

Final Experiment Report

Effect on Learning Competency of Three Pedagogical
Methods of Lao National Language Teaching
Among Ethnic Grade I Pupils in
Oudomxay Province

Ethnic Group Development

Second Education
Development Project – EDP II
(Grant No. H0840-LA)



*Asian Institute of Developmental
Studies, Inc. (AIDSI)*



TOP VALUE SERVICE

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FINAL EXPERIMENT REPORT

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I. PROJECT BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

The Government of Lao, PDR gears onward in strengthening the foundation of its national educational system through consolidated efforts in support of the goals of the national program on Education for All (EFA). This is aimed at bringing about basic institutional reforms towards increased access to quality education, improved quality and relevance of the curriculum, and strengthened school management for efficiency from year 2003- 2015. As such the government targets that by 2015, all children enrolled would be to able complete primary education and that they would be able to communicate (read, write, speak, and listen) effectively using Lao language.

Moreover the Education Ministry is responsible for four (4) development priority programs of the government namely: a) improving quality and opportunities for enrollment, 2) resolving the shortage and raising the capacities of educational managers, 3) increasing the Vocational Schools, and 4) curricular reform such revision of the General Education System from 11 to 12 years.

Meanwhile, the Second Education Development Project (EDP II) strongly pursues the use of Lao language in teaching and learning in the national curriculum across all ethnic groups for several reasons to include attainment of equity access to education, reduction in repetition rates in early years of education, and effectiveness and cost efficiency. Hence, support to the exclusive use of the Lao language as the medium of instruction is one of the concerns of the Ethnic Group Development Project (EGDP) of the SEDP. The EGDP component was conceived as cross-cutting project that runs through the different Program components of SEDP such as Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes (ASLO), Textbooks and Teachers Guide (TTG) development, Community-Based Contracting (CBC) of infrastructure, and provision of Community Grants (CG). These are aimed at increasing participation of the poor children including girls from the poorest provinces wherefrom most number of the ethnic minorities are likewise residentially located.

To harness local capability in undertaking the experiment, the services of the Asian Institute of Developmental Studies, Inc. (AIDSI) an international consulting firm in partnership with a Lao-based local firm, the Top Value Services (TVS) Consulting Firm was engaged. Three international and three national consultants rendered services in various stages of the experiment working closely with the EGDP Implementation Unit (IU) staff and Lao Language Division of RIES.

II. OBJECTIVES AND ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

General Objective

To assess the effectiveness of three pedagogical methods for Lao national language teaching among ethnic Grade I pupils in Oudomxay province.

Specific objectives:

1. To measure the change in performance of pupils from one competency level to a higher one through:
 - a) Improved reading skills indicated by correctness in pronunciation of consonants, vowels, words, group of words and sentences;
 - b) Improved skills in speaking Lao language through clarity, fluency, correctness in pronunciation and comprehension including ability to articulate ideas (speaking skills); Excel
 - c) Improved ability to listen by being able to distinguish different words with similar tones but with different meanings; and (Excel)
 - d) Improved ability to spell, copy and write correctly consonants, vowels, words or group of words presented to them.
2. To analyze the overall effectiveness of the combined three methods of language teaching on pilot and control schools.
3. To assess principal and teachers' perception on the three methods of teaching in terms of attractiveness to students, appropriateness to students, ethnic and gender sensitivity, usefulness in learning Lao language, cost-effectiveness, easy to use, appropriate to the level of students and relevance with the teaching activity.

Scope, Targets, and Duration of the Research

The study was limited to the province of Oudomxay including 18 schools (9 experimental and 9 control schools) involving 640 students, 18 teachers (2 women), and 18 principals (no women). It basically focused on measuring improvements in writing, reading, speaking and listening skills among Grade 1 pupils enrolled during the second semester of school year 2006-2007. This came from three ethnic groups namely: Mon Kmer (292/ 147 girls), Hmong Mien (127/71 girls), and Sino-Tibetan (41/19 girls).

Limitations of the Study

Given the short duration of the experiment and the limited time to fit the schedule into the last semester of school year 2006-2007, the more sophisticated research design was difficult to implement. Thus, the study limited its focus on the measurement of change in learning competency in listening, speaking, reading and writing skills among Grade I pupils in Oudomxay province as a function of the combined effect of the three Lao language teaching methods evaluated. Likewise, only three major ethnic groups were tested, Tai-Kadai was intentionally not targeted because the Project focused on ethnic groups which use Lao language as second language. Other variables found in the analytical framework earlier noted to

be studied were not covered but were recommended for the second round of the experiment including expanding the sample size.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A. Planning the Experiment on Methods for Lao Language Teaching

1) Research Activities.

The experiment on Lao language teaching using four methods was officially launched last February 2, 2007 in Oudomxay province during the trainers' training. The activity flow for the Experiment is presented in Figure 1.

2) Participatory Selection of Pedagogical Methods for Lao National Language Teaching

Several approaches in language teaching were presented during the workshop which included the most common ones: Grammar-Translation Method, Direct Method, The Audio-Lingual Method, The Silent Way, Community Language Learning, Total Physical Response Method and the Communicative Approach. (Gina Doggett 1986, quoted in Bala Report, 2007).

An analysis was conducted on three different methods for Lao national language teaching and learning used across the curriculum in schools and classrooms for ethnic student groups. The analysis focused on potential learning outcomes of primary school students taking into account their ethno-linguistic origins.

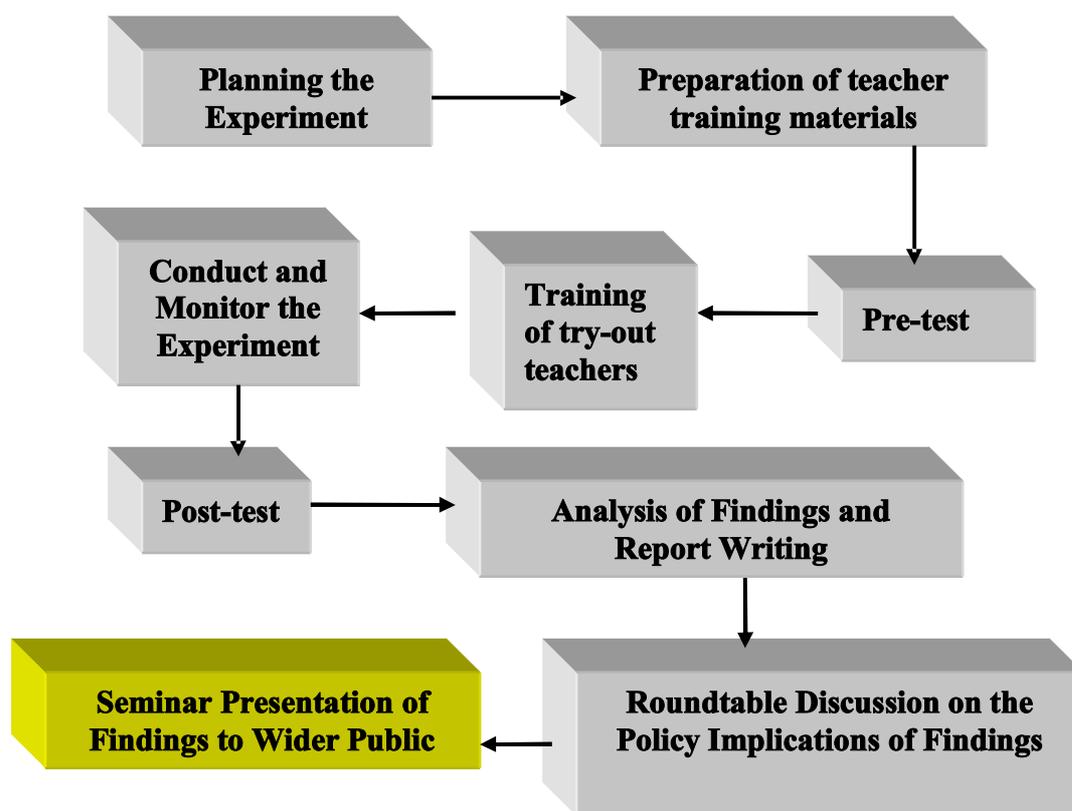


Figure 1. Research activity flow for the Lao Language teaching experiment.

The analysis was done after reviewing documents and literature on language teaching; visiting and interviewing officials, teachers and students on teaching Lao to ethnic children at Dong Khamxang Teacher Training School; observing a seminar on experiences of teacher trainees in practice teaching; visiting the Institute of Linguistics Research, Ministry of Information and Culture and attending a lecture on the structure of the Lao language, history of Lao script, and the different ethno-linguistics groups; and participating in a focus group discussion with RIES officials, local and international consultants. The identification followed a process of participatory evaluation together with prospective trainers and local consultants held during the trainers' training/workshop in Vang Vieng (June 19-28, 2007).

Among the methods presented, three methods for Lao language teaching were identified during the workshop in Vang Vieng. The screening process resulted to the selection and identification of: Total Physical Response (TPR), Audio-Lingual Method (ALM) and the Communicative Approach (CA) as potential methods for Lao language teaching and described below.

