an action participatory research targeting Patani Malay students in three schools supported by the Thailand Research Fund (TRF) and UNICEF since 2007 (Suwilai and Uniansasmita, 2012). As a linguistic research organization, they observed the dramatic decline of the ethnic languages and cultures in Southern Thailand,

¹² Actually, before the public education system became more open to non-dominant language learners, there already were some unofficial programs which helped them learning their first language when it differed from the Thai national language. For a long time, religious groups, indigenous community based organizations and NGOs have taught indigenous people’s first language (Hillmer, 2013), but according to an examination by a linguist, these programs were not really based on multilingual education methodology (Kosonen, 2009).

especially the Malayu or Pattani Malay. They started pilot projects which have shown positive results such as improving literacy in their first language and the Thai language and also partially solving problems related to underachievement. In conclusion, up to the present date, there are a total of thirty five public schools implementing the MTB-MLE program and two major actors Mahidol University and FAL, who are in charge of the Thailand MTB-MLE program¹³ (IEN and TICA, 2015; UNESCO, 2015).

2.5 MTB-MLE Program by Foundation of Applied Linguistic (FAL)

2.5.1 Introduction of FAL

The Foundation for Applied Linguistic (FAL) was registered as a Thai non-profit organization in 1989 by various university scholars in the area of applied linguistics and also by members of other organizations in Nonthaburi Province. These members recognized the importance of a quality education especially among the educationally disadvantaged. Thus, they set their vision as “to try to give every person in Thailand and the neighboring countries the opportunity to learn a language that helps them enhance their lives” (FAL, webpage). In the beginning stage, they sponsored scholarships for marginalized students and also held some training on a small scale. They opened an office in Chiang Mai in 2004.

Since 2003, FAL has been involved in a Bi-lingual Education (BLE) project which was conducted by the Office of Non-Formal Education Commission with the cooperation of SIL. This project had received financial support from UNESCO since November 2002 (Sawat 2003; Wanna, director of FAL, interview 24 October 2015). FAL helped to design and develop the materials for the BLE project based on community learning centers in two Pwo Karen villages - Nong Ung Tai village and Hauy Kwang village in Omkoi District of Chiang Mai province for two years. However, in 2006, this pilot project became infamous and faced conflict because they were teaching Pwo Karen language through Thai script. Additionally, there were fears of

¹³ Mahidol University and FAL have covered 10 language groups and regionally, 15 schools in the South, 1 school in the East, 1 school in the West, and 18 schools in the North. Mahidol University is in charge of all the whole schools in the South region, particularly for Patani-Malay ethnicity and the rest of the 20 schools are managed by FAL.

possible damage to the Thai language, so the project came to a halt in the name of a “national security reason” (Wisanee, Suchin and Anong, 2009: 177) and, officially, the centers closed in early 2007. Thus, FAL couldn’t sustain the BLE projects in those two community learning centers (Wanna interview 24 October 2015). At the same time, the director of FAL joined in a training held by SIL, on the topic of Literacy and Education in India. From this training, she understood more about mother tongue-based literacy and multilingual education programs for children, youth and those adults who speak non-dominant languages.

Meanwhile, another stakeholder is ‘Pestalozzi Children Foundation (PCF) through operational partners’¹⁴. This international NGO wanted to begin country programs in Thailand in 2006 so they discussed with SIL and FAL about the MTB-MLE project in Northern Thailand area (Burkard, PCF program manager, email interview, 25 October 2015). In this process, FAL emphasized the Northern Thailand situation of indigenous children in terms of their struggles in public school and their high drop-out rates due to the language barrier. PCF had some field trips with FAL and they decided to support MTB-MLE projects in public school for 9 years.

