



International Conference on
**Mother Tongue Based
Multilingual Education 2021**

**23-25
NOVEMBER**

**Recent Language-in-Education Policy Developments in Thailand
+
The Bangkok Statement on Language and Inclusion**

Kirk R. Person, PhD.

Senior Consultant, Literacy and Education, SIL International
Associate Professor of Linguistics, Mahidol University (Thailand)

Member, Royal Institute of Thailand National Language Policy Drafting
Committee (2006-2013)

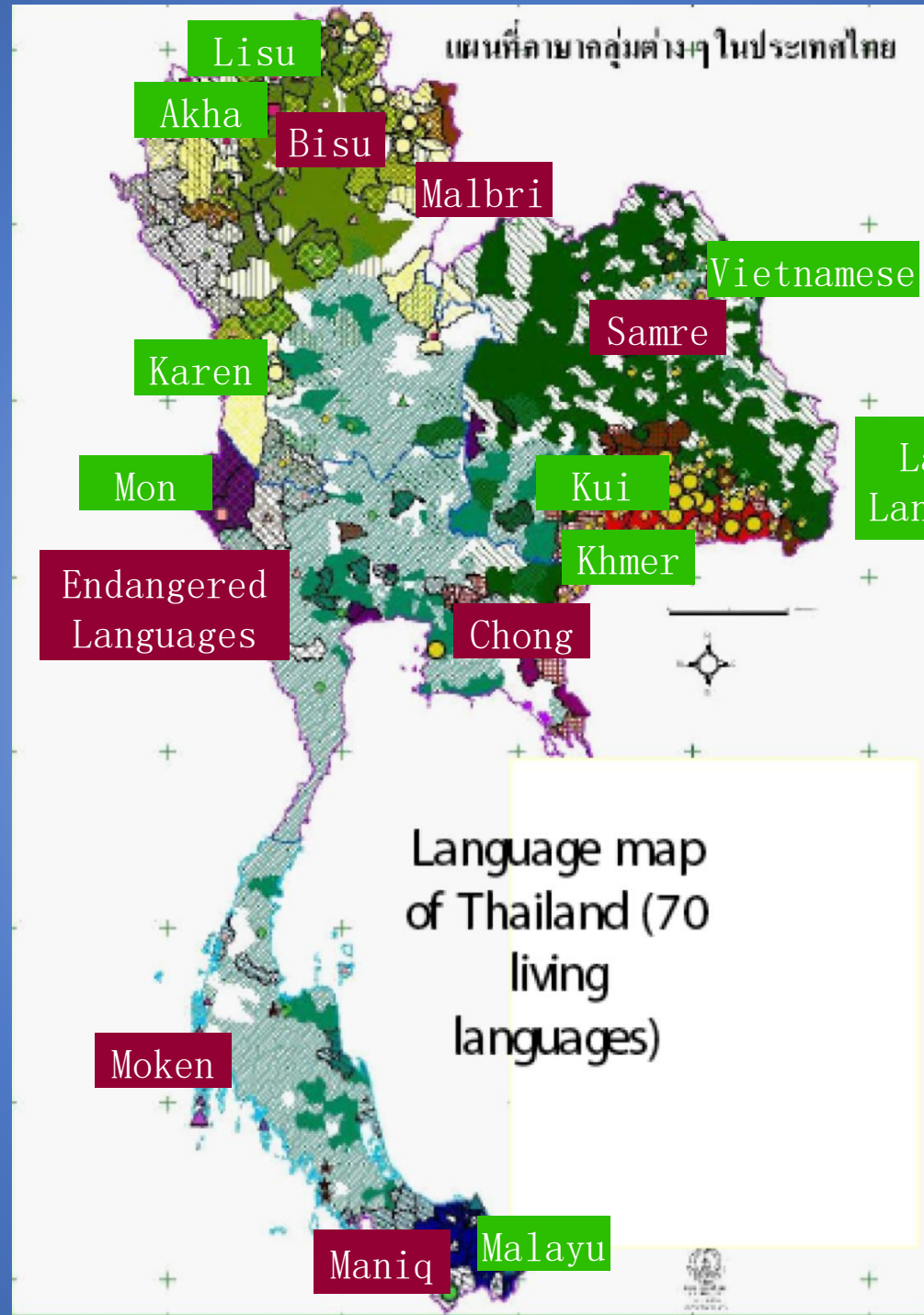
Thailand

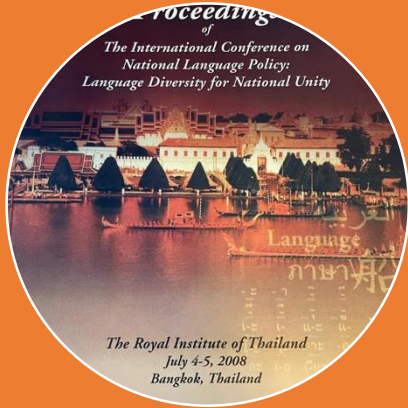
- Language not mentioned in recent constitutions
- 24 June 1940 Field Marshal Plaek Pibunsongkram declared Thai the national language (State Convention #9)
 - *“Thai people must extol, honor and respect the Thai language, and must feel honored to speak it.”*
