

CHAPTER 4

Mainstreaming of Education and Negotiation Strategies

FAL, this research's target NGO, has focused on the MTB-MLE program since 2007. To implement this program in a practical manner, FAL needs to co-work with diverse people from local to international agencies and, in this process, they have developed negotiating strategies. In this chapter, I depict how FAL works to promote the MTB-MLE program, particularly at the local level with stakeholders such as the school authorities, parents and villagers. The MTB-MLE program completely relies on the cooperation of people in schools and villages because the program cannot be operated without the school teachers' participation and the parents' acceptance. According to research from other regions (Ortiz, 2007; Estrada, 2012) that, explored the implementation of similar new programs based on indigenous knowledge, the local people's reaction is not always affirmative and the previous FAL pilot project school cases' results confirmed this. From the fact, I argue that to initiate the MTB-MLE program, FAL needed to develop some strategies for efficient negotiation with the local people. To analyze this more fully, I selected one of local schools which started implementing the MTB-MLE program from 2015 and observed how it was carried out at the local level.

4.1 Features of FAL's MTB-MLE Program

The self-identity of FAL is explicitly revealed when the FAL staff members introduce themselves in public. I witnessed their introduction in several places but the most impressive one was at a special lecture for more than one hundred 3rd grade students at the Education Faculty of Chiang Mai University on 24th October, 2015. Four of the MTB-MLE program veteran managers and the director of FAL opened their special lecture in the following manner:

Four staff stood in front and started introducing themselves one by one. At first,

Por grabbed the microphone and said something but not in Thai, then Chen and Dah also spoke in a language that was not in Thai (I think it was Bisu, Pow Karen and the Hmong language because they are all indigenous people). Not only I but also the other people in the hall seemed unable to understand them. There was silence. But finally, Panne spoke out “*sa wat di kha* (hello)” then everyone answered loudly “*sa wat di kha*” with a joyful voice. Even though I am not very good at the Thai language, I answered very happily too, after what must have been a couple minutes of frustration.

Panne kept talking in the Thai language saying, “Are you surprised about what they were talking about? Can anybody guess? (silence) What did the first speaker say?” Por answered by herself in Thai again. “I spoke in the Bisu language. Have you ever heard it? My name is Por.” The other two also reintroduced themselves in Thai and Panne explained additionally that “There are 4 people and we use 4 languages which are our own mother tongue. We don’t come from another country; rather, we are all Thai people just like you. Our social community has many cultures, many languages and a social hierarchy.”

Panne spoke in English that “If you can understand English then, please stand up.” then every student stood up. She asked the same question in French and a couple of the students stood up. She asked, “Can anyone explain how everyone could do what I asked when I spoke in English? And even though you cannot understand the second language, everyone knows what it is, right? Then how can everyone know it is the French language but you don’t know the previous three languages?”

(Student 1) “Because the language which the three people spoken, I haven’t ever heard before but English, I have studied since I was young. So I could do the action you requested.”

(Student 2) “Those three languages are used in small groups not like English and French which are used in many countries.”

After sharing some ideas, Panne turned to another topic. “So if this language disappears, how would you feel about it? When we focus only on big languages and forget small languages, this will have an effect on the distinction of diverse ethnicities. They call themselves *chon phao phun muang* (indigenous people), do you understand what indigenous people means, anyone?”

(Student 3) “The people who have lived in specific areas for a long time.”

Panne answered, “Correct. The people who speak Bisu, Karen and the

Hmong language have also lived in Thailand for a long time just like you who use the Thai language as a mother tongue. The UN has accepted the existence of these diverse ethnicities since 2550 (2007). Today, we are going to learn why and what *tawi pasa* is ... and what kind of effect or importance it has socially and culturally.” (Field Note, CMU special lecture by FAL, 24 October 2015)

This introduction implies many of the issues which FAL concentrates on such as ‘indigenous people in Thailand’, ‘various languages presently in use in Thailand and the danger of extinction’ and ‘mother tongue based education’ to explain their mission to the public. Not only this time but, whenever I asked the staff how they explain their MTB-MLE program to general people, most of them described the process in a similar way. However, it might differ a little bit when they are trying to persuade local indigenous people. In this section, I give a description of how FAL works to fulfill their major goal in a certain procedure with various people and various activities.

4.1.1 Working with Diverse Levels of People

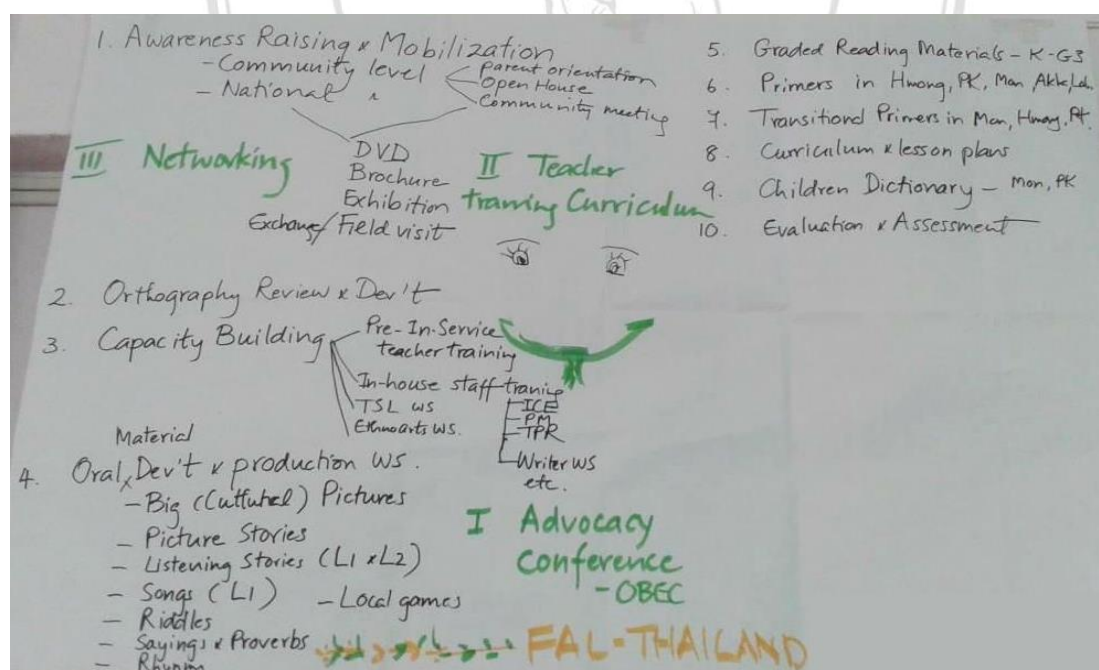


Figure 4.1 Working List-Up for MTB-MLE Program

In 2015, FAL's the MTB-MLE program was run by eleven staff members of diverse ethnicities. When I observed them in their office, I felt that eleven staff members were not enough to do all the works required. The intermediary managers in particular were really

busy. In their office, there is a wall notice detailing what they should do for MTB-MLE. When I asked about that, one of the staff persons said, “We made it around three years ago during our future plan workshop. It is about what we should do for the MTB-MLE program’s development but we cannot remove it until now because we don’t complete it yet!” (FAL staff, personal conversation, 27 August 2015). In their planning, there are two main task categories; one is co-working with other partners such as IEN, PCF, OBEC and the other is developing supplemental materials for the program’s implementation in class. It indicates that FAL recognizes the importance of mobilization and advocacy and tries to work with diverse people, organizations and their network to run MTB-MLE.

As Lewis and Kanji (2009) illustrated, NGOs have recently cooperated with other agencies very highly and they regard creating partnerships as one of their essential tasks. A NGO cannot work efficiently without these partnerships which improve the quality of interactions and increase institutional sustainability. FAL is a non-profit organization thus it needs sources of funds and, technical support as well. Furthermore, the MTB-MLE program’s goal is to be implemented in the public school system so it needs be accepted by the school authorities. Hence, from the initiation stage, it has to be a cooperative project between different actors at different levels - OBEC and three ESA offices for school teachers’ participation, PCF, SIL, UNESCO and Mahidol University for technical support and six local schools and villages for practical approval. For 10 years, FAL has developed more partner organizations and tried to “negotiate with many levels” (Wanna, director of FAL, interview, 11 March 2015). Table 4.1 is summarizing their current partner groups for the MTB-MLE program directly or indirectly.

This research mainly focuses on the activities between FAL and people at the local level, but first, I briefly depict FAL’s work with other levels. First of all, FAL has worked with international agencies. Like many other NGOs, FAL has also been influenced by global policies and programs and has endeavored to handle them in a sensitive manner. Actually, the MTB-MLE program’s embarkation was deeply related with global agencies such as SIL and UNESCO so FAL has used the international educational agenda as their foundation and has continued to strengthen it over time. A remarkable activity that occurred during this year at the international level was that the MTB-MLE program was included in documents reporting the ‘response to the 55th Session of the UN ESCR, with examination

of the Country Report of Thailand' (see chapter 3.2).

Table 4.1 Categorized Partners of FAL in Different Levels

No.	Level	Organizations
1	International	United Nation Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (UN ESCR)
		United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)
		United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
		The Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO)
		Summer Institute of Linguistic (SIL)
		Pestalozzi Children's Foundation (PCF) and its operational partner
		Child's Dream
2	National	Ministry of Education (MOE)
		Office of Basic Education Commission (OBEC)
		Institute of Language and Culture of Rural Development, Mahidol University
3	Regional	Education Service Area (ESA) offices
		Indigenous Education Network (IEN)
		Linguistic Institute of Pa Yap University, Chiang Mai University
4	Local	20 local schools, local villages

On the national level, FAL has been co-working with the MLE team under OBEC. Under OBEC, there is a Thai Language Institution and, under this institution, there is a MLE project and a Thai Language Development project. The MLE project team has had two major implementing partners since 2007 – the Institute of Language and Culture of Rural Development of Mahidol University and FAL. Formally, the MOE of Thailand joined the 41st (2006) and 42nd (2007) Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO) Council Conferences which discussed the issue of mother tongue-based language (SEAMOE, 2008)²⁷ and tried to incubate this educational model.

