

**Using mother tongue as a medium of instruction in Thailand:  
How does it affect Yunnanese children's behaviour?**

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

The Yunnanese-Chinese children at Ban Mai Neong Bua School, in Chiang Mai province also have to confront this educational challenge. The teachers at this school try to use the children's first language as a medium of instruction from kindergarten 1 (KG1) onwards. However, the school has no Yunnanese teachers. Consequently, teaching assistants who are Yunnanese and speak Yunnanese Chinese have been trained to teach the children. Although this project has just started, in the first semester of 2010, the home room Thai teacher and teaching assistant working in an experimental KG1 classroom observed that the children's behaviour has changed for the better. For example, the children are no longer afraid to go to school; they enjoy learning and actively participate in various activities with the teaching assistant.

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