FAL has been doing various works but their works can be summarized in three categories. Firstly, implementing the Early Child Care Education (ECCE) started in 2010. This program was designed to supply appropriate education for children in ethnic language communities in remote locations where there is no opportunity for them to receive kindergarten level education. So they set up ten community kindergartens supported by the Bernard Van Leer Foundation (BVL) up to the year 2012. ECCE had

¹⁴ The Pestalozzi Children’s Foundation (PCF) is a Swiss children’s charity promoting peaceful cohabitation worldwide by comprehensively strengthening the competencies and rights of disadvantaged children and adolescents. PCF operates in two program domains: one is the intercultural exchange projects for Swiss school classes and children and adolescents from East European countries in the Children’s Village. The other are projects in developing countries which support children and young people to enjoy their right to good quality education and a promising future. Among their international cooperating partner countries, Thailand is one of them and has supported 3 organizations including FAL since 2006. (PCF, 2015) However PCF has not been registered in Thailand and officially operated under Indigenous People’s Foundation for Education and Environment (IPF) through the Memorandum of Agreement between PCF and IPF. PCF operated totally through the operational partners registered organizations in Thailand (Suriya, PCF country representative in Thailand, email interview, 2 November 2015). The exact term indicating it in Thai context is the ‘PCF through the operational partners’ but I use ‘PCF’ as acronyms.

covered six Pwo Karen and two Lahu communities for 3 years and it is still going on in five communities where FAL supports their teacher training. Secondly, they run the Rakspasa School which teaches the Thai language to non-Thai speakers and also English language courses for Thai people who want to improve their English. It is a for-profit program. Lastly, their current major work is the MTB-MLE project which they have been carrying out since 2007. This MTB-MLE program aims to form a multicultural and multi-language setting in public school classes. It is quite challenging work but FAL focuses on the school setting because they feel it is essential; it is very practical work aimed at improving the learning experience, the quality of education and the lives of the marginalized students in the many indigenous language groups.

To cover the above works, there are fifteen staff members in the Chiang Mai office. Ten staff, including the director, are in charge of the programs, mainly related the MTB-MLE program, and four staff are office managers such as cooks, cleaners and a secretary. Among the fifteen staff, all but two are indigenous people. This is related to the fact that it is necessary to communicate properly with indigenous groups to carry out the indigenous language based activities thus, whenever they expand to new schools in a specific indigenous village, they try to find a staff member who is from the same ethnic group. Three of the indigenous staff members discussed the reason why they are working at FAL;

“I had experience when I was a child. When I went to school I didn’t understand because of the language difference. Sometimes I understand but I don’t know how to answer. It’s very suffering and these kinds of memory influenced to make me work here” (Por, staff of FAL, interview, 24 September 2015).

FAL doesn’t have any limitations or requirements in terms of religion for staff members (or for their works) but all are Christian. According to the present director (25 December 2015), when they recruit a new staff person, there is not a regulation concerning religion but they select a Christian candidate if he or she is in the last selection stage. Because, if a staff member is a Christian, they say, it is easier for them to understand the vision and goals of the organization which have been composed by their Christian board members. It is also because quite a few of the indigenous people in Thailand have changed their religion to Christianity after having been influenced by

missionaries over a long period of time. It is not a compulsory task for every member of the staff but there is a weekly quiet time for reading the Bible and praying for members and works among the staff on every Wednesday afternoon for 30 minutes.

2.5.2 History of MTB-MLE Program Development

The main activity of FAL, the MTB-MLE program, covers 20 schools of 8 indigenous sub-groups; Mon, Hmong, Pwo Karen, S'gaw Karen, Lahu Shi (Yellow Lahu), Lahu Na (Black Lahu), Lahu Shehleh, and Lawa in the 2015 academic year. It is the result of an accumulation of challenges and experiences over the last 10 years. It was initiated in the past with other two international actors – SIL and PCF. FAL officially began to implement the MTB-MLE program in earnest at governmental levels and local levels in 2007. Setting up the MTB-MLE program in public schools requires the approval and cooperation of the school teachers and the parents of these communities. Particularly, in order to allow school teachers (including principals) to participate in the MTB-MLE, the approval and cooperation of OBEC (Office of the Basic Education Commission) under the MOE in Thailand is essential. At the same time, OBEC has also had an interest in local language education from the previous model of BLE through Non-formal education sectors in community learning centers in Om Koi District and the constant challenges of Mahidol University in Southern Thailand region for Patani Malay people. Thus, three stake holders – FAL, Mahidol University and OBEC – signed a MOU and began to do pilot projects for four schools in the South, one in the West and five in the North since 2007. Among them, Mahidol University¹⁵ has been in charge of the four Pattani Malay schools in the Southern region and the other six schools have been supported by FAL.