²⁷ The SEAMOE titled this activities as "Using the Mother Tongue as Bridge Language of Instruction in Southeast Asian Countries: Policy, Strategies and Advocacy" and got the supported budget from the

Even though, the MOE of Thailand has shown their concern about the issue of MLE with other international agencies, an analysis of the structure and features of the MLE team under OBEC demonstrates how insubstantially their efforts really are.

“For [MTB-]MLE project, there are only two staff in the team. I joined in it 2 years ago so before my joining, Ms. Busaba only one. Actually, she will retire in this year so [it means] I will be the only manager for MLE. OBEC supports some of local teachers’ salary of 6 pilot projects but not all of salary. For 4 Hmong schools in Chiang Rai, we provide 75% of salary (4,500 baht) and for the rest of two schools we pay 25% (1,500 baht).²⁸ Not only for local teacher’s salary have we supported some trainings and workshops for material developing. The total budget for MTB-MLE project in 2015 is 2 million baht (56,000 USD)²⁹ and we got some budget, 5 million baht (140,000 USD) from UNICEF in this year. The difficulty is that there is no previous collected data in OBEC. I have worked for 2 years but cannot see the whole data so cannot design for future. Since 2007, even OBEC has supported MTB-MLE by budget but only collected some results of the program” (OBEC officers, interview, 24 September 2015).

It can be summarized that OBEC formally started the MTB-MLE project and has allocated monies in its budget for it since 2007. However, they have hired only one educator for its management and their budget for this project is less than half that of the international agency’s budget. They have demanded only results from the program rather than trying to know the detail processes or improve future project management. Most of all, during the last decade of the MTB-MLE program’s implementation, practical operation of MTB-MLE in Thailand has been done by only two organizations, FAL being one of them. To this day, there is no specific education policy formulated to apply MTB-MLE in the Thai public school system. Hence, it can be interpreted that OBEC has carried out the MTB-MLE program only as a model in response to international demands and has never shown any real commitment to its widespread application.

World Bank.

²⁸ The average salary of local teachers for 6 pilot projects is 6,000 baht (180USD) per month. The rest part of salary is supported by PCF through FAL.

²⁹ Refer to the footnote No.3.

Lastly, FAL has actively worked with other regional partners. The major regional partners are IEN members. During this past year, the MTB-MLE program was one of the major topics of discussion for IEN members. They had a Mother Tongue Day conference in February, submitted a report to UN ESCR based on the MTB-MLE program in June and organized a member training in July. Within the network, FAL strongly promotes their program because they think it can be disseminated quickly and have a broad impact through the other organizations. The director of FAL elucidated that “We also lobby to IEN to apply the MTB-MLE program in their communities or partner school” (Wanna, interview, 24 October 2015). Although, this wide range of endeavors sometimes makes the FAL staff discouraged, these diverse levels of work are necessary to be taken a step ahead so they try to cover all.

4.1.2 Procedure of Initiation

The implementation of the MTB-MLE program in public schools usually goes through a certain process. It appears that FAL developed this procedure and the corresponding criteria for the selected schools from their previous pilot projects experiences. According to a staff interview, they would use the same language spoken in the target school at first. Next, every class needs to consist of at least ten students. Lastly, they have to find a teacher who can speak the same language as the students (Panne, interview, 27 August 2015).³⁰ With these selection criteria, FAL usually searched for eligible schools but they didn’t contact them directly; rather, they contacted to ESA offices first. FAL made relationships with certain ESA offices in the areas where the eligible schools resided and some of them were regarded as “our strong team” by OBEC (OBEC officer, interview, 24 September 2015).

This procedure of initiation was expressly revealed in the case of a new project in 2015. When FAL announced this new project to several ESA offices, four of them

³⁰ “[A] local teacher should speak exactly same with their students. For example, there is one school (which is consisted with) all Pwo Karen people, the local teacher also is Pwo Karen but comes from another area so even [they are] same ethnic group, it is not exactly same language as students. We checked the language. We have a vocabulary check-list” (Panne, staff of FAL, interview, 27 August 2015). Like this, FAL which is based in linguistic discipline care about the diverse language usage and this background influences to MTB-MLE program.

recommended some schools in their area.

“There are more than twelve schools in recommendation list from 4 ESA offices. We opened an orientation meeting but only two offices attended and other two just sent us their information only. It means that the others, even if we work together, maybe the cooperation might not be good so we decided to work the participated offices” (Panne, staff of FAL, interview, 27 August 2015).

After deciding which ESA offices were going to be working with FAL, they visited the candidate schools with supervisors from the ESAs and with staff from their sponsor partner, Child’s Dream.

During these pre-visits, they examined the schools’ condition and also asked the teacher group for their opinion. During the selection process, the teacher group’s approval is one of the essential conditions for inclusion and the case of Khun Tae School revealed this, too. According to a teacher’s recollection, when Khun Tae School was selected, FAL told them the reason was because “the teachers in Khun Tae School wanted, accepted and their preparation level was higher than Khun Pae School” (Mari, government teacher, interview, 14 September 2015) which was another candidate and neighbor school. So, finally, Khun Tae School was selected. During this whole process, FAL definitely held discussions with Child’s Dream, too. After Child’s Dream agreed to fund the local teachers’ salaries, FAL proceeded to select new teachers since the school had no local teachers. Child’s Dream was concerned about the sustainability of the program; one of the core conditions for their support is that the local people appear to be able to sustain the program by themselves.

However, the eleven projects that were expanded by OBEC put a little different complexion on the procedure. The selection and discussion process was completely done by OBEC and by some of the ESA offices in the four provinces; thus, there wasn’t much discussion time with local schools and villages. OBEC tended to expand the MTB-MLE program applied schools but they didn’t expand the budget for hiring local teachers who play a major role in this program. Rather, they tried to find schools which already have a bilingual teacher, i.e., a government teacher on staff who speaks ethnic language as his/her mother tongue. However, there are not many such bilingual teachers,

so only eleven schools were included. In addition, the progress of these schools tended to be delayed in different ways. FAL has limited its supportive role helping with methodology and technology in these OBEC-gearred because of different conditions and purposes. Hence, the main manager for the program's initiation stage summarized that;

“We [take a responsibility for substantive] train[ing for] teacher but their participation is not same. We don't work in the community; we just give guidelines to ESA offices and OBEC. We cannot call to school teachers and ask them ‘how is going on your lesson and materials? Did you finish or not?’ No way! We cannot do like that. Just ask to supervisor sometimes but the other nine school cases, we can” (Panne, interview, 27 August 2015).

In conclusion, the manner of initiation of the MTB-MLE program differs due to the agreements between stakeholders. But for ten years, FAL has had good relationships with national and international partners.

4.1.3 Practical Activities for Making the MTB-MLE Program Applied Class

Among the 20 schools which FAL manages or supports, there are three different types of classroom situations – one where there is the combination of a government teacher and a local teacher, one where there is only one local teacher or the situation where there is only one bilingual government teacher in a classroom. FAL doesn't force a specific type. Instead, it tries to find the best way for each school and village situation. The MTB-MLE program has been designed to start from the level of KG1 and then extended to higher grade levels during ensuing years. FAL follows the educational design for formal school classes (see chapter 2.4), so it emphasizes that when indigenous students enter the school system, there should be a teacher who can speak the same language which the students use at home and in the village. The local teachers at the kindergarten level are indispensable so most of the MTB-MLE schools hire one or two local teachers for the kindergarten class. Several schools in remote areas have already hired some staff from the community for temporary positions at a lower salary due to the lack of teachers. In these cases, most of the staff for kindergarten are not qualified, trained teachers and they tend to be put in charge of childcare. After the school begins implementing the MTB-MLE project, FAL trains these existing local teachers with newly hired teachers and supports their salary.

When the inaugural MTB-MLE students advance to the primary school level, FAL is required to follow the standard public curriculum; thus, the local teachers also require more academic background in education. FAL basically suggests a co-teaching system between a government teacher and a local teacher for each classroom. When a class is run by co-teaching, usually the government teacher makes a lesson plan following the public curriculum for each subject and the local teacher tries to explain the major concepts of each lesson in the students' first language. At the low levels of primary school where more usage of the local language is needed for explanation, the local teacher would be the lead teacher in class but, over time, the percentage of explanation in local language is gradually decreased. However, many schools in the mountains have faced a shortage of teachers so they place just one bilingual teacher in each class and this bilingual teacher is either a formal government teacher or a temporary hired³¹. In order to show progress in the MTB-MLE applied system at a school, FAL does the activities at the local level detailed below in Figure 4.2.