Brief description of Total Physical Response (TPR), Audio-Lingual Method (ALM) and Communicative Method (CA) Methods

Among the list of possible approaches, the Audio-Lingual Method, the Communicative Method and the Total Physical Response were evaluated and

chosen by participants as probable methodology for teaching Lao as a second language or target language for the ethnic group learners.

The Total Physical Response (TPR) Method

Total Physical Response is a language learning method based on the coordination of speech and action. James Asher, a professor of psychology, developed it. It is based on the following premises: 1) Selected language learning is parallel to first language learning and should reflect the same naturalistic processes; 2) Listening should develop before speaking; 3) Children respond physically to spoken language; 4) Children learn language primarily by listening and watching; 5) Children learn best when they are actively involved in the lesson; and 6) Physical actions plus language provide a powerful combination for comprehension and retention of a second language. This method begins by placing importance on listening comprehension and then moving to speaking, reading and writing. The basic procedure in a listening lesson requires vocabulary for action words (commands), objects or *realia*, words for body parts, numbers, words or phrases that are necessary for children to be able to speak good second language. The teacher gives commands and the students demonstrate their comprehension by acting out these commands. The techniques for this method are modeling and demonstration. TPR activities are designed to be fun. They include role-play, language setting (pictures), using picture cards, games, skits, TPR storytelling and other humorous variations of commands for activities that require action. Teachers can evaluate students through simple observations of their actions.

The Audio-Lingual Method (ALM)

The Audio-Lingual Method, also known as the Aural-Oral Approach (AOP), Functional Skills (FS) approach or New KEY approach was considered a scientific approach to language teaching. It is based on the principle that language learning is habit formation. This is characterized by mimicry, memorization of set phrases and over-learning. Structures are sequenced and taught one at a time. Grammar is taught inductively. Skills are sequenced: Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing are developed in order. Teaching points are determined by contrastive analysis between L1 (the native Language) and L2 (second language, Lao, for example for the ethnics). Teaching the sounds, tones or pronunciation through this method has been found to be effective across schools and cultures. There is an abundant use of the language laboratory, tapes and visual aids. The teacher directs, controls students' language behavior, provides a good model for imitation; students repeat, respond as quickly and accurately as possible. Drills are based on patterns in dialogs. These are repetition drills, chain drills, transformational drills, etc. The reading and writing tasks are based on oral work. This method emphasizes everyday speech and uses a graded syllabus from simple to difficult language structures. The means for evaluation are discrete-point tests.

The Communicative Approach

The Communicative Approach is also known as the Notional-Functional or Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach. This developed from the writings of the British applied linguists such as David Wilkins (1976), Christopher Brumfit (1979), Littlewood (1981), and others as well as American educators such as Sandra Savignon (1972), Dell Hymes (1970), and Canale and Swain (1980). Michael Canale and Merrill Swain, in the same year, proposed four dimensions of communicative competence: linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence and strategic competence: Linguistic competence refers to knowledge of the rules of grammar, lexicon and syntax and pronunciation norms. Sociolinguistic competence means the use of appropriate language forms in communication situations. Discourse competence refers to the ability to organize oral and written discourse logically and the ability to use signal words or cohesion devices to come up with meaningful discourse. Strategic Competence refers to the ability to cope with various communication situations; ability to initiate, maintain, terminate and redirect communication. The Communicative Approach is not bound to a particular methodology but represents a flexible approach to teaching that is responsive to learner needs and preferences. It may include language arts activities, language for a purpose (content-based), personalized language use, social interaction (games) and theater arts including simulations, role plays, chamber theater, reader's theater, speech choir. It may also include picture talk, grouping techniques and cooperative learning strategies. The goal of this approach is to become communicatively competent, able to use the language appropriate for a given social context; to manage the process of negotiating meaning with interlocutors. The teacher facilitates students' learning by managing classroom activities and setting up communicative activities. He/she emphasizes functions over forms. Students' work is at the discourse level. They work on speaking, listening, reading and writing from the beginning. The teacher may use formal or informal evaluation. Informal evaluation takes place when students communicate in the classroom. Formal evaluation includes the use of integrative and communicative tests.

Since the three methods when they were evaluated by the teachers manifested uniqueness according to each one's specific strength, it was decided that these three methods be used altogether in integrated fashion. However, since these are limited to enhancing listening and speaking skills, a fourth technique called Integrated Reading and Writing (IRW) skills was added to enhance literacy specifically writing and reading skill. However, analysis was limited to CA, TPR, and ALM.

In summary, the three methods could be compared according to their characteristics as presented in Table 1. The comparison of the three methods plus the IRW based on the criteria for effectiveness, relevance, practicality, and efficiency as language teaching methods are presented in Tables 2, 3, and 4.

4) Results of the Evaluation of the Advantages of Four Methods.

There is really no superior method for teaching language. However, several criteria are developed for choice of methodology. In this particular Project the three methods were evaluated and chosen in terms of their attributes such as adaptability to ethnic groups, fairness to ethnic groups, gender fairness, practicality, economy, and appropriateness to pupil/student's level, relevance, efficiency, and effectiveness. Table 1 shows the ranking of the three methods according to these attributes.

Using Likert scale measurement to determine the perceived strength of the three pedagogical approaches across the set nine attributes, the communicative approach (CA) appeared strongest having ranked first in 5/9 (56%) of the attributes evaluated such as fairness to ethnic groups, gender fairness, efficiency and relevance. On the other hand the TPR ranked 1 in 4/9 (44%) of the total attributes evaluated which include acceptability to ethnic groups, effectiveness, practicality, and economy in using the approach. ALM emerged rank 1 in effectiveness and economy of use (Table 2).

Further analysis using the pooled weighted mean scores (PWMS) among the three approaches is shown in Table 3. Order according to PWMS showed that TPR ranked first (18.60); then CA (18.22), and closely followed by ALM (17.64). Comparative analysis of the four approaches by the participants

Table 1. Comparison of three methods according to salient characteristics.

Method	The Audio-Lingual	Total Physical Response	The Communicative Approach
Goal	Use the target language communicatively, over learn it, so as to be able to use automatically by forming new habits in the target language and overcoming native language habits.	To provide an enjoyable learning experience having a minimum of the stress that typically accompanies learning a foreign language.	To become communicatively competent, able to use the language appropriate for a given social context; to manage the process of negotiating meaning with interlocutors.
Roles	Teacher directs, controls students' language behavior, provides good model for imitation; students repeat. Respond as quickly and accurately as possible.	At first the teacher gives commands and students follow them. Once students are "ready to speak," they take on directing roles.	Teacher facilitates students' learning by setting up communicative situations. Students are communicators, actively engaged in negotiating meaning.
Teaching/Learning Process	New vocabulary, structures presented through dialogs, which are learned through	Lessons begin with commands by the teacher; students demonstrate their	Activities are communicative-they represent an information gap that needs to be

	imitation, repetition. Drills are based on patterns in dialog. Students' correct responses are positively reinforced; grammar is induced from models. Cultural information is contextualized in the dialogs as presented by the teacher. Reading, writing tasks are based on oral work.	understanding by acting these out; teachers understand by acting these out; teachers recombine their instructions in novel and often-humorous ways; eventually students follow suit. Activities later include games and skits.	filled; speakers have a choice of what to say and how to say it; they receive feedback from the listener that will verify that a purpose has been achieved.
Evaluation	Discrete-point tests in which students distinguish between words or provide an appropriate verb for a sentence, etc.	Teachers can evaluate students through simple observation of their actions. Formal evaluation is achieved by commanding a student to perform a series of actions.	Informal evaluation takes place when teacher advises or communicates; formal evaluation is by means of an integrative test with a real communicative function.

Adapted from Techniques and Principles in Language Teaching by Diane Larsen-Freeman (quoted from Bala Report, 2007).

during the Oudomxay training and in the Vang Vieng last January-February 2006 showed almost the same ranking (Table 4): TPR, followed by CA, IRW and ALM. Basic data set used in the analysis of the four methods are presented in more details in Annex 2 and Consultancy Report of Dr. Penano-Ho (April 2007).

Table 2. Perceived ranking of three methodologies for language teaching.

ATTRIBUTES	RANK (Very Strong)		
	1	2	3
Acceptability to Ethnic Groups	TPR	ALM	CA
Fairness to ethnic groups	CA	TPR	ALM
Gender fairness	CA	TPR	ALM
Effectiveness	TPR, ALM	CA	-
Efficiency	CA	TPR	ALM
Practicality	TPR, CA	ALM	-
Economy	TPR, ALM	CA	-
Appropriateness to pupil/student level	CA	TPR, ALM	-
Relevance	CA	TPR, ALM	-

Table 3. Weighted mean scores of three approaches (June 2006).