 - *“Everyone must hold it to be true that all born as Thai people have the same Thai blood and speak the same Thai language. Place of birth or accent makes no difference.”*

Unity in uniformity (by definition)

Common attitude in post-World War II nation building







Academic Interest

- Endangered language revitalization (1990s)
- UN-related conferences
- Power of Language Conference (2006) (Malones, Kosonen, + Bradley) influenced Dr. Udom Waramakasadit of Royal Institute
- MoE, Mahidol University, Thailand Research Fund, Royal Institute



Political Situation

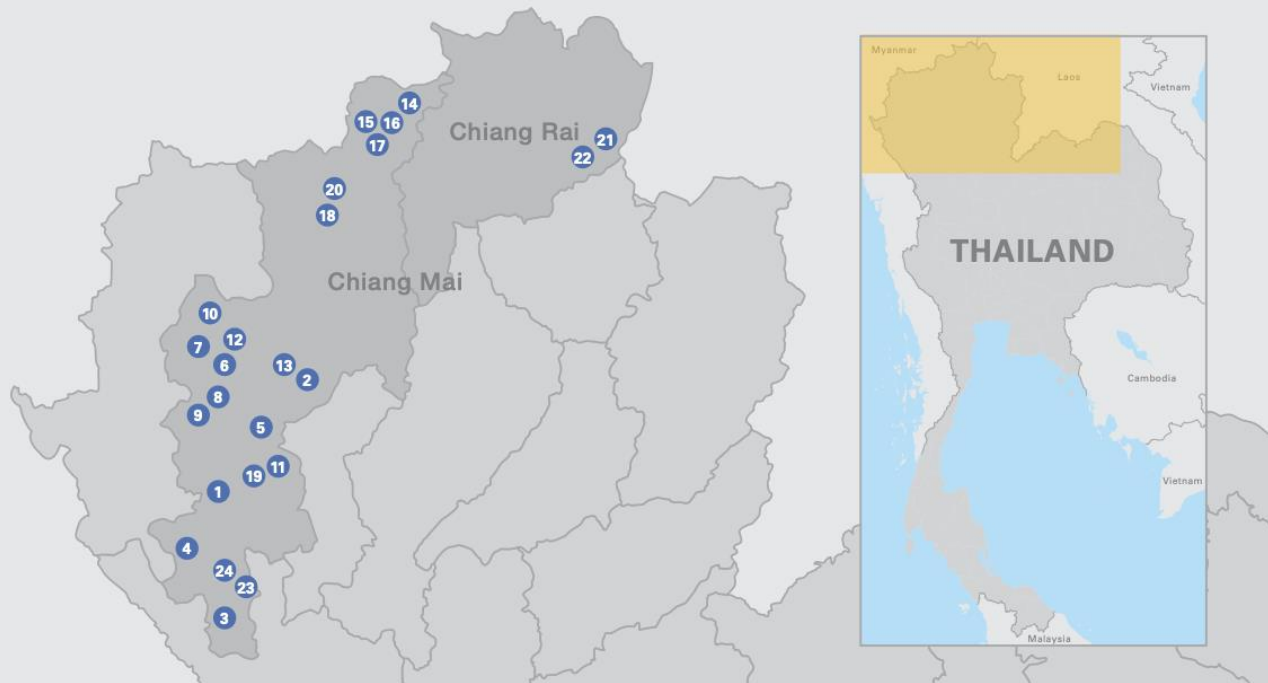
- Violence in the Deep South (2004 onward)
 - National Security Council, MoE recommend "bilingual education"
- International pressure on MoE to address statelessness (ethnic minority/migrant children) and out-of-school children
- English, Chinese for economy