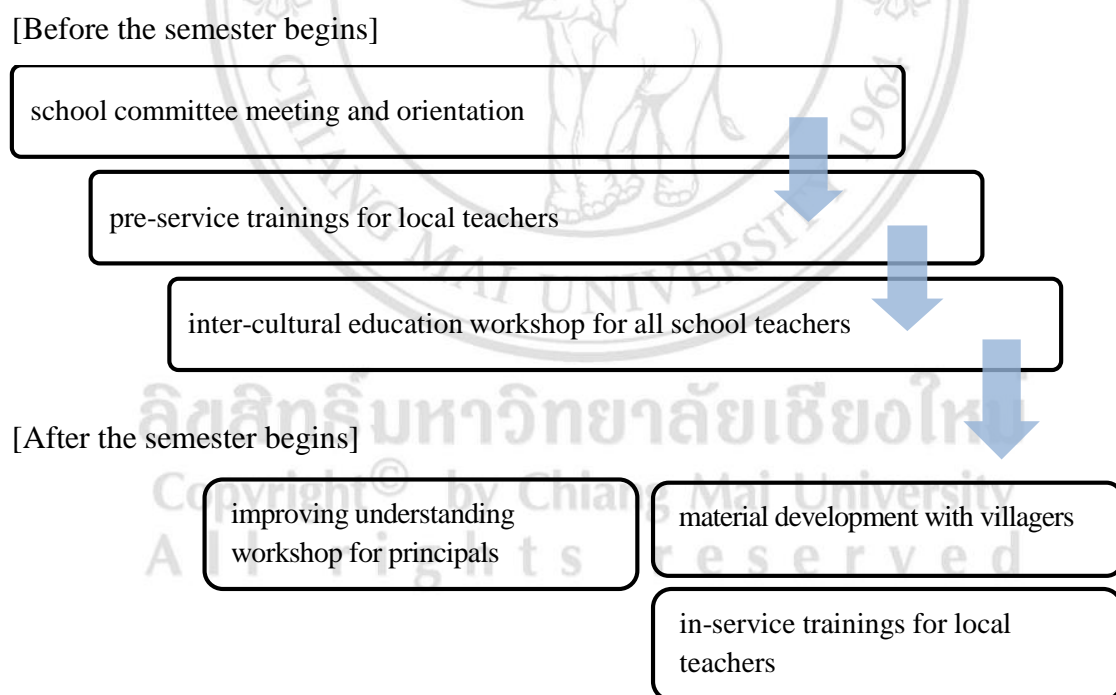


Figure 4.2 The Process of Implementation of MTB-MLE Class

³¹ In Khun Tae School, there is a teacher who has taught for 7 years the G1 students alone. The school has lacked formal teachers so it has hired a couple of staff from the community. The teacher of G1 students had a certificate for the teaching profession but she hadn't passed the government test. Her salary has been supported by ESA Chiang Mai 6 office .

The activities that take up the largest portion of this list are several kinds of trainings for local people. For example, from February to October in 2015, there was an ‘Intercultural education seminar’ for all teachers in the applicable schools, a ‘Management training workshop in the way of local based bi/multi language, co-organized learning to school administration and teaching guideline for bi/multi language’ for school directors including some ESA officers, seven times of pre-service training and three in-service trainings for local teachers for Khun Tae School. I missed the ‘intercultural education seminar’ so I cannot relay much data about it but, when I conducted interviews with government teachers, they seemed have a good impression of this seminar. Before attending this seminar, they hadn’t had much background regarding intercultural or multicultural education. After the seminar, they remarked that they understood the new concept better and had received some helpful teaching skills. The aim of this training was to improve the teachers’ comprehension of multicultural societies and to increase understanding between local teachers and government teachers. Implementation of the MTB-MLE program requires cooperation between both groups of teachers but “there are many cases because they cannot get along well due to their different culture” (Por, staff of FAL, interview, 16 September 2015).

When FAL opened the workshop for school directors, there were around 35 people of the MTB-MLE program present including school directors and ESA officers. In this workshop, participants learned more about the educational background required for the program or its administrative management but some of them were impressed more by the sharing session held by directors from the pilot project schools. They shared their experiences and this helped the participants gain confidence in the MTB-MLE program and fostered solidarity among the directors, particularly the new comers. “Today I am happy because I learn a lot and also know that there are another people a lot so I am not working alone” (Huau Khu School principal, in training, 22 July 2015).

Above all, the most frequent training is given for the local teachers who play a crucial role in for this program. The main goal of training is “improving capacity and the encouragement for teaching confidence” (Wanna, director of FAL, interview, 24 October 2015). Some schools have already hired local teachers before the implementation of the MTB-MLE program as temporary hire teachers but some schools

don't have enough local teachers, in this case, FAL suggests the schools to hire more local teachers. In this selection process, FAL doesn't demand but recommends to find a teacher who has at least finished G12. After enough teachers have been hired, FAL opens a pre-service training during school vacation to prepare for the new semester. Prior to this training, even the experienced local teachers had never used their mother language in class and didn't know their language system very well, especially in terms of reading and writing. Thus FAL must teach and train them all in new skills. They stated frankly that "I've never taught in Karen language so it seems more difficult to me" (a local teacher, pre-service training, 11 May 2015) or complained that "If they invite so many times during the vacation, I don't want to go because I should spend too much time at outside" (Eun, local teacher, interview, 14 September 2015).

FAL visits the school during the semester too, primarily to observe and assess the local teachers' classes. This is called in-service training. FAL visited Khun Tae School, three times during the first semester of 2015, but, depending on the school situation and the teachers' abilities, FAL staff might visit more often to help them.

4.1.4 Assessment Result of MTB-MLE Program

The MTB-MLE program's educational and social impacts have been studied in other country contexts but Thailand started this relatively recently (after the 2000s) and only Mahidol University and FAL have worked actively with it for the last ten years. Therefore, there have been only a few studies done in Thailand (Dooley, 2013; Hillmer, 2013; Kosonen and Young, 2009; Suwilai and Uniansasmita, 2012; Tan, 2012) and, among these, only Dooley's study (2013) is not in linguistics discipline and includes an educational assessment of FAL's MTB-MLE program in four Hmong schools in Chiang Rai. According to her quantitative research, there have been successes and challenges.

The successes and benefits of FAL's MTB-MLE program, as perceived by educators and parents, are that "the most successful in the Hmong-Thai bilingual project is the impact on students' learning, literacy, understanding, self-confidence and enjoyment of their schooling experience" (Dooley, 2013: 27). The results of students' tests and a questionnaire show that teachers and parents had, at least in the beginning, debates and much doubt about the program's efficacy. Over time, however, they became

more understanding and accepting of the program more because they saw the improvement in their children's learning abilities (see Figure 4.3) and their increased satisfaction with school life. These results of the students' improvement are detailed in many other reports emphasizing the program's positive impacts.

On the other hand, there are still barriers to overcome such as frequent staff turnover, low salaries for local teachers, difficulties in producing all the necessary lesson plans and class materials and, insufficient funding and policy support for the project. Some of these difficulties were discovered in my research target, too. It has had a negative impact on the program's effectiveness and sustainability. However, the general conclusion of these assessments of FAL's MTB-MLE program, in terms of educational improvement, is that there is measurable, visible progress being made. This program has become a good model for indigenous students benefiting from the usage of their mother tongue.

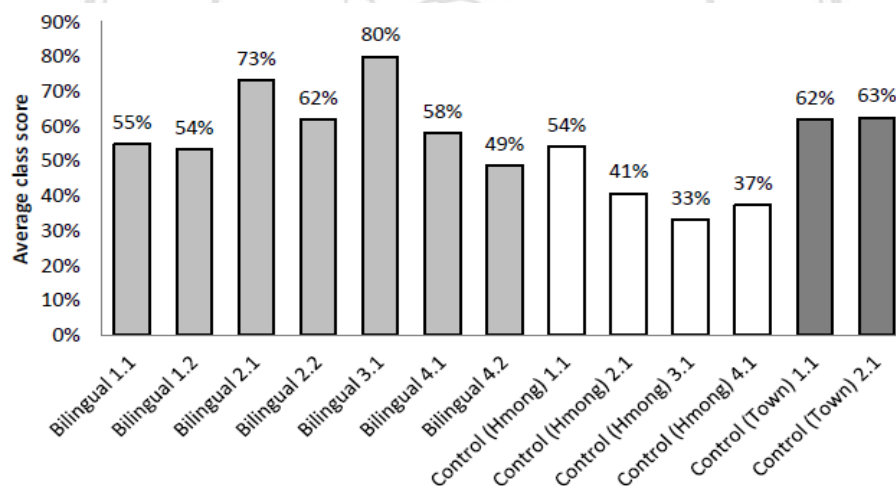


Figure 4.3 Average Class Score of Thai Language Test in G2, February 2013

Source: ESA Chiang Rai 4 Office, cited in Dooley (2013)

4.2 Indigenous People's Opposition to the MTB-MLE Program

FAL has faced objections about its MTB-MLE program from indigenous people including other indigenous NGOs. Their primary criticism stems from the MTB-MLE's major concept and methodology, i.e., 'teaching indigenous language through Thai alphabet'. The people in opposition are divided into two groups; one group consents to teaching indigenous language but objects to the use of the 'Thai alphabet' because they think it is like the national uniform education with all its attendant problems. The other group disagrees

with ‘teaching mother tongue’ under any circumstance. They want to teach the Thai language to indigenous children as soon as possible and think that the role of school is improving indigenous students’ Thai language ability; thus, they don’t approve of teaching indigenous language at school. Therefore, FAL has labored to persuade these people and negotiate with them for the program’s acceptance. In this section, I verify these two different oppositions to the MTB-MLE program implementation from the local people.

4.2.1 Opposition by Strong Conservatism

Some indigenous groups, particularly those who have proclaimed for indigenous peoples’ rights for a long time, have opposed to the use of the Thai alphabet in MTB-MLE. They contend that if the MTB-MLE program is designed for teaching indigenous language, then it should be through their own writing system. They don’t accept the use of the Thai alphabet for MTB-MLE program because it is different language and has been a primary agent of the nation-state in their cultural obliteration. Some of them also disagree with the MTB-MLE’s educational impact, as promoted by FAL that teaching indigenous language based on the Thai primer might make learning the Thai alphabet easier and more effective for indigenous students.