ATTRIBUTES	Weighted Mean Scores		
	TPR	ALM	CA
Adaptability to the ethnic group	22.00	21.00	20.00
Fairness to ethnic groups	13.70	21.00	22.00
Gender Fairness	21.15	20.50	22.00
Effectiveness	20.00	12.66	12.33
Efficiency	20.00	12.00	13.00
Practicality	13.60	17.00	21.00
Economy	20.00	14.67	11.67
Appropriateness to pupil/student Level	20.50	20.5	21,50
Relevance	19.5	19.5	20.50
Average Weighted Mean Scores All Attributes	18.60	17.64	18.22

Source of data: Survey of 9-trainee respondents by Dr. Nita Bala, June 2006 (Training in Vangvieng District, Vientiane Province)

Table 4. Weighted mean Scores of 4 approaches to Lao language teaching (January 2007).

ATTRIBUTES	TPR	ALM	CA
Applicability to ethnic group	41.00	28.33	39.50
Adaptability to ethnic group	25.30	24.33	25.33
Fairness to ethnic group	22.67	21.75	25.00
Effectiveness	38.50	24.33	26.67
Efficiency	32.33	27.66	28.00
Practicality	23.33	24.33	26.00
Economy	22.67	23.67	22.00
Appropriate to Grade 1	59.00	27.66	25.67
Relevance	29.33	25.33	26.67
Average Weighted Mean Scores All Attributes	32.68	25.26	29.47

Source: Survey of 19 trainee-respondents, by Dr. Lety Penano- Ho, June 2007, Training in Oudomxay Province.

Since the survey results revealed that majority of the respondents rated the three methods as “very strongly” or “strongly” agreed on the nine attributes the methods were evaluated on, the participants or implementers may now choose the method or methods in teaching Lao. However, the results revealed that no method was unanimously and singly rated and ranked as number one in all attributes. This implies that implementers may combine these methods in teaching Lao to ethnic group pupils. This needs careful planning and more in-depth training of implementers so

that they can give excellent input for teacher training, production of textbooks and supplementary materials.

The following chart (Table 5) may give initial input in planning for methods to use in teaching Grade I ethnic pupils.

Table 5. Primary Education Curriculum for Lao Language.

Teaching-Learning Content/Competencies	Suggested Method
<p>1. Listening Train listening to teacher's orders and obeying them. Train listening to friends and family members' advice. Train listening to story telling, tales and daily events. Train listening to the teacher and friends in reading vowels, consonants. Tone marks, syllables, words, phrases and sentences. Train listening and remembering, identifying simple content and short words which are appropriate to the 6-7 school year age. Train to avoid noise while listening.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ TPR ▪ TPR, CA ▪ TPR, CA, ALM ▪ ALM ▪ TPR, CA, ALM ▪ CA
<p>2. Speaking Train to ask teachers and friends questions about things they don't understand. Train to answer rationally questions within the lesson and those related to one's self Train to introduce one and tell a simple daily story. Train to pronounce words and sentences. Train to speak clearly in communication using words accurately. Train to use polite words, not to use slang words and not to speak too loud or too quiet.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ CA, ALM
<p>3. Reading Train to pronounce vowels, consonants, syllables, phrases and sentences. Train to spell Lao consonants with vowels and tone marks. Train to pronounce tone marks. Train to read loudly, clearly and</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ ALM ▪ ALM, TPR ▪ ALM ▪ ALM, CA, TPR

Teaching-Learning Content/Competencies	Suggested Method
understand simple words. Train to have good habits in reading: book held in right position (book must be about 30 centimeters distant from the eyes); students should know how to maintain textbooks and to love reading.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ CA, TPR

6) Research Approach to Assess Appropriateness of Methods of Lao Language Teaching (MLLT)

Selecting the Study Sites. Sites selected for the study were chosen from provinces where high level of ethnicity is found and where poverty looms large. In these communities, problems related to education of non-Lao ethnic groups include among others, affordability of education, parents' education and ability to support the children's education, and their access to quality schooling and quality instruction taking into account children's ability to understand. The language of instruction has been recognized as a constraint to basic education. Likewise, curriculum and textbooks were biased against ethnic groups and girls. Since the long term objective of the Project is poverty alleviation by enhancing poor people's access to education, the focal study sites were schools belonging to poor communities and where the various ethnic groups account large in number. The population share of non-Lao ethnic groups in project provinces ranges from 63% in Attapeu and 95.7% in Phongsaly and 90.9% in Oudomxay. These poor provinces were previously identified by the national government as pockets of poverty. Hence, priority provinces included in the experiment are Phongsaly, Attapeu and Oudomxay. However, the first round experiment was conducted in the province of Oudomxay whereby the 18 try-out schools (9 experimental and 9 control schools coming from three (3) districts came from. The distribution of experimental/pilot and the control schools are presented in Table 6. Expansion of the experiment to the other provinces will be conducted by RIES to allow for more time to prepare and integrate lessons learned from the first round of experiment.

Table 6. List of tryout schools for the experiment.

Experimental Schools (PS)	Primary	Control Schools	Primary
Teng Vang PS		Mok Khei PS	
Keng Xang PS		DoneSaT PS	
Mok Phang PS		Phoulouang PS	
Pha Keo PS		Phone Sy PS	
Kok Ngia PS		Vieng Keo PS	
Kioa Lane PS		Nam Toui PS	
Mou Teun PS		My Xay PS	
Pak Nam PS		ChomSen PS	
Nam Khong PS		Xay Sam PS	

At this point, the experimental methods for language teaching and study sites (TPR, ALM, and CA) have already been identified so with the control and tryout schools. Teaching modules to be used for the evaluation of the language teaching methods were already prepared and pre-tested, and teachers were already trained to use these teaching methods in the experimental classes. To proceed with the experiment, the research process is described in the following sections.

Research methods to be applied are the Experimental and Case Study. The Experimental design specifically entails the *Before and After with Control* which is profoundly described in the analytical framework.

The Research Analytical Framework. The analytical framework for the experiment is presented in Figure 2. The research assumes that the Lao national language is a unifying factor amongst the Lao people. And that it will be more cost-effective if Lao language will be taught using language teaching techniques/approaches that are sensitive to both ethnicity and gender considerations. Improvement of Lao language will likewise positively affect performance of other subjects.

In this experiment, the three methods (TPR, ALM, and CA) to language teaching previously identified to be used in the experiment were supplemented by Integrated Writing and Reading Skills (IWR). Teaching with Lao language using these four methods (*independent variables*) was tested among Grade 1 pupils. Hence their integration into the Lao language national syllabus for Grade 1 pupils would be strategic and necessary. However, appropriate language teaching method is not sufficient condition to bring about effective and efficient teaching outcomes. The quality of the school support system (*intervening variable*) either facilitates or impedes attainment of desired outcomes. Practical inputs that make the experimental environment or context favorable (school support system) for language teaching include the availability, adequacy, timeliness and relevance of teaching learning facilities (e.g., number and level of competency of teachers), classrooms, tables, chairs, teaching aids, supplies and materials, textbooks/syllabus, etc). This necessitates looking into the school profiles such as number of teachers and their qualifications, inventory of equipment and other teaching facilities, supplies, and learning materials such as textbooks and course syllabi. The presence of all these intervening variables would determine whether the three language teaching approaches would result to effective and efficient language teaching (*dependent variable*) which are indicated by increased learning effectiveness, reduced repetition rate, reduced drop-out rates, increased school attendance, achieve set learning outcomes, cost effectiveness, and reduced time for effective teaching on a given subject matter. The assessment on efficiency of the three teaching methods will be based on the cost of delivery vs. outcomes. Eventually, the improvement of Lao language will positively affect performance of other subjects, too.