Pilot Projects

- Patani Malay-Thai MTB-MLE in South (2006)
 - Mahidol University, UNICEF, Thailand Research Fund, MoE
- Hmong, Mon, Karen MTB-MLE in North (2008)
 - Foundation for Applied Linguistics, Pestalozzi Children's Foundation, MoE

Motivation for, input to Royal Institute National Language Policy drafting process



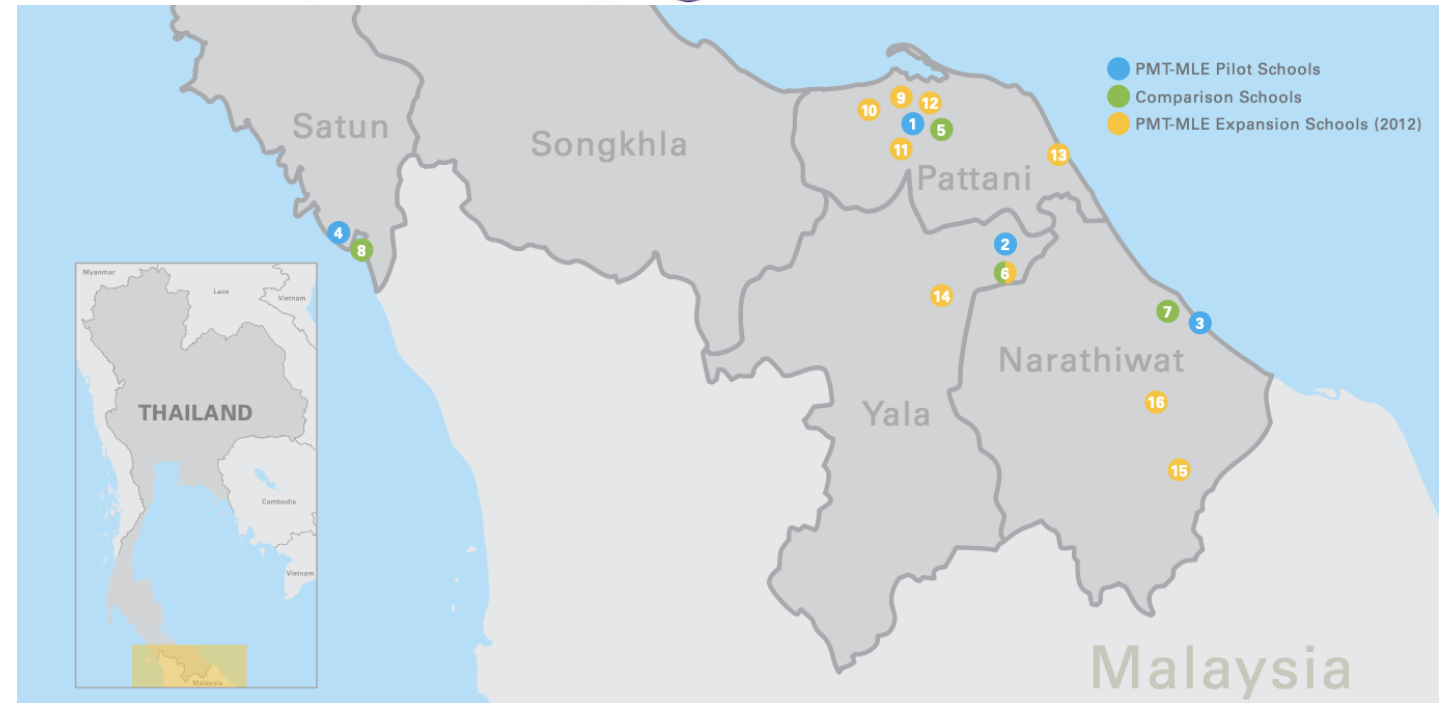
New Dawn Over the Mountains:
Improving Access and Equity through Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education for Thailand's Ethnic Children