The MTB-MLE program wasn’t initially designed to use a second language alphabet in order to improve students’ learning of a second language. However, the MTB-MLE program in Thai public schools started with this premise, that improving the indigenous students’ learning of the Thai language could be achieved in this manner. FAL and Mahidol University have had to develop indigenous primers based on the Thai alphabet. There is no specific regulation which prohibits the use of other local or ethnic languages by MOE. Nevertheless, they only stipulate to use Standard Thai as a medium of instruction in the classroom (Busaba, 2009) and only the teachers of the MTB-MLE program can exceptionally speak the students’ mother tongue. The director of FAL has carefully stated that the real reason for using the Thai alphabet in Thai schools is because “it’s related with security issue” (Wanna, interview, 24 October 2015). As Watkins also mentioned, “In Thailand, few people are motivated to acquire an education in languages other than Thai. Non-Thai education is officially discouraged” (2002: 204). Consequently, learning indigenous language has not been regarded as a very acceptable

practice.

The other reason for developing primers based on the Thai alphabet is a far more practical one. Many indigenous communities have no writing system, or even if they do, the existing writing system is not systematic or uniform (Suwilai and Malone, 2003). The MTB-MLE program's implementation at schools requires most communities to develop the primer based on the Thai alphabet for teaching mother languages (Suwilai, email interview, 20 November 2015). There are exceptional cases in some of FAL's partner schools where their own writing systems do exist. According to research illustrating the initial discussion process with FAL and four schools in the Hmong communities in Chiang Rai, these communities have used the Romanized alphabet since the 1950s. Therefore, to promote the MTB-MLE program in these areas, it is necessary for FAL to open a three day workshop with Hmong representatives to decide whether they would accept the use of the Thai alphabet instead of Romanized one (Tan, 2012)³². However, most communities involved with the MTB-MLE program don't have a standardized writing system. For example, in the Khun Tae community, there are two different writing systems depending on the writer's religions³³. Furthermore, most of the adults haven't had a chance to learn either one; they don't know how to read and write proficiently in their mother language. For this reason, teaching their mother language to Khun Tae students using S'gaw Karen primers based on the Thai alphabet has not been controversial.

FAL recognizes well the claims of conservatives and, since it is a NGO based in linguistic discipline understands their concerns about preserving indigenous language. However, they "want to do what [we] can do right now for indigenous students at the disadvantage. Because [we] cannot wait until the ideal comes true rather try to find a

³² In this workshop, the Hmong representatives wanted to use their Roman alphabet based system at first time because it is used in Thailand, Laos and the United States widely but they changed their mind and selected using Thai alphabet for Hmong writing system instead. Because the education officials explained that this would help the children to learn Thai more quickly (Tan 2012). Finally FAL and OBEC could start the MTB-MLE program based on Thai alphabet. Although there was some intention of outsiders, but definitive agreement was done by the four of communities.

³³ According to the other linguistic document generalized that S'gaw Karen people basically has an oral tradition and although the S'gaw Karen language has two writing systems; a Burmese-based and a Roman-based, they don't have much opportunity to learn or to practice either of them because they don't have S'gaw Karen language based textbooks, newspapers in Thailand (Pongprapunt, 2012).

room for improvement” (Wanna, director of FAL, interview, 16 March 2015). To solve this problematic issue, FAL has further designed the MTB-MLE program to include an indigenous language writing subject starting in G4 to G6 if the community has their own alphabet. The four Hmong schools in Chiang Rai, for instance, have a class once a week to learn their Romanized alphabet with local teachers and this is possible through the allocation allowing for ‘local curriculum policy’ under the NEA of 1999.

4.2.2 Opposition by Long Nationalism and Assimilation

The much stronger resistance to the MTB-MLE program at the local level is ‘teaching mother tongue in school’ under any circumstances. Most of those who oppose it are indigenous parents. Most of these parents think that the school’s role is to teach their children the Thai language. Some of them also wish their children to learn English and/or Chinese so the kids can better adapt to Thai society and get a better job in this era of globalization. As a result, teaching mother language is seen as having no use and being weird. This situation has been observed not only in Thailand but also in other regions, mainly in a Latin America context.

The study by Ortiz (2007) denoted that Inter-Bilingual Education (IBE) in Chile was contested by the grassroots in many Mapuche communities. The local people didn’t show a clear commitment for it. Their opposition was historically based the legacy of nation-state dominated education and social discourse so they wanted their children to be mainstreamed for the following reason;

“The parents see the future of their children outside the land, outside the Mapuche community and the young people see education as the means that will enable them to get out of the rural world of the indigenous world, as something that will enable them to insert themselves into mainstream Chilean society and into the world of work in a more advantageous situation than if they were to be illiterate in Spanish and ethnically very Mapuche” (Vidal, 1989; cited in Ortiz, 2007: 112)

Since the 1960s, Thai government has intensively tried to set up schools and state agencies for indigenous children to be educated under the nation-state discipline. Therefore, there has been a gradual increase in the number of indigenous people attending public schools. Going to public school has been regarded as natural for more than fifty years now. For instance, in the case of Chong community in Southern

Thailand, even when faced with the loss of their Chong language around twenty years ago, the Chong parents themselves tended to stop speaking Chong with their children “as a way to improve their success in Thai schools” (Suwilai Premsrirat and Dennis Malone, 2003: 9). This tendency is observed in many ethnic groups in Northern Thailand, too. One of the staff of FAL explained her village situation as that;

“my generation or the previous generation faced the difficulties to go to study at school so nowadays, Bisu people try to speak Thai to their children at home. So when they go to school, they don’t struggle like us. But what is changing now is Bisu language is in danger because a lot of students don’t speak in Bisu” (Por, interview, 16 September 2015).

This is not only a problem that one ethnic group faces but what most ethnic groups face today in Thailand. Thus IEN summarized the current situation under public education as that;

“new generation, children are become pride less and lack of worthiness on their own traditional knowledge, as well as the formal education system also reduced the process communities’ knowledge passed from generation to generation because there is no space to exchange their experiences and knowledge to one another, including there is no supporting policy that related to this issue” (IEN, 2015).

It is in this manner that the mainstreaming of education has become a barrier to implementation of the MTB-MLE program. Previous research targeting to FAL’s pilot project schools in Hmong and Pwo Karen villages details how they encountered strong opposition from the communities at the beginning stage or described how the divided groups of parents agreed or disagreed with the program. Many local people still doubt it. FAL staff also mentioned this as one of their difficulties.

From this experience, FAL recognized the realities at the local level and subsequently developed new ways of negotiation. The one factor which works to the FAL’s staff’s advantage is that the current students’ parents’ generation received a Thai public school education and many of these parents remember how they suffered due to the language barrier. Some of them criticized the failure of Thai education as follows;

“Until I was third or fourth grade, I couldn’t speak Thai fluently and my classmates were as same as me. But if we couldn’t speak Thai well then we

were punished so I spoke less and less in the class” (a mother no. 5, interview, 17 November 2015).

“The environment for study was so stressful because we didn’t understand. Even I didn’t understand, my language in Thai was very limited so didn’t know how to ask. I find out that I was very struggle at math always but if I learned in my mother language then it might be different somehow” (a staff of FAL, interview, 16 September 2015)

The people who suffered are of two minds on this subject. One is the need to mainstream children into Thai society as much as possible; the other, of course, is their skepticism and doubt regarding the effectiveness of such a public school education in light of their own experience. They well know how stressful and ineffective it can be.

In summary, it is recognized that there are different power relationships between languages. To survive in Thai society, Thai language is essential one and, additionally, English (and recently, Chinese) is seen as useful for their social and/or economic capital in this globalized world. In the meantime, indigenous people regard their mother language as basic to their communication with family and community but have difficulties conceptualizing that it may hold much deeper meaning to daily lives. Hence, to implement the MTB-MLE program, FAL needs to handle this difference in the power of languages in the local community.

4.3 Case Study: Ban Khun Tae School in S’gaw Karen Village

As I previously mentioned, I wanted to select one school which had recently begun the MTB-MLE project. Among the three schools of different conditions, I selected Ban Khun Tae School as my case. In this section, I describe in detail about Ban Khun Tae School and village.

4.3.1 Introduction of Ban Khun Tae School

Ban Khun Tae School is the only school in Khun Tae village and has covered from KG1 to G6 since 1997. Before 1997, it functioned as a branch school of Ban Huai Som Poi School. Only two teachers were dispatched to it and they taught at the primary level. At present, there are 115 students³⁴ attending during the first semester of 2015 and ten

³⁴ The number of students in each grade are KG1(15), KG2(20), G1(18), G2(14), G3(10), G4(16), G5(9)

teachers including a principal. Most of the students come from Khun Tae village but, in this year, 26 students come from the Ban Hin Lek Fai village. Ban Hin Lek Fai village is too far to commute so they stay at a school dormitory from Monday to Friday and one of the local teachers who lives very close to the school takes care of them. The school has facilities such as one classroom size library, canteen and a dormitory for teachers, a dormitory for students and a nursery.

1) Staff of School

The teachers of Khun Tae School consist of six government teachers who can speak only Thai and four S'gaw Karen teachers. The four S'gaw Karen teachers live in Khun Tae village but the other six government teachers live in Chom Thong or Chiang Mai city. Khun Tae School is located in a so called *bon doi* (mountain area) at an elevation of 1,200m and it takes about 1 hour from Chom Thong downtown to reach it, driving on an unpaved road. Even though the commute is not easy, the teachers of Khun Tae School have taught there from 2 years to as long as 15 years long. Whenever I met people who were related somehow to my research topic, most of them mentioned that the frequent transfer of teachers in rural areas is one of the most influential factors causing inequity in the Thai educational environment, particularly in the mountainous areas where many indigenous groups' villages are located. However, in the case of Khun Tae, the government teachers are satisfied teaching there and have stayed quite a long time. It seems an unusual case.

There are four S'gaw Karen teachers. Three of the teachers are female and teach KG1, KG2 and G1. The one male teacher is in charge of English and Social Science subjects from G3 to G6. The male teacher majored in education from university and passed the government test. He is the only 'bilingual government teacher' in my case study. His hometown is Khun Pae which is a nearby village and the biggest S'gaw Karen Village in Chom Thong District. Two of the female teachers have a teaching certificate but haven't taken the national test and the other one finished her study at the high school level. All of the female teachers were hired for special positions³⁵. All of

and G6(13).