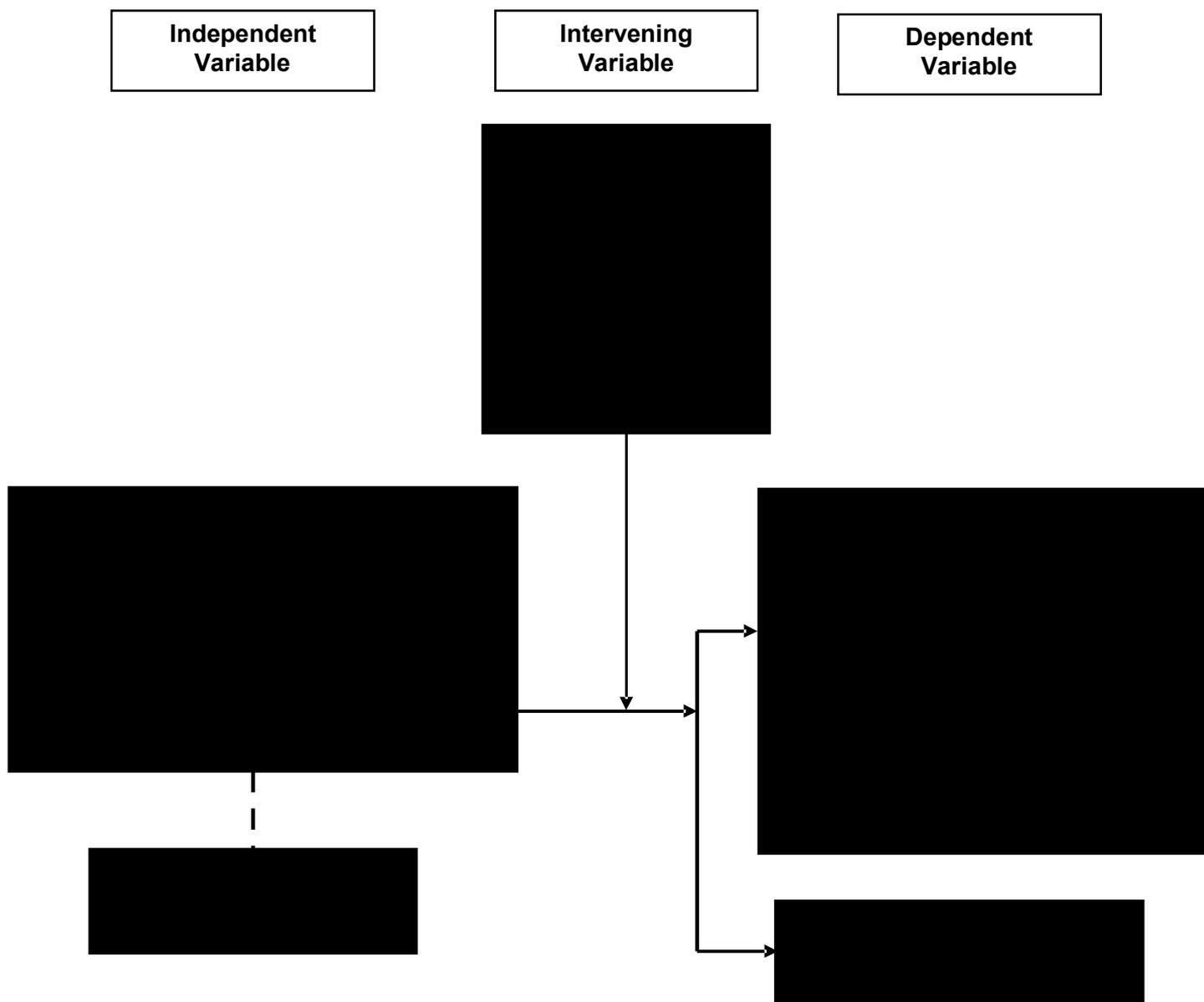


Figure 2. Analytical framework of the experiment on three methods of language teaching.

However, for the experiment in the province of Oudomxay (first round), variables studied focused only on the effectiveness of the three language teaching methods indicated by increase in level of competency (scores) and increase in the number of students accelerating from a lower to higher competency level and the apparent factors to explain them.

Other potentially critical variables described in the conceptual framework will be more appropriate to be described and analyzed after the completion of the experiment in the second round.

The experimental design used was the pre-and post-test design with control. Total scores before and after the experiment were compared to that of other pupils' scores under the control group/classes who were exposed or taught using traditional method of language teaching.

Grade 1 Teachers' Observations data focused on the: Teachers profiles, e.g., number of pupils in each school, gender distribution of students, ethnic affiliation, and number and gender distribution across ethnic groups; teachers' class preparation and teaching practices; methods, use of teaching materials; gender and ethnic participation in class activities; class assignment; teaching atmosphere; and teachers' comments on observations.

B. Preparation of Teacher Training Materials

Minister's Decree No. 1629/MOE/06 dated 14/8/2006 authorized the conduct of workshop to prepare training materials for the teacher training. The Activity objective of the workshop was to prepare the materials for (1) training of teachers on the new teaching approach using the 3 methodology selected, (2) ethnic and gender awareness training, and (3) Lao language competency test. There were 19 participants who attended the workshop: 13 from the EGDG Implementing Unit, 2 supervisors, 3 consultants and 1 administrator. Major activities undertaken during the workshop were as follows:

No. of days	Activity
1 day	Ethnic and gender awareness training
1 day	Language and language teaching methodology
3 days	Finalizing the ethnic and gender awareness raising materials
3 days	Preparing the Lao language competency test
5 days	Preparing the training materials for the teachers

The Ethnic and Gender Awareness Raising Training materials were finalized and the trainers left the training venue confident to carry out the awareness-raising workshop by them.

C. Pre-testing Instruments and Results

Pre-testing activities were conducted with reference to No. 445/NRIES/06 dated 19/9/06. Pre-testing of instruments to assess language teaching was undertaken in Phongsaly and Attapeu on November 20, 2006 and December 17, 2006, respectively.

There were 401 respondents from the two provinces. Results revealed that pupils from Attapeu seemed to perform better than those in Phongsaly. This performance was based from the traditional method of Lao language teaching.

Specifically, 4 districts in Phongsaly covered were Mai, Sumphanh, Gnot Ou, Phongsaly. In Attapeu, the two districts covered were Phouvong and Sanxay. These were participated by 26 technicians of EGDG-IU, 2 provincial staff, 6 district staff and 1 local expert.

D. Training of Try-out teachers

The try-out teachers were trained in Vang Vieng in June 2006 by international consultants who in turn trained national try-out teachers in Thalat, in September 2006 this time led by national consultants. Transference of knowledge was observed as these in turn trained the teachers from the 18 try-out schools (9 experimental and 9 control schools that came from three (3) districts of Oudomxay province. The training took place from January 28 to February 7, 2007 in Oudomxay province. Outputs of the workshops included:

Revision of the Lao language learning assessment lessons for ethnic pupils (Student test form for Grade 1, Teacher observation form, Teacher questionnaire form and School principal questionnaire form)

Revision and editing of training documents on ethnicity and gender related to education

Lao language learning assessment lesson for ethnic pupils and teacher guideline

All of these materials had been presented in the Interim Report.

E. Conduct of Pre-Test and Post Test in Oudomxay Province

The Pre-Test at Oudomxay province was conducted from 11-22 February 2007 to assess the practicality of the language testing materials and methodology to be used in the experiment as well as the try-out teacher questionnaire. The EGDP team which undertook the pre-testing was led by Dr. OneKeo, together with Mr Bounthong, Mr. DuangTa, Mr. Bualy, and Mr Littana. Preliminary arrangements for the pre-test (12 February 2007) were done through a meeting with the Deputy Director of PES Oudomxay (Mr Chindavong). During the pre-test the students were asked to answer questions to assess their competency in listening, speaking, reading and writing vowels, consonants, words and groups of words in Lao language. The difficulties were noted. These were used in refining the questionnaire according to the general situation or context of the local school.

The schedules of the experiment as well as participation of individuals to be involved were discussed. One who was responsible for teacher training and another for general education were included as members of the pretest Team.

The schedule of the pre-test, gender and ethnic affiliation of participants are presented in Table 7. There were 750 students who participated with 373 females (213 and 160 from the pilot and control schools, respectively) who participated and they represented 65 % of the pre-test sample size. However, to assess pupils' comparative performance from the pretest to post-test and comparative analysis in the performance of experimental/pilot schools against the control schools, only the students who were able to participate both in the pre-and post-test were included in the analysis. This resulted to only 460 students who qualified in the final assessment.

EGDP team conducted the post-test on 23-29 April 2007 on the experimental/pilot classes and the control classes using the same Lao Language Tests. The Tests were conducted by 3 groups whereby a group consisted of two (2) RIES staffs, one (1) PES, and one (1) PA.

Table 7. School district, schedule and participation in the pre-test.

Date and Location (2007)	Location	No. of Students	No. of Female Students
13-14 February	PakBeng district	211	119
15-16 February	Beng district	257	149
19-20 February	NaMor district	282	105
Total		750	373

In the pre-test interview with try-out teacher, information gathered included: qualification (education level they started), experience e.g., number of years of schooling (formation), aspirations, ambitions, and others. Interview with principals was also undertaken.

F. The Experiment on Three Methods of Language Teaching

The experimental sites included 9 control and 9 uncontrolled sites of similar characteristics. These were participated in by three (3) provincial education staff (PES), and three (3) district pedagogical advisers (PA).

The main intervention in the experiment on Lao Language teaching is the set of pedagogical language teaching methodologies such as the Total Physical Response (TPR), Audio-Lingual Method (ALM), and Communicative Approach. Since these approaches limit themselves to enhancing competency in listening and talking, a fourth method which is Integrated Writing and Reading (IWR) Skills was added to complement attaining Lao Language literacy which is on writing and reading. The expected outcomes from these methods include teaching/learning and cost effectiveness which will be evaluated later to establish the three experimental methods in comparison to the traditional language teaching method. Confounding factors to effectiveness of the pedagogical methods are the school-related variables including adequacy, availability, and timeliness of school support services, monitoring and evaluation. This framework is described in more detail in the Interim Report. However, for this round of experiment, focus was limited to the effectiveness of the three methods of language teaching in increasing competency on speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills.

A 10-item test in each subject matter area was given to pupils to assess the increase in knowledge and skills in writing, reading, speaking and listening Lao language. Pupils' performance in the tests were grouped in five (5) categories as follows:

Score	Category
0-2 points	Very weak
3-4 points	Weak
5-6 points	Average
7-8 points	Strong
9-10 points	Very Strong

The number of pupils (in percent) was computed and the difference between the pre-test and post performance were likewise determined. To measure the effect of the teaching methods, the number of pupils in the pilot school within each performance category was compared with number of those in the control group. For the measurement of effect, analysis and interpretation of results, the incremental difference in number of pupils per category based on highest number obtained vis-à-vis the control group. This incremental difference describes the number of pupils which were either added or subtracted from the pre-test and post test as an effect of the teaching methods on the competency of pupils. The (>) sign indicates an increased trend in number from the pre-test to post test in a given competency level; and the (<) denotes decrease. This analysis generally showed the amount of change in competency level gained or lost after the post test.