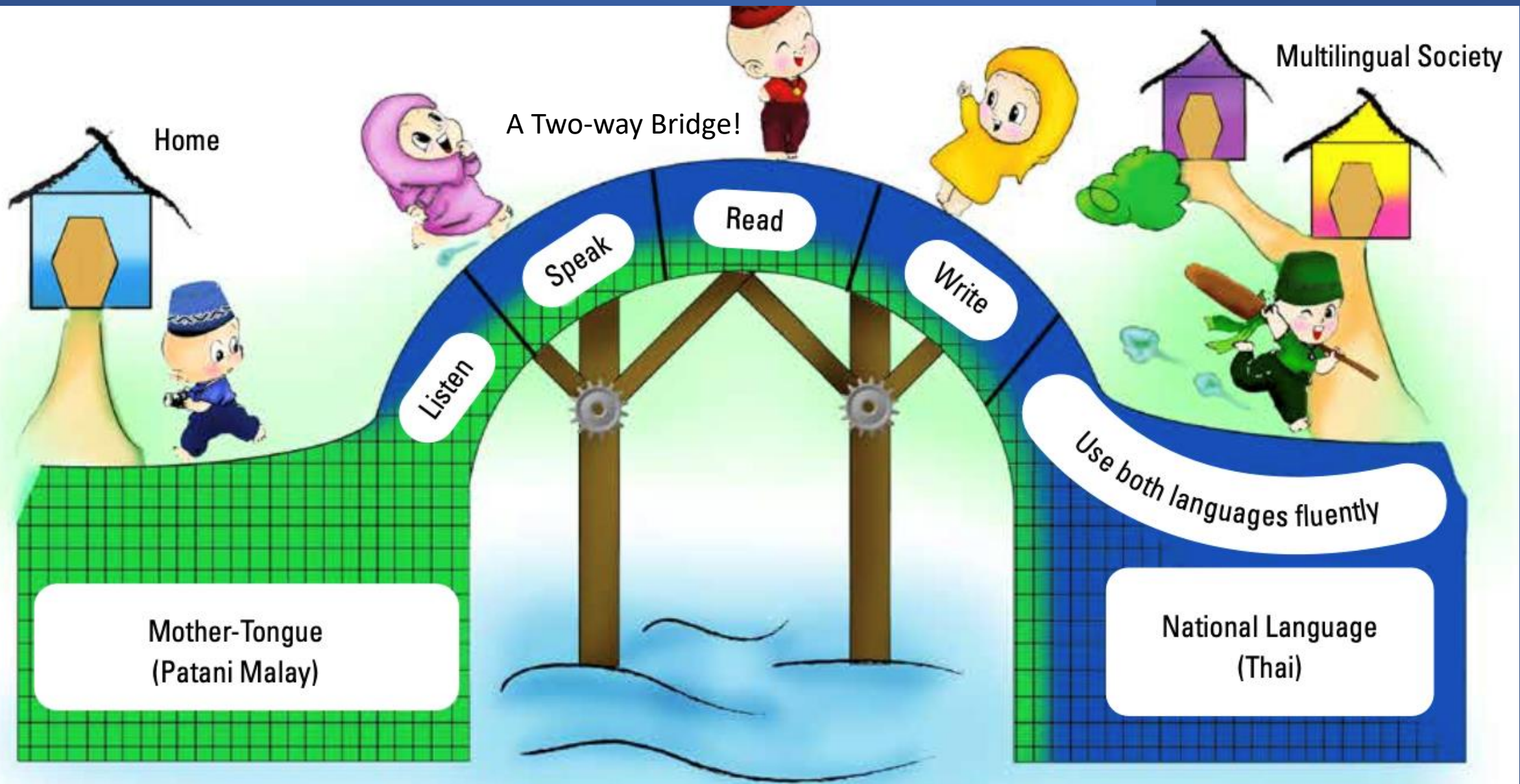
Pestalozzi Children's Foundation

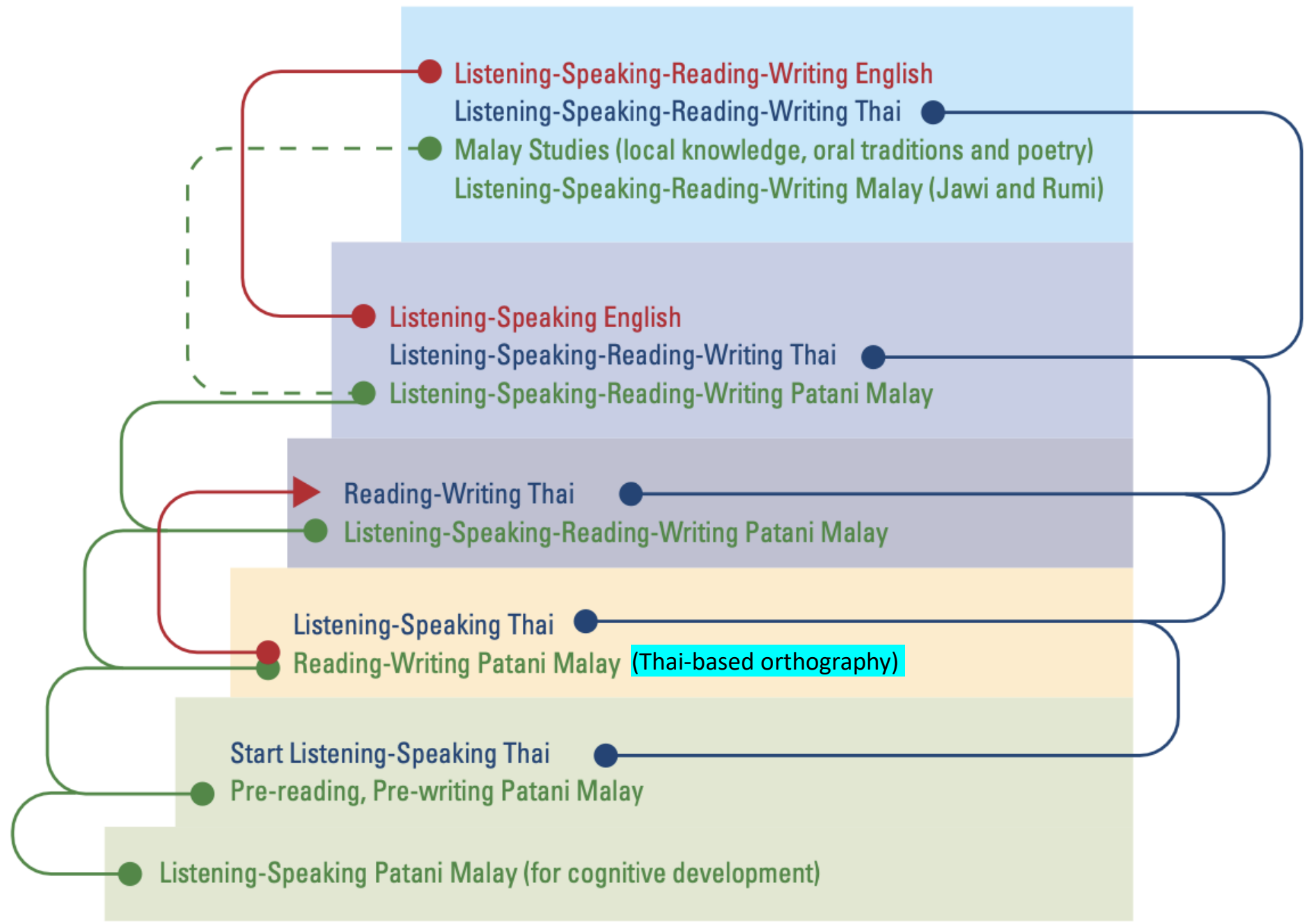


BRIDGE TO A BRIGHTER TOMORROW:
The Patani Malay-Thai Multilingual Education Programme