³⁵ On the board listing the structure of the school's staff, the three local female teachers' positions are

them were born in the village and finished their primary education from Khun Tae so they are described as ‘local teachers’ in this study.

2) The Difficulties of Teaching: Road, Electricity and Language Barrier

Many researchers have described the weakness of education in upland areas because most teachers are not willing to work there due to “difficulties of housing and access, particularly raining season” (Hanks, 2001: 137). These facts were applied to my research target school and, while I visited the village four different times, I concurred with them. Above all, what I discovered was the most difficult and limiting factor for teachers at Khun Tae School was the poor condition of the road and the lack of electricity. The road from Chom Thong downtown to the village is about 25km but it is not paved and there is no public transportation. In May of 2015, they started road construction from Mae Tae Ya National Protection Park to the village and plan to finish it in 2 years. But for now, the way is steep and unpaved so it is not easy to get to the village, particularly during the rainy season. It seems quite dangerous. Three of the government teachers who commute by motorbike everyday have had accidents and not only the government teachers; many villagers have experienced motorbike accidents as well.³⁶ Whenever I went up or down, I also felt scared and tired. Before I experienced this travel, I used to criticize that many development projects tended to focus mainly on infrastructure but, from this experience, I can now agree that it is a very influential element in educational development.

The other issue is the supply of electricity. The villagers, including the school, rely on a solar system that was supplied by the government around ten years ago. But after its initial construction, there haven’t been any extra supplemental funds provided

described as ‘government employee (พนักงานราชการ)’, ‘teacher for the disabled children (ครูพี่เลี้ยงเด็กพิการ)’ and ‘teacher for specific period hired (ครูอัตราจ้าง)’.

³⁶ The six Thai teachers commute from Chom Thong to Khun Tae School by motorbike and it usually takes around one hour. Three of the female teachers experienced accidents which did harm to their bodies and all of them have experienced motorbike trouble or have fallen down at some time on the way. One teacher had a collarbone injury so she took a break from school for two months and the other two teachers had an arm and leg contusion so bad that they couldn’t come to school for about two weeks (personal conversation, 17 November 2015).

for new households and any proper training for its use. The chargers for the solar energy become old so it has not operated properly for the last three to four years; thus, quite a few of the households face shortages of electricity. A charger costs around 3~4,000 baht (100USD) but the government doesn't fund them. Some of the villagers expect that after the road construction is completed, the electricity supply problem will be solved but they skeptically mentioned that "[it is] not sure and cannot expect until it's done" (a villager, personal conversation, 11 September 2015). The school has more solar panels than the village but, since the rainy season in mountainous area lasts longer than average, the school still suffers from black outs for almost half the year. During the four times I visited, except in May, every morning had an outage and, until 10 or 11 a.m. all the classroom couldn't turn on the light. They compensated by opening up some ceiling panels to make it brighter. Only the teacher's room had stable electricity. This is exceptional because every school should be connected to OBEC and ESA websites.

Even though the above issues are certainly urgent, the greatest challenge when it comes to teaching and learning at Khun Tae School is the language issue. Four of government teachers pointed this out as their main difficulty and they confessed in a similar manner that "Oh! These students cannot understand my word at all. [It's] quite often!" (Por, government teacher, interview, 14 September 2015). Even when the relationships between teachers and students are fine, if the language between them is not mutually proficient, then it cannot help but be a significant barrier. "When my second grade students have problems or questions, an average of 4~5 students come to me and ask in a day. They ask in Thai but I cannot sometimes understand so I ask the other children who are better than him or her to help" (Por, Thai teacher, interview, 14 September 2015). From my observations at the school, it was rare to see any student ask questions to the government teachers because they had to ask using the Thai language. But, on the contrary, the students asked to the local teachers when they have an inquiry and even answered actively to the local teachers' questions in Karen language. For this reason, what government teachers hope to improve most at Khun Tae School is solving the language barrier.

3) Educational Status

When evaluating the educational status of Khun Tae School students, since I don't

have a professional educational background, I relied on the teachers' comments, particularly about the Ordinary National Education Test (ONET)³⁷ for G6 and National Test (NT)³⁸ for G3. These tests are national education examinations and O-NET is organized by the National Institute of Educational Testing Service (NIETS). The test results of Khun Tae Students have never reached the average level so government teachers are worried. Each public school in Thailand is forced to pass a certain score but “Khun Tae School has never passed at all” and it has led to some teachers feel dismayed. “[I] get stressed” (Principal, interview, 23 September 2015). In the results of O-NET in 2013, Khun Tae students got a score of 31.45 in the Thai language subject but the Chom Thong school students in Chom Thong downtown got 48.52; in mathematics, Khun Tae students' score was 26.36 compared with Chom Thong score of 47.01.



Figure 4.4 Charts of Results for O-Net and NT in Khun Tae School Teachers' Room

Most of the government teachers receive pressure from the OBEC regarding these

³⁷ It objects to test the knowledge and thinking ability of Grade 6, 9 and 12 students according to the Basic Education Core Curriculum of 2008. The test for Grade 6 includes 8 subjects as required in the core curriculum. They are; Thai language, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies(Religion and Culture), Health Study and Physical Education, Arts, Occupations and Technology and Foreign languages in the academic year 2009. In the academic year 2015, it's the first year that Grade 6 students will be given the test in 5 subjects as required in the core curriculum. They are; Thai language, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies (Religion and Culture) and Foreign languages. (The National Institute of Educational Testing Service, 2015)

³⁸ The National Test for G3 is composed of three categories to assess; Literacy, Numeracy and Reasoning Ability.

tests because OBEC constructs regional groups and manages them as a group. The teachers feel pressured to measure up with the other teachers in their group. Khun Tae School is included in the Chom Thong Network with four other schools³⁹ and this network used to take a Pre-O-Net test. I can understand how much the government teachers and ESA officers are concerned about these test results. Some of the government teachers criticized these tests because they think it is not an efficient means for checking the change in students' learning levels and also is not an accurate gauge of the teaching skill but, in the government teacher's evaluation report, these tests' results count heavily.

4.3.2 Language Usage at Khun Tae School and Village

For this trip to the village, I fortunately got the chance to hitchhike in a couple's car. They came down to Chom Tong downtown to buy stuff for the coming week. They are the parents of two sons, in G4 and G1 respectively at Khun Tae School and another 7 month old son, too. They got married in 2004 and the husband's hometown is Khun Tae so they live there. The husband finished his study at university level and his wife finished G12 so both of them studied in low land schools after they finished G6. They studied at a quite high level and they speak the Thai language well, but, during the one hour of driving, both of them spoke only the Karen language to their son. Even if it was not in very big words or sentences when they spoke to the son, still, the sound for humoring was in Karen. Most importantly, when they talked between themselves, they absolutely spoke in Karen (field note, 9 September 2015)

My research focused on the case of FAL's MTB-MLE program of FAL so the language usage in my target school and in the community was an important subject. Therefore, whenever I had a chance, I tried to observe people's conversation to know which language was being used in which situation. There were three groups significant enough to analyze their language usages and capabilities in this manner.

Firstly, students at Khun Tae School certainly use the Karen language except when they are attending class, talking with Thai teachers, watching TV and reading Thai documents or papers, etc. As my field notes demonstrated, since they were babies, they

³⁹ Chom Thong School, Ban Pak Tang Ta Ri School, Ban Huai Nam Dip School and Ban Huai Som Poi School and Ban Khun Tae School is one group network.

listened to the Karen language from their parents. Moreover, when both of parents work, grandmothers usually look after children. At this school, every morning, more than 30~40% of the children came to school with their grandmothers wearing their traditional clothes. Most of the grandmothers are not good at speaking Thai. In this environment, even when they start learning the Thai language formally at school, it is often not enough for the students to quickly improve their ability of speaking, listening, reading and writing Thai language. For students, this mixed language usage is also quite confusing so they often make mistakes. Ruang mentioned that “Children often switch the order of the Thai language, they use incorrect grammar. For example, they say that *ni ma* (here come) instead of *ma ni* (come here)” (government teacher, interview, 14 September 2015).

The other thing I was concerned with was the teachers’ language. In Thai education policy, teachers in the public school system should use the central Thai language as a standard language. Teachers, however, who are not from the central region have their own local languages and all of the Thai teachers of Khun Tae School come from the Northern Thai area. According to my experience over the last two years in Chiang Mai province, I recognized that even when people speak Thai, it differs quite a bit in each region. “These days young and city living people cannot understand the Northern Thai language. We speak not only different accent and tone, but also use different words. For example, I know three words for ‘I’ in Northern Thai” (a resident in Chiang Mai, personal conversation, 4 November 2015). I observed with my translator which language they used in school and discovered that five of the Thai teachers normally spoke central Thai in the classroom but mixed the Northern Thai and central Thai when out of class. For example, when a teacher orders a student to bring something, they use Northern Thai and whenever they have a conversation among themselves they always speak in Northern Thai. However, most of the adults of Khun Tae cannot speak Northern Thai and when I conducted interviews with them, all of them used central Thai. It implies that students are much less familiar with the Northern Thai language but they encounter it quite often through their teachers.