G. Seminar on Study of Three Methods for Lao Language Teaching and Learning in the Primary Curriculum

The results of the first round of the experiment were presented in a seminar conducted on August 30, 2007 at Research Institute for Education Sciences (RIES) auditorium. It was attended by 53 officials of the Ministry of Education, particularly the RIES; provincial education officials of the province of Oudomxay including teachers from the pilot and control schools, principals; faculty members of the National University of Laos; national consultants and international consultants; and representatives from the consulting firms: Top Value Services (TVS) and the Asian Institute for Developmental Studies (AIDSI) (Annex A).

The seminar was of three parts: the opening ceremony presided by RIES Director Dr. Phoungkham Somsanith, the presentation of the results of the experiment on three methods of Lao language teaching (MLLT) by the Team Leader, Dr. Virginia R. Cardenas, and Dr. Vongphachanh Vilayhom of EGDP IU (Ethnic Education Division of DGE) and the feedback session which was moderated by national consultant, Mr. Inthasone Phetsiriseng. In the feedback session, some of the recommendations to improve the methodology for the second round of the experiment were discussed.

During the feedback session Mr. Inthasone applied a participatory inquiry approach in determining ways to improve the methodology for the second round of the experiment. He invited the audience to think back and review the results of the experiment presented earlier, and asked them whether they agreed totally with the findings or not, and if not, they pointed out areas where some disagreements were noted. The participants voiced out their thinking on some contentious results by explaining some attributions to the issues identified and suggested ways to improve the methodology. This aimed to control the effects of some spurious variables. The seminar was truly participatory that it gave the RIES and other officials, as well as the consultants important information to be considered in the redesign of the experiment for the second round.

IV. DISCUSSIONS OF FINDINGS

While several data were gathered during the survey, primary analysis was devoted to information that would reveal the effectiveness of the three methods of language teaching in increasing competency on speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills¹. The rate of increase of students moving from a lower to higher competency level was also assessed between pilot and control schools. In addition, the effects of ethnic affiliation of teachers and students, as well as teachers' number of years of teacher training were likewise evaluated.

A. Effects of three methods of Lao language teaching (MLLT) on pupils' writing, reading, speaking and listening competency

The effect of the three methods on the competency levels of students was measured in terms of their progression in writing, reading, listening and speaking skills. The following discussions describe pupils' performance.

Writing Skills. This set of competency skills was measured by pupils' ability to spell, copy and write correctly consonants, vowels, words or group of words presented to them (Tables 8 and 9). Figure 3 indicate that the writing skills of the students in the experimental or pilot schools were slightly improved. This is shown in the decline by 12.20 % of students who were under "very weak" category and slight increase in the number of students in the "very strong" category (8.5%) The incremental increase in the "strong category" between those in the pilot schools and the control, yielded only a slight difference (>7.0 for the control and 7.1 for the pilot (Table 10) in terms of the effect of MLLT on writing skills.

Explanations to these were attributed to the pressure laid on the control schools to perform at their best as, well owing to the threat brought about by the teachers' awareness that they are being compared with experimental schools, hence the need to teach more aggressively.

Table 8. Pre-test: Difference in pupils' level of competency in writing skills: Pilot schools compared to control schools (N=460).

Type of School	Pupils' Competency Level (%)				
	Very Weak	Weak	Average	Strong	Very Strong
Control	52.90	38.20	4.40	2.50	2.00
Pilot	29.70	18.80	18.40	22.70	10.50
Difference	<12.20	<20.40	>14.00	>19.20	>8.50

¹ The reason for this is that some confounding factors such as lack of benchmark on the quality of educational support services and environment, shortness of time, and singularity of the experiment (one semester only) despite having control schools was insufficient to establish more conclusive outcomes.

Table 9. Post-test: Incremental difference in pupils' level of competency in writing skills: Pilot schools compared to control schools (N=460).

Type of School	Pupils' Competency Level (%)				
	Very Weak	Weak	Average	Strong	very Strong
Control	34.80	20.60	21.60	11.80	11.30
Pilot	21.50	18.80	23.80	18.40	17.60
Difference	<13.30	<1.80	>1.20	>6.60	>6.30

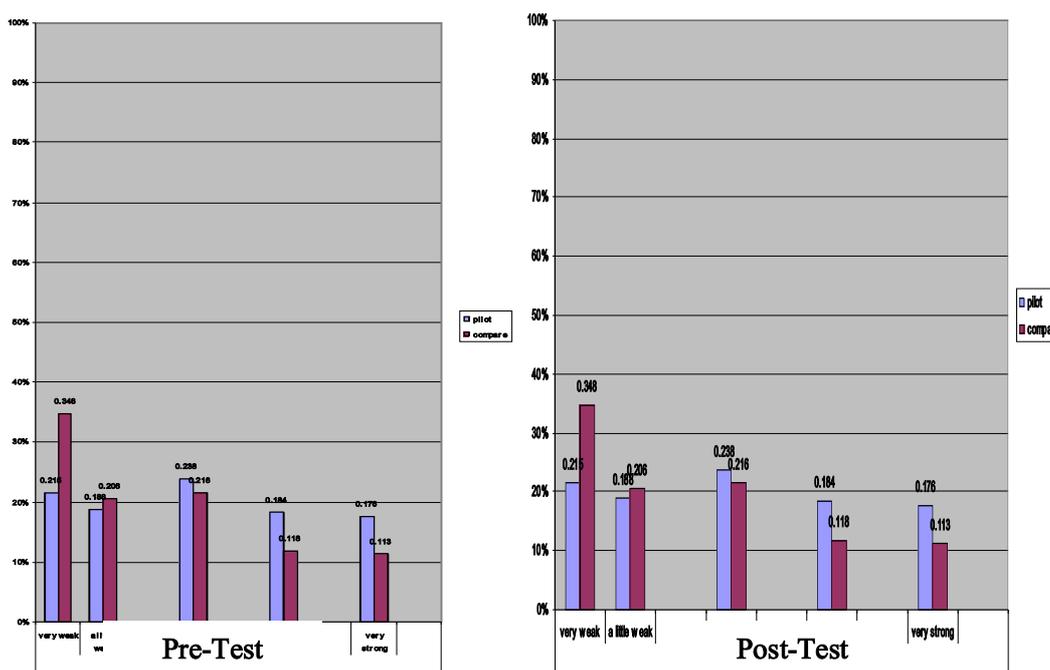


Figure 2. Pupils' comparative writing performance between control and pilot classes during the pre and post-tests.

Table 10 . Summary of progress in writing skills as incremental difference from pre to post among control and pilot schools (N=460)..

Type of School	Pupils' Competency Level (%)				
	Very Weak	Weak	Average	Strong	Very Strong
Control	<18.10	<17.6	.>17.20	>9.30	>7
Pilot	<8.2	0	>5.4	<4.30	>7.1

Reading Skills. A slight increase in the pupils' performance was observed in reading skills in both types of schools. During the pre-test there were more students in the control group who were weak (86.80%) compared to those who were strong and very strong (3%). There were fewer who were weak in the pilot (60.20%) and slightly more who were strong (6.60%) (Table 11). Comparing the difference in the post-test performance between control and

pilot schools, (Table 12 and Figure 4) the number of students whose performance shifted to “very strong” was higher in the pilot schools where there were 11.01% more students compared to the control school. In terms of the incremental difference between the pilot and control schools, the increase in the number of those who was shifted to “very strong” was higher in the pilot school (7.50%) compared to the control (1.50%). This indicates that the effect of the three MLLT was more positively observable in the pilot schools.

Table 11. Pre-test: Difference in pupils’ level of competency in reading skills: Pilot schools compared to. Control schools (N=460)..

Type of School	Pupils’ Competency Level (%)				
	Very Weak	Weak	Average	Strong	Very Strong
control	86.80	8.30	2.00	0.50	2.50
pilot	60.20	20.70	5.90	6.60	6.60
Difference	<28.60	<11.40	>2.10	>6.10	>4.10

Table 12. Post-test : Difference in pupils’ level of competency in reading skills: Pilot schools compared to. control schools (N=460).