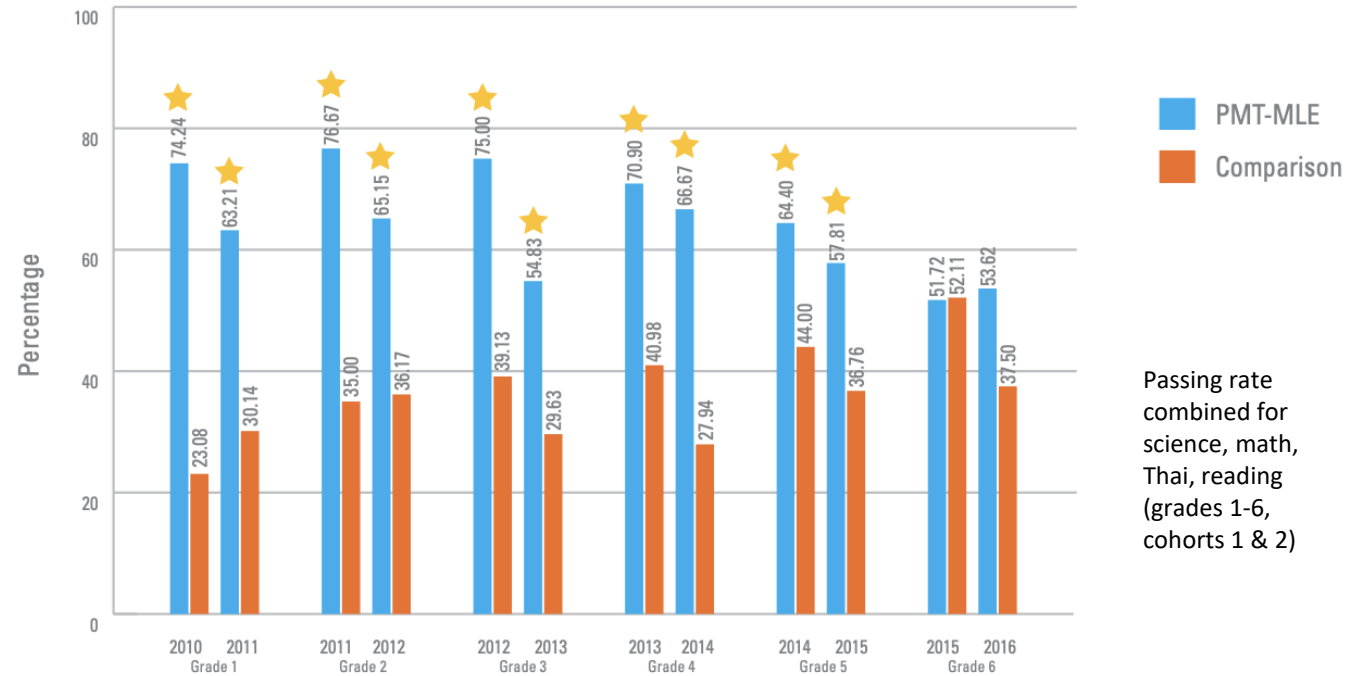
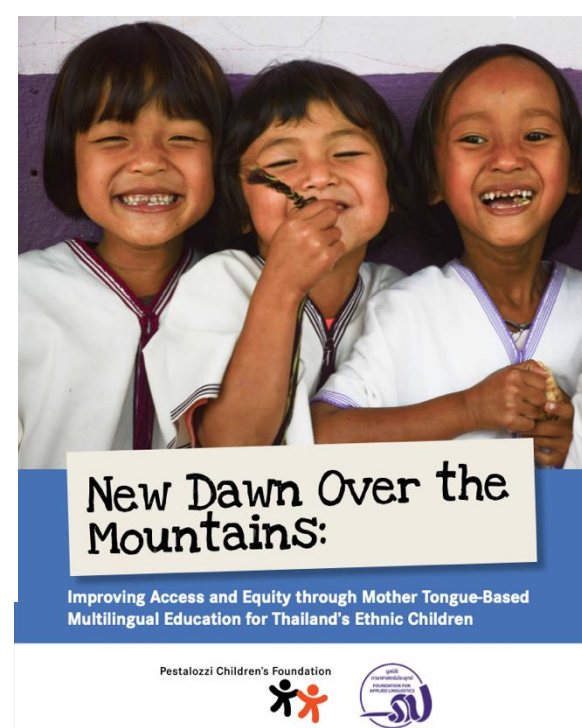
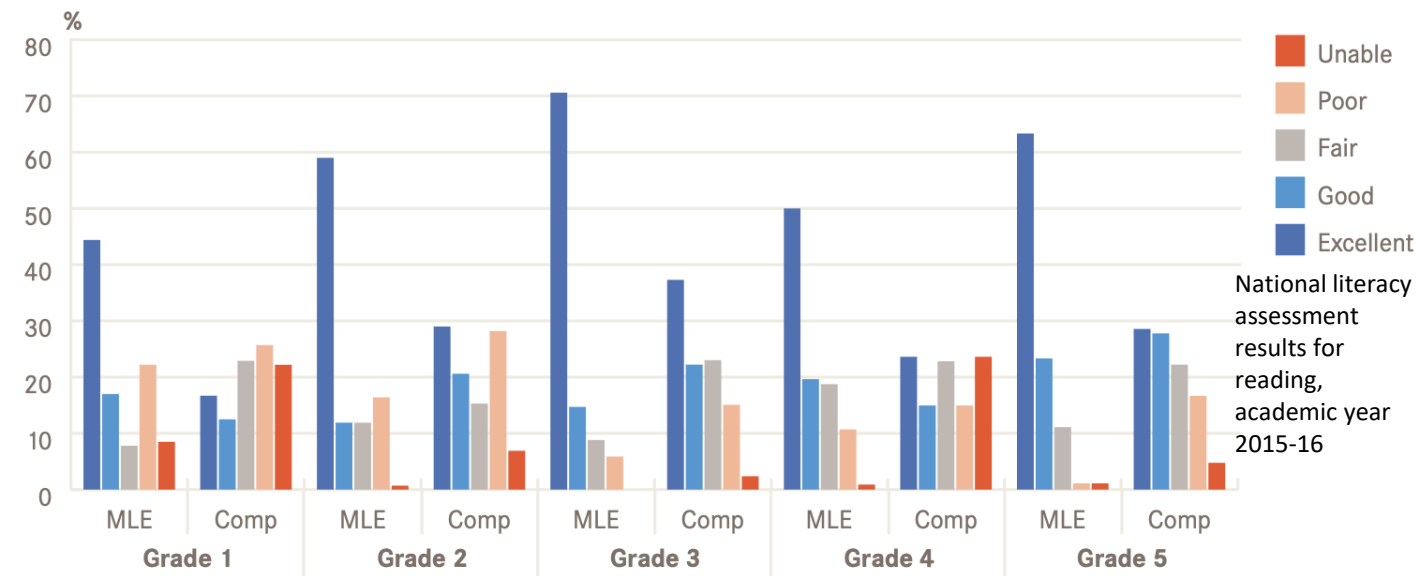
unicef for every child