How about the adults’ language ability? The active adult members of the village can be divided into two generations, i.e. one is the current students’ grandparents’

generation and the other is their parents' generation. Most of the grandparents' generation cannot speak Thai very well because they didn't have a public school system in the village when they grew up. They can speak only simple Thai conversational language and only a few of them (those who used to work in the city) can use it. Hence, they speak S'gaw Karen language mostly and they are afraid that they cannot communicate with those of their grandchildren who have left the village in their early years. They speak Karen but their reading and writing in Karen differs depending on their religion. Some of them can read and write Karen in the Roman alphabet because they had a chance to study in Catholic institutions. The parents' generation dominantly speaks Karen in the village but they can speak central Thai when they need to because this generation received a public education and they were forced to study only the Thai language in school. However, depending on their education level, some of them are not confident speaking Thai⁴⁰ and cannot read and write very well. Besides, their Karen reading and writing ability is also determined by the education level they attained and their religion. If they have a higher education background, they often can read the English alphabet. They can then read the Karen language that is based on the Roman alphabet. But most of them didn't learn it systematically so it is not possible that they are correct all the time. The other Karen people who can read and write in Karen are Protestants. They studied intensively how to read Karen based on the Burmese alphabet but their number is less than twenty in the community. Some of the Catholics who were deeply involved in their religion had a systematic education at schools such as the Children Training Center for Thai Hill Tribes in Mae Pon District, Chom Thong. Khun Tae has a higher proportion of Catholics, so compared with other religions, they can read Karen through the Roman alphabet. "When I was young every summer a teacher or a priest or a nun came to our [Catholic] church and opened a camp for teaching Catholic doctrine and the bible. To teach them, they taught S'gaw Karen reading as well based on Roman alphabet" (a villager, personal conversation, 11th August 2015) To sum up, all the villagers can speak S'gaw Karen but there are not many adults who can read and

⁴⁰ Among the ten interviewees, four mothers needed translation from Thai to Karen so when I conducted the interviews, I gave a question in English that my English-Thai translator translated first and my gate keeper translated in Thai to Karen. The four mothers' education backgrounds are the following; one is uneducated, two of them finished G6 and one finished G9.

write Karen either in the Burmese alphabet or Roman alphabet because they haven't learned systematically except those few who attended Christian institutes.

4.3.3 MTB-MLE Program Application Status in Ban Khun Tae School

Ban Khun Tae School started applying the MTB-MLE program with FAL and Child's Dream at the start of the new academic year of 2015. This stage of MTB-MLE program implementation in September and November of 2015 (first semester of 2015) included only KG1 and was applied to the fixed curriculum for 30 minutes every morning by one local teacher as characterized in Table 4.2. The class for KG1 only focused on listening and speaking in their mother tongue so it can be categorized in four parts for the first semester; big picture, story-telling, experience-telling and picture book. In the second semester of KG1, students practiced the Karen language through Thai alphabets for reading and writing as a 'pre-reading and writing' course. Then, from the KG2 level on, students study the reading and writing of their mother language based on developed primers using the Thai alphabet (Por, staff of FAL, interview, 16 September 2015). According to one interviewee (Eun, local teacher for KG1, 13 September 2015), when the students do their weekly review on Friday, most of them can remember and answer well. According to my class observations, the teacher for the KG1 class spoke mostly in S'gaw Karen all day, not only for the 30 minute class in the morning. She instructed, told a story, sang a song and even scolded the students in their mother tongue but when she spoke any simple words or sentences in Thai, she repeated them several times.

Table 4.2 Everyday Lesson Plan of Kindergarten 1st Grade of Khun Tae School in September of 2015

Day (09:00~09:30)	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Class Material	Big Picture	Story Telling	Experienced Telling	Picture Book	Review
Preference Rank by Children	1	2	5	3	4

Even though the program's developed curriculum and material for regular class is only prepared for KG1 during the first semester, the other two teachers for the KG2 and G1

classes also tried speaking more mother tongue more in class during this semester. It is notable that local teachers fully understood the importance of actively using their mother tongue in class and wanted to apply it as soon and as much as possible.

Notwithstanding that it is too early to discuss the educational impact of MTB-MLE in Khun Tae School, I garnered some significant facts from the teachers' feedback. The local teacher of KG1 noted explicitly that;

“Compared to last year, children are not afraid of me. I sometimes felt that children are afraid of (กลัว) me because I only spoke in Thai last year. This year children seem to feel more comfortable to me and the frequency of answers and questions is absolutely higher than last year” (Eun, local teacher, interview, 18 November 2015).

I listened to students' changed attitude from Thai teachers, too.

“Compared with last year, kindergarten level students tend to be more active and seem to feel more comfortable to school environment. For example, when students see the teachers, most of students ran away or hid but this year students say ‘*Sa wat dii Kha/Krap* (Hello)’ to teacher and don't run away”(Ruang, government teacher, Interview, 14 September 2015).

It proves that the comments by the principal of Haui Han School about the program's impact are true. He has implemented MTB-MLE for 7 years. According to his commentary, the MTB-MLE program is very helpful for improving the children's social skills, not only their learning skills. It helps improve their communication skill too and this leads to better relationships with their teachers (principal of Haui Han School, management training workshop observation⁴¹, 22 July 2015).

4.4 Negotiation Strategies for Acceptance of MTB-MLE Program

As I represented previously, the application of the MTB-MLE program in a public school class is no easy task. Above all, the indigenous people don't all have the same opinions about education based on their indigenous knowledge; thus, a NGO needs to persuade them for to accept it. In this part, I delineate the FAL's ways of working with

⁴¹ It was a program named as ‘Management training workshop in the way of local based bi/multi language, co-organized learning to school administration and teaching guideline for bi/multi language’ on the 22nd~24th July 2015, at Away resort in Chiang Mai.

the local people and their developed strategies.

4.4.1 Following the Thai Social Power Structure

When FAL introduces the program and approves it to local people, there is a certain procedure for initiation. Because the MTB-MLE program targets public schools, the principal's acceptance and attitude is crucial to make the program work and progress. The principal is also very influential among the local people including both teachers and parents. Firstly, in regards to the school staff, the principal is a vital person for persuasion and promotion of this program to local people. Most of the government teachers of Khun Tae remembered the very first meeting held to discuss applying for MTB-MLE as "the principal already accepted it" (Mari, government teacher, interview, 14 September 2015). One of the FAL staff, a manager of MTB-MLE even commented that "actually it depends on principal; allowing, understanding and everything" (Chen, staff of FAL, interview 28 August 2015). The principal led the decision making and tried to listen to the voices of all the teachers.

"In our first meeting, I explained all and then asked teachers one by one whether they want and accept or not. After it, ESA had a chance to explain again. Teachers easily accepted it. The teacher group in Khun Tae School is one group and has solidarity already. So they agreed with each other and nobody refused it" (principal, interview, 23 September 2015).

Surely there might be other factors that help teachers agree with the MTB-MLE program such as the experiences of previous model schools or popular TV shows in public media. Some government teachers said that "I [have] heard about *tawi pasa* school in other district" (Ruang, government teacher, interview, 14 September 2015) and also "[we] saw a show on the air through PBC TV program⁴² about the pilot schools so

⁴² Thai PBS broadcasted about the MTB-MLE program divided into three different school cases through *Phun Seng Rung* Show (พันแสงรุ่ง: Thousands of Rainbow Light, every Sunday 16:05 to 16:30). This program aims that it is "presenting diversity of living and culture of various ethnic groups over land Thailand and Southeast Asia who live together harmoniously. Based on the basis of academic research and a survey of community focused on removing links knowledge from academia and the community to understand" (Thai PBS webpage, 2015) They introduced the MTB-MLE program focusing on Wat Wang Wi Veka Ram School (Mon) on the 7th April, Paen Din Thong School (Hmong) on the 21st April, some of Malau schools in Patani on 19th May and Ban Pui School (Pwo Karen) on the 2nd June in 2013 as a series. FAL uses this video clip very often especially for introducing the MTB-MLE program to the first encounters and it seems very effective to make them understand and also trust it.

it makes the wider understanding before initiating our school” (Aek, bilingual government teacher, interview, 13 September 2015). The MTB-MLE program has spread gradually through the education authorities and media so some of the teachers were able to accept its application in their school more readily. But the principal’s role remains a core factor.

Secondly, the principal has influence with the villagers, too. FAL emphasized the role of the principal not only for persuading teachers but for persuading the parents of the village. After the selection of the school for the MTB-MLE program by FAL and Child’s Dream, the school teachers’ group and the ESA office, FAL emphasized the approval from the villagers as an important condition before embarkation. FAL “had a meeting with principals from selected school with the FAL director and led each principal to talk to villagers, before FAL visit schools (Panne, staff of FAL, interview, 27 August 2015). After FAL checked the school committee’s agreement of cooperation and consideration for the program’s sustainability, FAL moved to the next step of its practical implementation.

Then how was the principal’s opinion informed and influenced about this new program? And by whom? It was from a supervisor at the ESA Chiang Mai 6 office. “Before the team [which is composed with ESA, Child’s Dream and FAL member] came to school to observe our condition, I got a phone call from ESA and heard about the MTB-MLE program” (principal, interview, 23 September 2015). Moreover, whenever the selection team visits a candidate school, “The supervisors of ESA mostly go with us [FAL]” (Panne, staff of FAL, interview, 27 August 2015). Therefore, the process for the practical embarkation of the MTB-MLE program at the local level shows the features that it follows the usual information transfer protocol from the top down. Nevertheless, there are certain times and groups for discussion and, at each step, the actors who are involved these discussions are influenced by the information deliverers. FAL explicitly uses this order and impact for their negotiations. For instance, FAL contacted the ESA offices first to know which schools were suitable and accompanied ESA officers or supervisors on the pre-visit to schools. Besides this, a principal who had already informed by the ESA office in advance led the discussion with the teachers and school committee. I allege that FAL cognates the social power

structure in Thailand and applies it in their procedure for the program's initiation.

4.4.2 Touching Educational Desire through Education Theory

FAL began the first pilot project in Wat Wang Wi Veka Ram School and it became a kind of model for them afterwards. FAL shows this case to persuade those who have no idea about MTB-MLE and, in the case of Ban Khun Tae School, most of the teachers including the principal regard it as a positive program due to the previous school's success. However, since education usually takes a certain time period to prove any specific impacts or result, it was not easy to persuade the pilot project schools to accept a new program.