Type of School	Pupils’ Competency Level (%)				
	Very Weak	Weak	Average	Strong	Very Strong
Control	63.70	20.60	8.30	2.90	4.40
pilot	47.30	26.60	8.20	3.50	14.50
Difference	<16..40	>6.00	<0.10	>0..60	>11.01

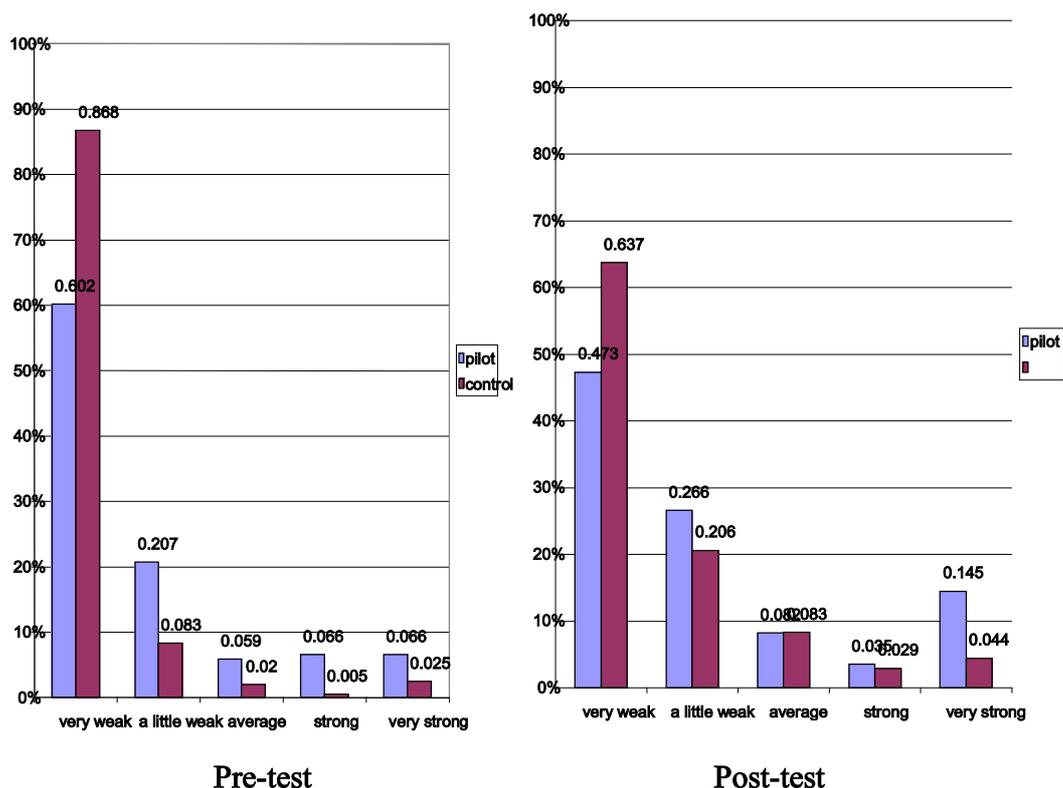


Figure 4. Reading skills of student's pre-tests and post-tests.

Table 13 . Summary of progress in reading skills from pre to post-test levels between control and pilot schools (N=460).

Type of School	Pupils' Competency Level (%)				
	Very Weak	Weak	Average	Strong	Very Strong
Control	<22.90	>12.30	>6.30	>2.4	>1.50
Pilot	>12.90	>5.90	>2.30	<3.1	>7.50

Speaking Skills. An improvement in speaking Lao language was measured through clarity, fluency, correctness in pronunciation and comprehension including ability to articulate ideas (speaking skills). In terms of the Lao speaking skills of the pupils in the experiment or pilot schools, the effect of the MLLT was visibly higher in the post-test with the pilot group showing an increase of 29.30 % of those who had moved to the "very strong" category (Table 15 and Figure 5)) compared to the control group. The incremental difference or progress between the two groups showed that the rate of increase of those who had shifted to the "very strong" category was higher in the pilot (15.50%) compared to the control which increased only at the rate of 8.3% (Table 16). This manifests that the effect of the three MLLT was more positively visible in the pilot schools. Reading skills were improved.

Table 14. Pre-test : Difference in pupils' level of competency in speaking skills: Pilot schools compared to. control schools (N=460).

Type of School	Pupils' Competency Level (%)				
	Very Weak	Weak	Average	Strong	Very Strong
Control	23.50	7.40	23.00	25.50	10.80
Pilot	10.90	17.20	12.90	44.10	24.60
Difference	<12.60	>9.80	<11.00	>18.60	>13.80

Table 15. Post-test : Difference in pupils' level of competency in speaking skills: Pilot schools compared to. control schools. (N=460).

Type of School	Pupils' Competency Level (%)				
	Very Weak	Weak	Average	Strong	Very Strong
Control	18.60	10.80	21.60	29.90	19.10
Pilot	3.90	3.90	10.50	33.20	48.40
Difference	<14.70	<6.90	<11.10	>3.30	>29.30

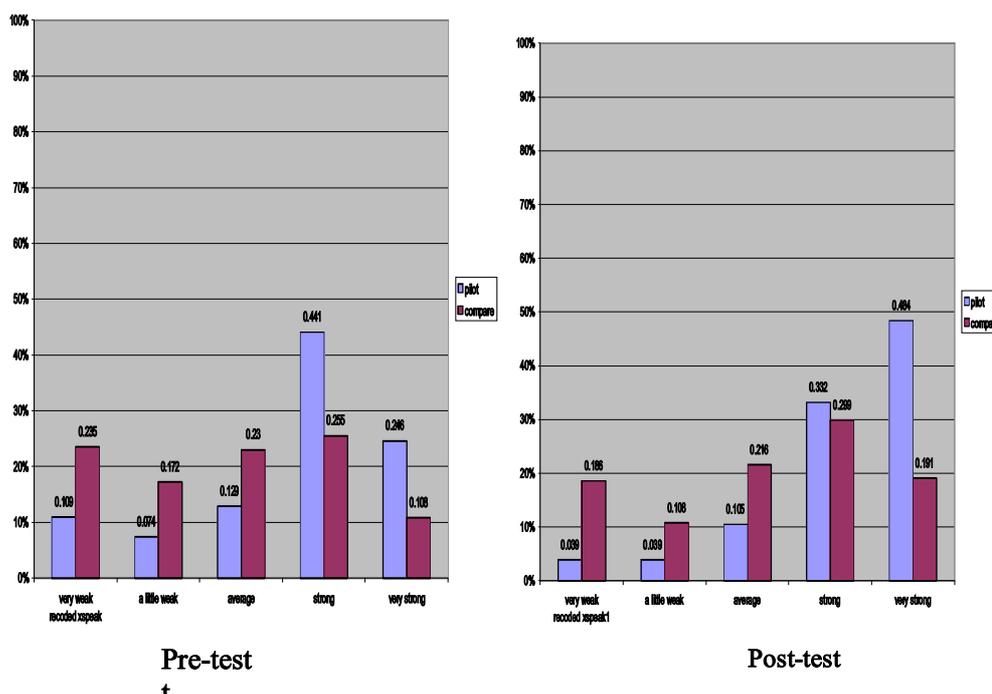


Figure 5. Speaking skills of students: Pre and Post Tests.

Table 16 . Summary of progress in speaking skills from pre to post-test levels between control and pilot schools (N=460).

Type of School	Pupils' Competency Level (%)				
	Very Weak	Weak	Average	Strong	Very Strong
Control	<4.90	>3.40	<1.4	>4.90	>8.3
Pilot	<7.00	<13.3	<2.4	>10.9	>15.50

Listening skills

Listening skills was assessed by the ability of the pupils to distinguish different words with similar tones but with different meanings. Results from the post-test showed a substantial difference between the control and pilot schools. The decrease in the pilot schools of those who were weak was at the rate of 9.30% and the rate of increase of those who shifted to very strong was at the rate of 20.50% (Table 18 and Figure 6). The incremental difference in rate of improvement between the control and pilot groups are summarized in Table 19. In the pilot group, those who were very weak, weak, average and strong decreased at various rates resulting to an aggregate increase to very strong at the rate of 40.20 % compared to only 18.10% in the control group. This indicates that a more visible effect of the three MLLT was more positively observable in the pilot schools than in the control.

Table 17. Pre-test: Difference in pupils' level of competency in listening skills: Pilot schools compared to control schools (N=460).

Type of School	Pupils' Competency Level (%)				
	Very Weak	Weak	Average	Strong	Very Strong
Control	23.50	14.70	27.00	19.10	15.70
Pilot	14.50	13.70	24.20	33.60	14.10
Difference	<9.00	<1.00	<2.80	>14.5	<1.60

Table 18. Post-test: Difference in pupils' level of competency in listening skills: Pilot schools compared to control schools (N=460).