The first school, initiated by FAL, Wat Wang Wi Veka Ram in a Mon community in Sangkhlaburi district, Kanchanaburi province, began implementing the MTB-MLE program in 2007 and it expanded annually. As Table 2.2 describes, there are six schools

¹⁵ The Resource Center for Language Documentation, Revitalization and Maintenance of Endangered Languages of Mahidol University started this program supported by the Thailand Research Fund (TRF) and UNICEF. Their project initiation was different than FAL's because it is a research institution; thus, they implement an action participatory research on Patani Malay preprimary and primary schools in southernmost provinces of Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat first (Suwilai and Uniansasmita, 2012).

which have been involved in the pilot project with FAL and all the schools have the same thing in common; their students have their own ethnic language and primarily speak it in daily life. However, in the case of the schools in the North, the school teachers speak only Thai and Northern Thai, leading to communication difficulties between teachers and students. For these pilot projects, FAL needed to develop new material and also train many new teachers. It was conducted step by step; a new curriculum was prepared annually as the first applied students' group moved up a grade. At the initiative stage, there were no applicable materials available for each new class so everything had to be developed and every teacher trained. For these pilot projects, PCF has taken a key role for 9 years. Even though the projects are known as a collaboration consisting of three stakeholders – FAL, Mahidol University and OBEC –, most of the budget for local teachers' salaries and material development have come from PCF. This indicates that the initiation of the MTB-MLE program in public schools was driven by the concern of a local NGO and by financial support from overseas before the Ministry of Education of the nation state got involved.

Table 2.2 Six Pilot Projects Sponsored by PCF (2007~2015)

No.	Year of begin	Name of school	Region	Ethnicity
1	2007	Wat Wang Wi Veka Ram (โรงเรียนวัดวังแก้วเวการาม)	Sangkhlaburi district, Kanchanaburi	Mon
2	2008	Ban Pui school (โรงเรียนบ้านพุย)	Hot district, Chiang Mai	Pwo Karen
3	2009	Ban Rak Phaen Din School (โรงเรียนบ้านรักแผ่นดิน)	Thoeng District, Chiang Rai	Hmong
4	2009	Ban Phaen Din Thong School (โรงเรียนบ้านแผ่นดินทอง)	Thoeng District, Chiang Rai	Hmong
5	2009	Ban Huai Khu School (โรงเรียนบ้านห้วยค)	Wiang Kaen District, Chiang Rai	Hmong
6	2009	Ban Huai Han School (โรงเรียนบ้านห้วยหาน)	Wiang Kaen District, Chiang Rai	Hmong

After the pilot project, OBEC wanted to expand this program to more schools. They have set up in 11 schools since 2013 as shown in Table 2.3. However, this is not managed by FAL; rather, it guides and supports the process for implementation of OBEC.

Table 2.3 Eleven Supportive Projects Cooperated with OBEC (2013~)

No.	Year of begin	Name of school	Region	Ethnicity
1	2013	Ban Huai Khong School (โรงเรียนบ้านห้วยไค้ง)	Chiang Mai	S'gaw Karen
2		Mae Ang Khang School (โรงเรียนบ้านแม่อ่างช้าง)	Chiang Mai	Pwo Karen
3		Ja Kue School (โรงเรียนบ้านจะค้อ)	Chiang Rai	Lahu Na (Black Lahu)
4		Pa Khwang Wi Ta Ya School (โรงเรียนบ้านผาขาววิทยา)	Chiang Rai	Lahu Na (Black Lahu)
5		Huai Eun School (โรงเรียนบ้านห้วยฮั่น)	Chiang Rai	Lahu Na (Black Lahu)
6		Nong Paam School (โรงเรียนบ้านหนองคำ)	Chiang Rai	Lahu Shi (Yellow Lahu)
7		La Oob School (โรงเรียนบ้านละออบ)	Mae Hong Son	La Wa
8		Chao Poh Luang 10 School (โรงเรียนเจ้าพ่อหลวงอุปถัมภ์)	Mae Hong Son	La Wa
9		Mae Poon School (โรงเรียนบ้านแม่ปูน)	Mae Hong Son	S'gaw Karen
10		Huai Kung School (โรงเรียนบ้านห้วยกุ่ม)	Mae Hong Son	S'gaw Karen
11		Mae U Su School (โรงเรียนบ้านแม่อุสุ)	Tak	S'gaw Karen

FAL takes some role in activities like teachers' training and developing materials, FAL's areas of expertise. According to an interview with the FAL staff (Panne, 27 August 2015), this arrangement is because of "the different agreement and condition of project". Even though these projects are based on the FAL's developed procedure, it seems different in the way the program is set-up. When the 11 schools were selected, it was done

by OBEC and some ESA offices¹⁶ in four provinces so there wasn't much discussion process with local schools and villages. Until 2015, most of the schools have applied the MTB-MLE at the KG1 and have prepared the lessons for KG2. These schools tend to show slow progress, compared with previous pilot projects.