Drafting the National Language Policy (NLP) (2006-2010)

Influenced by Australian National Policy on Languages (1987)

Royal Institute NLP Drafting Committee, with 6 subcommittees:

- Thai for Thai Students and Thai Nationals
- Regional Languages (including ethnic minority languages)
- Languages of Commerce, Neighboring Languages, and Working Languages
- Teaching Thai to Migrants Seeking Employment in Thailand
- Language Needs of the Visually and Hearing Impaired
- Translation, Interpretation, and Localization Standards

Multiple meetings, seminars, conferences involving academics, community members, international experts, Ministries of Culture/Education/Foreign Affairs, National Security Council

Approving the NLP

- 2010: Prime Minister Abhisit approves
- 2012: Prime Minister Yingluck approves, creates implementation planning committee
- 2012-19: Political uncertainty, sporadic work with UNICEF help on implementation plan
- 2020: Implementation planning committee forwards to the National Economic and Social Development Board (NESB); revisions
- 29 June 2021: Cabinet Approval of “National Language Policy Action Plan”
 - BUT the approval is for current 5-year plan, expiring 2022

Cabinet NLP Resolution Quotes

- “At the heart of the National Language Policy is the idea that learning development can be accomplished by promoting the study and use of the **mother tongue** as a strong foundation, linked to the study and use of the Thai language....”
- One Goal: “promoting the use of **local language(s)** in education alongside the Thai language.”
- One Indicator: “Increase in the percentage of educational institutions using [a] **local language** along with Thai language as a medium of instruction.”