“Many villagers were initially skeptical of the program, wondering why their children should learn Pwo Karen? 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” (Hillmer, 2013: 9).

Hiller's (2013) research about one of the pilot project schools mentioned briefly how local indigenous people reacted to the MTB-MLE program in the beginning. The Northern Thai people's reaction was similar to that of Mapuche people's reaction to the IBE program so the researcher perceived that “[it] remain[s] a contested idea among the grassroots of many Mapuche communities” (Ortiz, 2007: 109). Though my research cannot cover the initiation stage of previous project' schools, but people involved still remember their experienced.

During the management training workshop for school directors last July, three pilot project school directors shared their experiences and summarized the resistance of parents to the MTB-MLE program by saying “They want their children to learn only Thai language” (Huai Han School principal, in training, 22 July 2015). From these advanced research and observations, it can be assumed that indigenous people use their own language in family and community but they regard the public school system and national language, potent symbols of dominant nation-state power as more important when it comes to education. In the meantime, the Huai Han School principal expressed, “Because at that time, they couldn't understand the reason of the *tawi pasa* program and

how it is better way to study” (in training, 22 July 2015). It means that the principal thought that the major reason for MTB-MLE acceptance at this school was due to ‘better education’. Then, what is FAL’s key message when they introduce the MTB-MLE program to local people and begin to negotiate?

According to interviews with school teachers and parents, the MTB-MLE program is definitely introduced as a tool for ‘better education, improving learning’.

“I still remember that the first meeting with FAL and villagers. FAL showed some practical examples. At that time they tried to teach them in two different languages. *Chen* (Pow Karen staff) taught them in Pow Karen language then people seldom understand and then in the second time, *Palot* (S’gaw Karen staff) taught them again. It was our language so they could understand well. After that show, *Chen* explained more that as you can feel if we use our mother language to teach, it is helpful, easy to response and easy to understand, questioning and answering possible something like that” (Aek, bilingual government teacher, interview, 13 September 2015).

This well-organized introduction is often used and it is their answer to the doubts of indigenous people when they argue “why children should learn mother language, since they already know it” (Hillmer, 2013: 9). FAL emphasizes to local people that learning needs to originate from familiar and comfortable knowledge or experience. The students already have this when they use their mother tongue and it leads to better critical and creative thinking skills later. Most of all, the reason why indigenous students’ Thai language ability is lower than others is that the previous school system prevented them from using their mother language at school. For the indigenous students, Thai language is a second language. As soon as they enter the school system, however, they suddenly need to use only Thai which they are not familiar with except from listening to TV and reading the packages of household products. This dramatically changed circumstance makes students uncomfortable and stressful. The students struggle and, in such a situation, nobody can be happy to learn new thing. In addition, without any chance of systematically learning using their mother tongue, people cannot learn a second language linguistically. The current student’s parents’ generation knows about this struggle all too well. They didn’t know back when they were in school, that their struggles were caused by the school system rather than by themselves or the environmental conditions. As part of their introduction, FAL explains this relationship

between a given environment that includes the mother language and learning skills. Their key message seems to have been repeated very often. Thus, whenever I interviewed local people, even those who could not remember much about MTB-MLE or FAL could answer clearly that “*tawi pasa* is helpful for children’s learning”.

To make this key message even more effective, there needs to be educational fever. If the people in the negotiation don’t have any interest in the subject related to the negotiation strategy, it cannot be accomplished. Hence, during my field research, I tried to examine the villagers, especially the parents’ perceptions regarding education and the desires they have for their children. In my interviews, ten parents told me they plan to support their children’s studies as much as their children want, up to bachelor degree level at least.⁴³ All of them said they want their children to grow up and be what the kids want to be. The parents also said they don’t care whether their children move away from the village or what kind of job they choose later in life. Five of the parents among the ten, I interviewed, expressed hope that their children would grow up to be a doctor or a teacher because both are perceived as being respected and stable jobs. These answers may not reveal perfectly their desires for their children but one can definitely see that the Khun Tae villagers highly value education, probably higher than previous generation. This might be a common phenomenon elsewhere in Thailand⁴⁴.

Onn who has been teaching for 17 years (since 1999) and graduated from Khun Tae School in 1990, demonstrated this fact. She said that when she graduated G6, she had thirteen classmates and five were girls. At that time, few of the students entered the secondary school in the city and among the girls, she was the only one. Her other classmates stopped studying. However, there are no youth in the village, aged thirteen to

⁴³ There are two mothers who were worried their economic ability to support them but they plan to rely on religion. One mother said her Protestant church already supports her daughter’s high school study and she expected the church will support university study too. The other one will send her son in G4 to temple after his primary school study because she cannot support his further study but many temples give a chance for higher education.

⁴⁴ Appendix A shows the educational background of ten interviewees. Only one father finished his semi-bachelor degree with the support of the Catholic Church. Two mothers didn’t have any chance to go to public school and the number of people who finished G3 is one, G6 are seven, G9 are five and G12 are four. Most of all, the parents, if their present age is in the twenties, tended to study higher levels’ than those in their thirties.

eighteen years of age. Nowadays, after graduating primary level in Ban Khun Tae School, everyone moves on to do higher study in city. Every year, more and more of her students⁴⁵ also enter the universities (personal conversation, 10 September 2015). This is consistent with the parents' response to their educational support plan for the children. All of them answered that they expect their children to study at university level except for one mother who worried about their poor economic condition. But even she plans to send her son to temple for the possibility of higher study there. In this way, the parents of Khun Tae School wish and plan to give more opportunity to their children and FAL seems to correctly read this desire of indigenous people and incorporate it into their negotiating strategy.

FAL hasn't formally adapted this educational theory but it is in the line with the 'Fund of Knowledge' theory. Fund of Knowledge (FOK) theory insists that every child has his or her own life's experience of the world (Andrews and Yee, 2006 cited in Hogg, 2011: 667). So school systems and teachers need to know about their students' knowledge and make the best use of it. According to this theory, students' native language is one of the key aspects of their knowledge, especially for indigenous people. Many educational researchers have emphasized the importance of the mother tongue for indigenous populations and have discovered the correlation between the lack of mother language education and lower literacy rate or other reduced learning abilities compared to the average (Klein, 2011: 84). Nevertheless, FAL doesn't directly mention this theory to local people they utilize basic educational theories as the ground for their program.

Then how about the issue of indigenous identity and culture? The similar case of Chile's IBE program illustrated that it was under the "emerging new (re)ethnification process, in which stress the recovery of cultural and linguistic traditions lost due to assimilation" (Ortiz, 2007: 110). However, in Thai context, FAL doesn't strongly stress this point. Rather, they use this point as an additional rationale for negotiation, particularly with the old people. According to a middle manager of FAL who normally participates in negotiation with local people, FAL principally emphasizes that the use of

⁴⁵ She has been teaching in Khun Tae School since 1998 and three of her first students are now studying at universities. She assumed that more students whom she has taught recently might be more likely to go on and study at university level. This is related to the improving economic status of the villagers.

mother tongue for children helps their children study better at school and if local people ask any questions related to the cultural preservation issue, they would discuss those aspects at that time (Por, interview, 16 September 2015). This message used for persuasion purposes seems similar to what another staff member expressed;

“I also mention about the value of local culture because most of people in the community older than 40 years, 50 years, they think it will be a problem in sooner future if their children don’t know anything about their culture. They don’t want to lose their identity so I use two points together. I explain that way ‘if you get this program then you can get both!’ It’s a kind of extra but mainly focusing on study because if I don’t mention about the education to parents who concern a lot about children’s study then cannot succeed” (Panne, a staff of FAL, interview, 27 August 2015).

In summary, the MTB-MLE program is emphasizing the indigenous language because it is helpful for the preservation of indigenous knowledge and identity. However, in reality, successful negotiation with local people hinges more on FAL touching the parents’ desire for a better education for their children. The large number of the current indigenous parents’ generation is concerned about their children’s education in the public school system where they themselves experienced failure. Hence, they are doubtful about using and teaching their mother language in school but, at the same time, they welcome a new program with expectations such as these; “whatever thing, if it can help us then we accepted it because until now not many people [have] help[ed] our education become better” (*Sur tor*, interview, 13 September 2015).

4.4.3 Coping with Communication Network

The other feature I found out through field research is that many local people couldn’t recall exactly when they were asked to approve the MTB-MLE program and how the discussion went. The teachers mentioned that they agreed readily because they hoped it would lead to their students’ better understanding Thai and the school committee remembered that they didn’t have a serious discussion; it was just kind of announced by the principal. Two possible assumptions can be made regarding this information. Firstly, the local people tended to easily accept it because the program was introduced as a tool for the improvement of education and secondly, even though there are some formal spaces for discussion, they are invalid.

Even though the negotiation for the initiation of the program progressed smoothly following the Thai social power structure, not all the local people were pleased or agreed with the MTB-MLE program like seen in this comment; “teaching Karen is ok but I hope they focus on Thai more. The teachers should talk in Thai because they already speak in Karen already” (a mother no.3, interview, 14 September 2015). The local people’s agreement is indispensable and substantive negotiation is required for sustainable and cooperative implementation.

Actually, FAL suggested that the school continuously make announcements to the villagers. When I asked the Khun Tae villagers when exactly they had heard about the MTB-MLE program, their answers varied. On Father’s day in 2014 (5th December), when one of the biggest gatherings of villagers occurred at the school, there was the first public announcement to the villagers. On that day, a bilingual government teacher of Khun Tae School, who had been given by the principal the task of coordinating between the villagers and the schools, announced to around 100 people that;

“Right now we didn’t get the fund yet but we would like to ask your public participation and acceptance whether you want it or not. If you are not willing to help and support this program, we cannot get the fund” (Aek, bilingual government teacher, interview, 13 September 2015).