Type of School	Pupils' Competency Level (%)				
	Very Weak	Weak	Average	Strong	Very Strong
Control	11.30	15.70	22.10	17.20	33.80
Pilot	2.30	4.30	18.00	21.10	54.30
Difference	<9.30	<9.40	<4.10	<4.00	>20.50

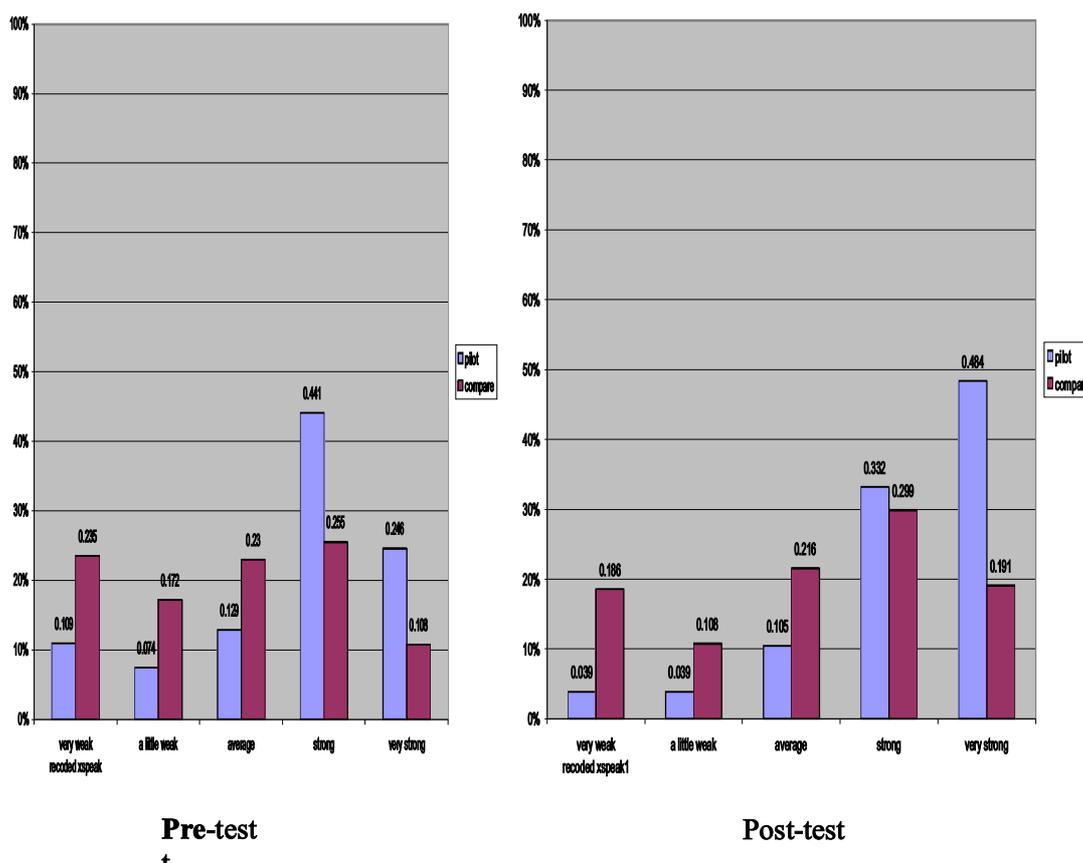


Figure 6. Listening skills of students: Pre and Post Tests.

Table 19. Summary of progress in listening skills from pre to post-test levels between control and pilot schools (N=460).

Type of School	Pupils' Competency Level (%)				
	Very Weak	Weak	Average	Strong	Very Strong
Control	<12.20	>1.00	<2.90	<1.90	>18.1
Pilot	<12.20	<9.40	<6.20	<12.50	>40.20

Based on the above discussions, it was evident that the MLLT had improved the writing, reading, speaking and listening skills of pupils from the pilot schools at various rates. These are summarized in Table 20. Results likewise showed that increase was observed from the control schools at bit lower rates of increase. This was attributed to several reasons, such as the threat of being compared to pilot schools that pressured teachers in control schools to teach more aggressively to be at par with the performance of pilot schools. Another reason noted why control schools performed equally well in some respects could be due to some external factors. In the case of Phone Sy School, the school building was new from the Basic Education Girls's Project (BEGP) whereby enrolment increased two-fold compared to 2005. It was noted that with the new facilities, students are inspired to go to school and attend classes thereby contributing to their improved performance.

Table 20. Summary of incremental increase in performance of students from pre-test to post test in both pilot and control schools.

Skills	Type of School	Pupils' Competency Level (% incremental increase)				
		Very Weak	Weak	Average	Strong	Very Strong
Writing	Control	<18.10	<17.6	.>17.20	>9.30	>7.00
	Pilot	<8.2	0	>5.4	<4.30	>7.10
Reading	Control	<22.90	>12.30	>6.30	>2.4	>1.50
	Pilot	>12.90	>5.90	>2.30	<3.1	>7.50
Speaking	Control	<4.90	>3.40	<1.4	>4.90	>8.30
	Pilot	<7.00	<13.3	<2.4	>10.9	>15.50
Listening	Control	<12.20	>1.00	<2.90	<1.90	>18.10
	Pilot	<12.2	<9.40	<6.20	<12.50	>40.20

Although empirical evidences apparently remain insufficient, (due to erratic trends in the results), other factors identified that could have affected the competency levels of the pupils were the length of teacher training school attendance by the teachers, length of teaching experience of teachers, ethnic affiliation of teachers and students, relative distance to the city and other educational support services, ethnicity, and relatively newer schools performed satisfactorily. In some schools it was shown that the more years the teacher spent in teacher training program, the higher was the level of competency of the pupils. However, the same trend was also observable within and across groups. Majority of the teachers went through the intensive teacher training program. So the effect of the number of years of attendance in teacher training program appeared to be an important variable to study and needs to be more carefully controlled or studied in the selection of schools for the next round of experiment.

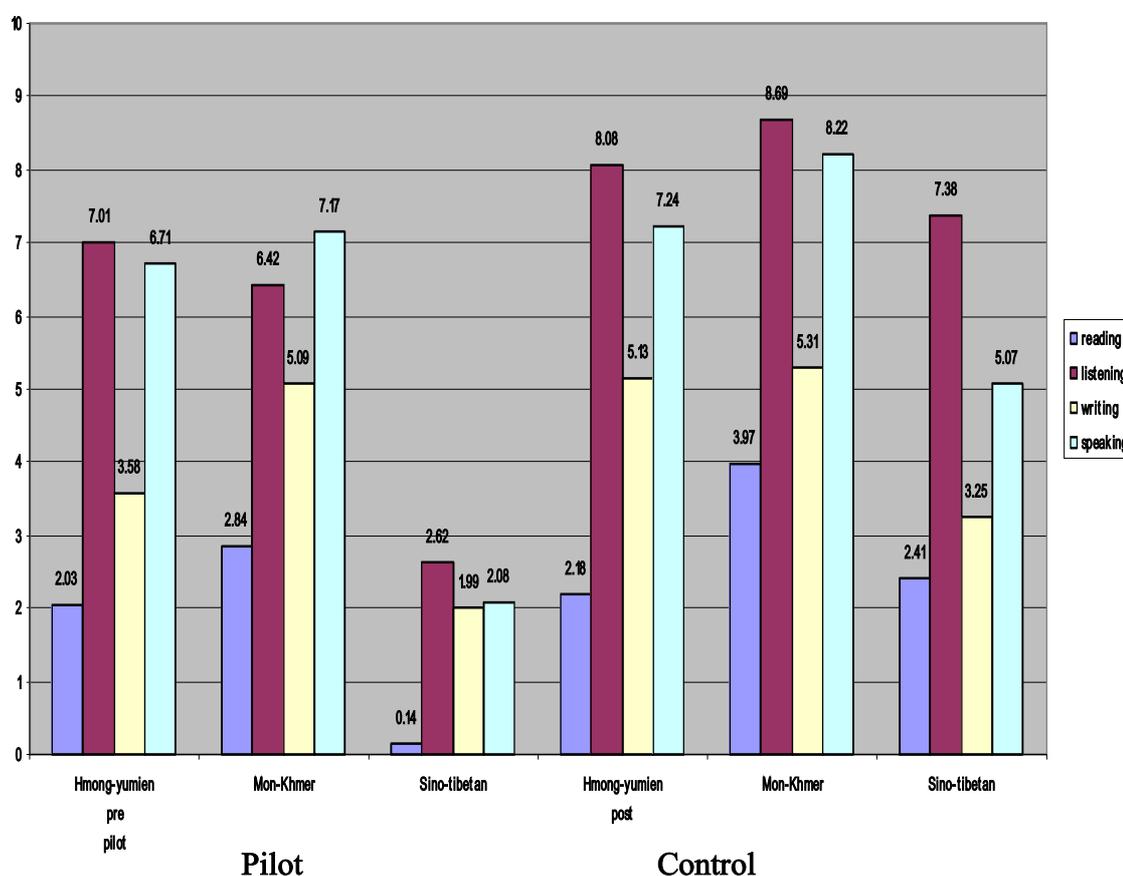
The age of student entering Grade 1 and their readiness to learn could likewise be a variable of further concern. Observations are clear that there is high participation of underage pupils in Grade 1. The age of Grade 1 pupils was difficult to control for two reasons. Parents send their children to school even before the accepted school age to enable them to take advantage of the available scholarship under the project and free school feeding program. However, because of the lack of psychological readiness to learn at their young age, these Grade 1 pupils tend to repeat the program causing higher cost of education on the part of the government. This difficulty is further exacerbated by practice in ethnic communities where there is hardly registration of births particularly in remote areas.