Table 2.4 Three Extended Projects Sponsored by Child's Dream (2015~)

No.	Year of begin	Name of school	Region	Ethnicity
1	2015	Ban Khun Tae School (โรงเรียนบ้านขุนแตะ)	Chom Thong District, Chiang Mai	S'gaw Karen
2	2015	Ban Huai Nam Khao School (โรงเรียนบ้านห้วยน้ำขาว)	Om Koi District, Chiang Mai	S'gaw Karen
3	2015	Ban Mu Soe School (โรงเรียนบ้านมูเซอ)	Om Koi District, Chiang Mai	Lahu Shehleh / Pwo Karen

FAL has further extended its MTB-MLE program based on the previous pilot projects by working with another sponsor, Child's Dream¹⁷. Child's Dream sought a local partner in Thailand to support some Thai students in rural areas and began to select the schools with FAL's assistance. In this stage, FAL encountered a new case, the Ban Mu Soe School. Ban Mu Soe school in Om Koi District consists of two kinds of ethnicities – Lahu Shehleh and Pwo Karen. Usually, FAL first suggested the MTB-MLE program to the local people but, in this case, the Ban Mu Soe School initiated contact with FAL and requested the MTB-MLE program for their students. FAL selected two schools – Ban Khun Tae and Ban Huai Nam Khao – and decided to support Ban Mu Soe School as well. These projects, which are supported by Child's Dream, were initiated at the beginning of the early 2015 academic year.

¹⁶ Education Service Area (ESA) offices were established in order to decentralize educational administration in 2009 and fall under the Office of the Basic Education Commission, Ministry of Education. There are currently 185 Educational Service Areas in Thailand: 182 in the provinces and the remaining 3 in Bangkok. Each ESA comprises an Area Committee, which is responsible for approximately 200 educational institutions and a population of 300,000 to 500,000 students (MOE, 2008).

¹⁷ Child's Dream is a tax-exempt charitable organization which was established under Swiss law in 2003. It mainly focuses on children's health and better education in Myanmar, Laos, Cambodia and Thailand. The majority of the team members are based in Chiang Mai, Thailand, whereas a project team each is located in Siem Reap, Cambodia and Yangon, Myanmar (Child's Dream Webpage, 2015)

To sum up, the MTB-MLE program, the main work of FAL, has been developed actively since 2007 in cooperation with diverse partners such as PCF, OBEC, Mahidol University, etc. Up until 2015, they have operated 3 projects that can be categorized by their project condition and sponsors and have co-worked with a total of 20 schools. During this development, FAL has also improved many educational methodologies for implementation and strategies for negotiation with diverse actors.

2.6 Summary

In this chapter, the basic background for understanding Thai society and how it relates to the indigenous education issue was introduced. Overall, information about Thai modern education, indigenous people's history and their education status were examined with the goal of enhancing comprehension of my target case. This case is related, of course, with indigenous language and the MTB-MLE program, whose concepts were generally presented.

Hereby some social changes which Thai society has recently faced were represented, particularly the will for decentralized education, the discussion about alternative education and the new interest in diverse languages' status through the NLP. From these changes, the background idea of the MTB-MLE program's implementation in the public school system can be assumed. But, in the meantime, the actual number of MTB-MLE applied public schools in the whole nation remains only thirty five and the fact that there have been only two operating organizations existent over the last ten years involved in this effort begs the question whether it is authentically proceeded with long the term future plans of the Thai government.

Based on this background, from the next chapter, I explain why and how some of the local NGOs which used to be not key actors in the Thai public education field, have attempted to act dynamically in promoting the indigenous knowledge based education methodology to improve indigenous students' learning.