However, villagers remembered being introduced to MTB-MLE at a different time and in a different situation. This reveals that the public announcement had some impact but it wasn’t perfect for everyone. Rather, many villagers, when interviewed, remembered that they first heard about it just before the new semester began (around April ~ May, 2015) and it was from the local teachers, individually.

“Some villagers understood but some couldn’t. I tried to make them understand more. Some people still think that if we don’t teach Thai at school how can children speak Thai but people don’t ask me directly rather they ask to my wife. For the one who want understand more and ask me directly then I try to explain more and more. And then they explain to close villagers one by one” (Aek, bilingual government teacher, interview, 13 September 2015).

This way of spreading information has also occurred in the material development process and on a pilot project school exposure trip to Ban Pui School. During the first

semester of 2015, FAL's staff held meetings three times for developing materials. One of the meetings' participants noted that she shared or explained afterwards to the other mothers what she had heard (a mother no.8, interview, 17 November 2015).⁴⁶ The indigenous knowledge based material development activities obviously have educational impacts but FAL expects another impact, a kind of dissemination through the local people that achieves a communal agreement.

“For development materials workshop, we always ask to community to attend as many as they can. When they join in workshops, they can know what we want from the school and community and I think that they probably tell to other people what they've done although they don't understand all the big concepts. They can say like that ‘today I attended a workshop and I did this and I made this and that for the school’ to other neighbors” (Panne, staff of FAL, interview, 27 August 2015).

This elucidates that FAL understands that most of indigenous communities still disseminate information based on kinship or individual relationships and FAL utilizes this impact for the program's higher sustainability.

In this sense, FAL employs another strategy based on the people's natural characteristics favoring human relationships. From May to September of 2015, FAL visited Khun Tae School seven times and these frequent meetings formed friendships and trust. Even those villagers who didn't know much about FAL or MTB-MLE, did know ‘*Chen*’ and ‘*Palot*’, the FAL staff members' name and “the S'gaw Karen man” (villagers, interview, 14 September 2015) i.e., their ethnicity. It shows that FAL knows that this tactic based on human relationships and trust building is necessary for stable program implementation. The combination of diverse ethnic staff is not only for increasing labor efficiency but also for using this feature of indigenous community networking and solidarity. Whenever FAL starts a new project in a new school, they consider whether there are any existing staff members who speak the same language as the villager's mother tongue and place him or her to work with that project (Wanna, director of FAL, interview, 24 October 2015). FAL spends most of its time working with

⁴⁶ During the first semester of Khun Tae School (from middle of May to end of September), FAL team visited a total of 7 times. Three of these times were for material development with villagers and local teachers on a monthly basis and three times for in-service training to check on the local teachers' class management and, in the beginning, there was an official orientation.

local people and their work is basically about language so, without a fluent speaker, it can be difficult. There are mainly three staff members primarily in charge of the Khun Tae School project and all of them are Karen (two of them are Pwo and one is S'gaw). I visited the school twice with this team and their attitude to the local people seemed sincere and kind. People thought that the FAL staff's attitude was positive and they regarded the FAL staff as people who could talk with them comfortably because they shared the same ethnicity.

In conclusion, the key message of the MTB-MLE program is not only delivered by the FAL staff but, is spread through those villagers who participate more in the program process. In this process, four of the local teachers are the major messengers to Khun Tae. They certainly realized the importance of their mother language, so when transferring information and persuading villagers' to cooperate, they were very confident. With regard to the rest of the FAL staff, most of them are also indigenous people (allocation of work according to shared ethnicity) and this strengthens the local people's understanding and acceptance of the program.

4.5 Limitations and Difficulties

The process of MTB-MLE's practical implementation has different aspects in each school. Although Khun Tae School has progressed quite smoothly, it is impossible to regard the other two start-up schools as similar. Moreover, with respect to the limitations and difficulties of MTB-MLE implementation, these often are different in each community and school situation. Khun Tae School hasn't yet faced many barriers because it is still in the beginning stage. In this section, I analyze the three major limitations and difficulties which were revealed from school teachers and FAL staff about its operation.

Firstly, the national tests for primary school students are excessively important in Thai education fields. These tests have been criticized as having many deficiencies; most of the students and parents complain every year and the media dutifully reports how bad the tests are. However, although some of the teachers also disagree with these tests, their teaching skills are evaluated by the tests' results; thus, they cannot disregard them. Every government teachers at Khun Tae School is concerned about the national

tests a lot. The impact of the national tests to the MTB-MLE program is that the government teachers don't think the MTB-MLE program has produced any big advantages for them in regard to these tests. They perceive it is as only being useful at the KG1, KG2 and G1 levels but that the students in the other grades should focus more on the major subjects to get higher test scores. Two of the government teachers mentioned that the MTB-MLE program is "not matching to national tests" (Fon and Mari, interview, 14 September 2015).

The second difficulty is that, among the school teachers, relations differ between the government teachers and the local teachers and it's not due to age. According to my observation, all the teachers' relationships are very good in general but at every lunch time, only the government teachers have lunch together. The local teachers said it was because they prefer to have a meal at home or to take care of their children or to eat Karen food. But sometimes, I found out that the local teachers ate in the school kitchen with a cook. Furthermore, in my personal conversations with the local teachers, they carefully stated "I assumed that government teachers might think we are teaching easier after we applied the MTB-MLE program, just talking in Karen language" (Onn, local teacher, personal conversation, 13 September 2015). Before the application of the MTB-MLE program, Khun Tae School had two groups of teachers and there seemed to exist a different hierarchy dependent on their qualifications. This can be a barrier to the implementation of the program but, on the other hand, if it is carried out well and empowers local teachers it might provide a chance to overcome this barrier, too.

The last issue is the national education policy problem which is noted by both FAL staff members and the school teachers. All of the FAL staff I interviewed pointed this out as a difficulty. Thai education policy has been criticized for its frequent changes. During my data collection period, I listened a lot to many different people who spoke about the frequent changes in Thai education policy. They gave me examples of policies which used to exist but disappeared suddenly.

"What I'm worried is the policy problem. In the past, there is a local knowledge subject as a regular class by the state education policy but once politic changed and policy is also changed. The subject still remains but there is no teacher because no fund from government after changing the politic. Now there is no outside speaker in our school" (Aek, bilingual

government teacher, interview, 13 September 2015).

Whenever Thai politics changes, the major administrators at MOE who have decision-making authority are also changed. Their tendencies are to change some policies including the budget.⁴⁷ The experienced staff members of FAL have seen changes by OBEC to their budget allocation and it has led FAL to consider the sustainability of its program and spurred their efforts to increase local people's participation. Dooley (2013) touched on this policy issue as one of the challenges facing the MTB-MLE program in Thailand. There aren't any policies, at the present time, which include financial, technical and logistical support for teacher training, material development and program monitoring and evaluation.

4.6 Summary

I asked a local teacher who had been teaching the first grade students for 7 years (and had worked in Khun Tae School for 17 years) whether this year's students, the first to experience the MTB-MLE program, showed any differences compared with previous students. She answered carefully, "We should wait, we don't know yet. But I use Karen language much more than last year, so I trust that this year G1 students will have better ability to think [critically]" (Onn, local teacher, personal conversation, 10 September 2015). It means that my target school cannot yet prove all the impacts or results of the MTB-MLE program and that FAL has diverse school cases that are difficult to generalize.

However, according to my research, FAL utilizes some negotiation strategies to a new school that has applied to start this program that have proven successful in gaining the local people's acceptance. They employed three major strategies; following the Thai social power structure, touching the indigenous parents' desire to improve their

⁴⁷ In this year, the major implementing organizations for the MTB-MLE program faced a big change. The new MOE focuses on Distant Learning through Information and Technology (DLIT) and doesn't include a plan to support the MTB-MLE program. Thus, FAL needs to work now with DLIT and FAL suddenly has produced a lot of video clips containing information about MTB-MLE. FAL thinks that even if the government's support ceases, it is important to find other channels to keep disseminating MTB-MLE to indigenous people. One FAL staff member commented (about their new work related with - DLIT policy), "This is only what we can do now. It makes us do many new works besides we already have lots of things to do but at least, it can help us to work under the OBEC, with OBEC" (Por, staff of FAL, interview, 16 September 2015).

children's education and coping with the communication network feature of an indigenous village. These negotiation strategies have been developed through FAL's experience at previous pilot project schools and, above all, the strategies are designed to overcome the opposition and doubt surrounding a new education methodology based on their mother language.

Some of the features of indigenous knowledge from the Ellen and Harris (1996) study, 'locally situated in a set of experience, consequence of practical engagement in everyday life and repetitive' are necessary to the training and education process. But, if the indigenous children are mostly educated through the public school system only, then indigenous knowledge cannot easily be passed down. Indigenous people have encountered the different power of languages and knowledge systems in Thai society not only in terms of education. Therefore, they don't have much confidence when it comes to promoting and utilizing their own language and indigenous knowledge.

Indigenous people, particularly Karen people are a representative ethnic group, used their indigenous knowledge to maintain their strong identity and to preserve their livelihoods while resisting government policy (Pinkaw, 2001; Prasert, 2007; Yos, 2004). However my S'gaw Karen target village showed another position in regards to the issue of their children's education issue. As one of the negotiation strategies indicates, they rely deeply on the public education system and desire that their children find success within it. The local people do not seem capable to find a way to educate their children in their indigenous knowledge, including their first language by themselves. Thus, FAL's alternative way is meaningful and useful. A deeper analysis of the impact of the MTB-MLE program on local people, as well as development of classroom educational materials which is one of the core activities, will be the focus of the next chapter.