In terms of ethnicity, there seem to be a positive relationship between pupils and teachers' ethnic affiliation and learning outcomes. Table 21 shows that a when teachers and pupils come from the same ethnic group the gain in learning is higher compared to the case where teachers and pupils belonged to different ethnic groups (Figure 7)

Results also showed a higher learning gain among Sino-Tibetan group. However, the result needs further verification as this could be attributed to the smallness of the number of the sample size and thus percentage-wise they appear to be large. Besides, the remoteness of their community and poor access to the schools may render some difficulty in monitoring and evaluating their participation in the experiment especially during the rainy season. Hence if included, the quality of results may be affected due to inadequate data gathering and monitoring. This is true in Na Mor district, wherein despite its remoteness; many of ethnic teachers also do not speak Lao.

Table 21. Ethnic affiliation of pupils and teachers and its effect

Type of School	Skills Evaluated	Pre-test		Post test		Result of Learning	
		Same Ethnic Group	Different Ethnic Group	Same Ethnic Group	Different Ethnic Group	Same Ethnic Group	Different Ethnic Group
Control School	Writing	2.04	2.35	4.15	3.23	2.11	0.88
	Speaking	6.09	3.08	6.99	3.17	0.90	0.09
	Reading	1.22	0.79	2.41	1.39	1.18	0.60
	Listening	6.48	4.87	8.05	5.68	1.57	0.82
Pilot School	Writing	4.96	3.51	5.89	1.57	0.94	-1.93
	Speaking	7.13	5.72	7.97	6.08	0.83	0.36
	Reading	2.80	1.57	4.05	4.29	1.25	2.71
	Listening	6.23	6.08	8.83	7.13	2.59	1.05



B. Perceived acceptability of the MLLT by Instructors and Principals.

The three MLLT, audio lingual method, total physical response, and communicative approach were evaluated in terms of their acceptability. Based on 10 criteria (Table 22) used to assess principal and teachers' perception on the usefulness and applicability of the methods of teaching such as attractiveness to students, appropriateness to students, ethnic and gender sensitivity, usefulness in learning Lao language, cost-effectiveness, ease of use, appropriateness to the level of students, and relevance to teaching activity, the three MLLT were rated generally "good" except on the criteria "suitability for all ethnic groups" where it was rated by most of the respondents as "very good". The characteristics of the three MLLT that rated them "good" by majority of the respondents are: "suitability of the approaches for both girls and boys" (55.55%), effectiveness for Lao language teaching (58.32%), good achievement returns based on what has been invested (time and fund) (72.21%) cheap cost or low in expenses (materials) (58.32%), suitable for teaching (63.88%), and, suitable to pupils level (50%). This indicates that the three MLLT fit teaching and learning needs of ethnic groups including school girls as perceived by teachers and principals, hence they are generally acceptable for Lao language teaching.

Table 22. Acceptability of Lao teaching method in audio lingual method, total physical response, communicative approach.

Title	1 Very weak	2 Weak	3 Fair	4 Good	5 Very good	Remark
Students show interest in the lesson			47.21%	41,66%	11.11%	
Adjust to suit the level of students			19,44%	49,99%	30,55%	
Suitable for all Ethnic Groups			8,33%	44,44%	47,21%	
Suitable for both girl and boy pupils			2,77%	55.55%	38,88%	
Effectiveness for learning Lao language			2,77%	58,32%	36,10%	No response from Kok Ngiew school
Good achievement on what has been invested (time and fund)			2,77%	72,21%	24,99%	
Easy to implement			24,99%	38,88%	33,33%	
.Low in expenses (Materials)			8,33%	58,32%	30,55%	
Suitable to pupils level			5,55%	49,99%	44.44%	
Suitable for teaching			5,55%	63,88%	30,55%	

V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Teaching using Lao language was foreseen to improve access of ethnic groups including women to education. From a management point of view it was more strategic and supposedly cost-effective particularly if these gains are reflected in the improved competency in learning skills in writing, reading, speaking and listening to the Lao language. The experiment under this consultancy engagement aimed to identify three methods of Lao language teaching and assess their effectiveness in developing writing, reading, listening and speaking Lao national language.

Although the trial duration was only for three months as well as limited number of schools (9 pilot schools and 9 control schools) and pupils (460) but with the resolution and effort of all concerned parties and the facilitation of EDP II Team Leader, the outcome was encouraging.

The first activity in the experiment identified the three methods of teaching Lao language using the audio-lingual method, total physical response method and the communicative approach. Each of these methods have their own merits, thus their combined features was valued, and thus the decision to use them in combination during the classroom-based experiment.

These methods of teaching were evaluated in terms of the extent they improved the writing, reading, speaking and listening skills of Grade 1 pupils in Oudomxay province. Results showed positive outcomes. Speaking and listening skills of pupils in the pilot schools improved substantially and slightly improved their writing and reading skills. Factors related to knowledge and acquisition of skills under the experiment was listed for further study (Analytical framework). However, erratic trends were observed when the results of the post test between the control and pilot groups were analyzed. This prompted RIES to undertake a second round of experiment to draw more conclusive results.

An assessment of the applicability of the combined methods as perceived by the teachers and principals from the participating schools showed good acceptability based on the criteria set. The feedback session was very productive as the discussions yielded lessons learned which could help improve the methodology to use in the second round of the experiment. The following highlights important conclusions.

An important decisive factor in the acquisition of skills is the quality of teachers; the length of their teaching experience and the number of years they attended teacher training schools. These indicated potential influence on learning. In the long term a combination of both teacher qualities would bring about more learning using Lao language in teaching.

Improvement in learning Lao language depends on several factors. If ethnic group students are to be able to improve their Lao language skills, we have to consider many factors such as:

- Their school condition (permanent, temporary buildings, quality and availability of learning facilities and learning materials)
- The teachers' facility to speak Lao Language

- Their school environment (rural, town and distance to educational support services)
- Their family (how often they speak Lao to each other)
- Their livelihoods (how much income they derive and the extent they are being exposed to other ethnic groups)

It would take a long process to master the Lao language. And foremost, the teachers must be well versed in Lao language skills as well. To teach in rural areas, one must speak Lao language correctly and have good command of the grammar. Pronouncing words with the right tones based on written words is critical. Sometimes, one could write correctly but use different tone when speaking. This altogether when not corrected may lead to communication gap.

Establishing the profile of schools particularly the adequacy of learning facilities for the pilot and control will ensure comparability of schools and reduce the effect of variations. Such facilities should be sufficient enough to allow the needed space for interaction in undertaking prescribed activities in programmed lessons to facilities learning (e.g. chairs, tables, clustering into groups, etc.) The location of the school and its distance from the source of educational support services in the community is important. If this remains uncontrolled it could become another source of variation of results.

Owing to the above conclusions, the following recommendations are forwarded for the second round of the experiment.

1. Undertake a second round of experiment with full control of the extraneous variables that may affect learning competency of the pupils.
2. For next round to be successful it should consider a review of the goals and objectives outlined in the project, documents such as the Interim Report, agreements made during the feedback session, as well as targets prior to finalizing the design.
3. Observe more rigors in the experiment. There should be no disparity among schools in the experiment. Profiles of schools must be established to be comparable. Variables to control are indicated in the analytical framework in Figure 2 as well as those mentioned previously (e.g., school condition, teachers' facility to speak Lao Language, school environment, family interaction and use of Lao language, and livelihoods systems and exposure to other ethnic groups). The location of schools as well as their conditions as participants of the experiment should be well controlled to ensure that the data to be derived will be truly comparable.

Improvement in the experiment could be focused on the following:

- Duration of the experiment,
- Sample size,
- Gender distribution of sample pupils,
- Ethnic participation,
- Administration of test items,
- Data collection, analysis and processing

- Monitoring of student progress with national consultants,
 - Develop protocol or guidelines in conducting the experiment based on experiences in round 1 experiment,
4. A qualitative study (case study) may provide more depth to analysis especially understanding the effect of some extraneous variables that could not be quantified. This was earlier proposed in Round 1. The methodology for the case study could be found in the EGDP Interim Report 2007.
 5. In the second round of experiment, the sample size/schools could be expanded to 36 instead of the original 18. In this scheme, the control schools of Round 1 experiment can now be added into the group of previous pilot schools to become altogether the pilot schools of the Round 2 experiment (9 original pilot + 9 original control schools= 18 pilot schools). This implies selecting new 18 other control schools. Altogether there will be 36 sample schools.

While this scheme may pose logistical constraints (e.g., time in processing approval of proposal and funding support, as well as survey and selection of new control schools) it was agreed in the post -seminar meeting that RIES will take care of addressing the attendant issues.

6. Experimental planning should include District Education Department as active stakeholders and other local authorities as participants.
7. Train teachers and other stakeholders who will be involved in the project.
8. Encourage student-parent participation in school activities and check if parental involvement will enhance language learning at home.
9. Establish a participatory monitoring and evaluation protocol for student learning outcomes with the involvement of as many stakeholders.
10. Revise EGDP Annual Activity Plan and Learning Programs to adjust to the changes made in the experiment for Round 2.
11. Engage the services of a national consultant to assist in the preparation of the design of Round 2 experiment and assist in teachers training.

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