Secretariat of the Cabinet. (2021) มติคณะรัฐมนตรีเรื่อง แผนปฏิบัติการด้านนโยบายภาษาแห่งชาติ (พ.ศ. 2564-2565) นร 04 (29 มิถุนายน 2564) Cabinet Resolution on the National Language Policy Action Plan (B.E. 2564-2565) Nor Ror 04 (29 June 2021)

https://resolution.soc.go.th/PDF_UPLOAD/2564/P_404048_19.pdf. Accessed September 29, 2021

Ministry of Education has also modified policies

- **National Education Plan (2017–2036):** “teaching and learning by integrating the curriculum in accordance with **local languages**, cultures, and local society...[so that] people in all ages in special areas to read and write Thai and **local languages** ...” (Office of the Education Council 2017)
- **Policy and Focus of the Ministry of Education (2020):** “[primary schools should help students learn] **local languages (mother tongues)** for communication” (MoE 2019).
- **Chiang Mai Education Sandbox Innovation Zone (2018):** Provincial education officials can choose appropriate approaches (MLE or TSL): 28 schools participating this year, 24 more applied for next year.
- ...and Royal Society has approved 10 Thai-based minority language orthographies

Model of Change + Challenges

- Change initiated by the “side” (academics, Thai NGOs, international development agencies, UNICEF) later supported from “below” (communities) and “above” (government) resulting in national policies
- Challenges:
 - Still largely driven from the sides
 - Budget availability (?)
 - Early-exit mentality (some at kindergarten 2, some at primary grade 3)
 - Teacher recruitment and training (3 universities, Equitable Education Fund)



D-MTB-MLE-TT

(Digitalized Mother Tongue Based Multilingual Education Teacher Training)

โครงการการพัฒนาหลักสูตรดิจิทัลการฝึกอบรมครู
เพื่อการจัดการศึกษาตามแนวทางทวิ/พหุภาษา
โดยใช้ภาษาแม่เป็นฐาน

Logos at the bottom: Thai Ministry of Education, Digital Education, and Pestalozzi Children's Foundation.

MoE Co-chaired Policymakers Forum → Bangkok Statement on Language and Inclusion



**The Inclusion, Mobility
and Multilingual Education
Conference**

Exploring the role of languages for
education and development

**24–26
September
Bangkok
Thailand**

Organized in partnership by:



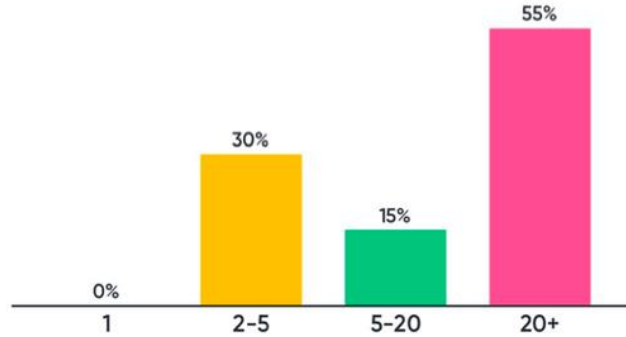
**BRITISH
COUNCIL**

Language & Development
COMMISSION 2019

You are not alone...

About how many languages or dialects are spoken in your country

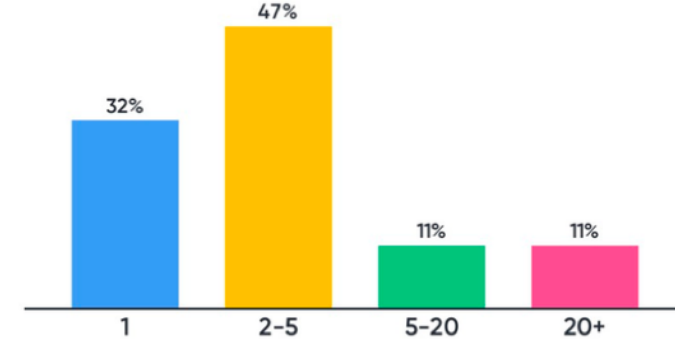
Mentimeter



20

In your country, about how many languages are officially permitted to be used in school?

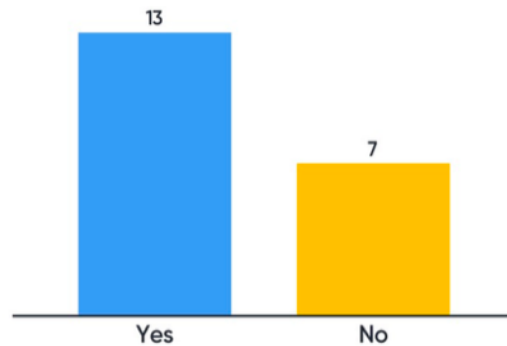
Mentimeter



19

In primary school, did you learn in your mother tongue?

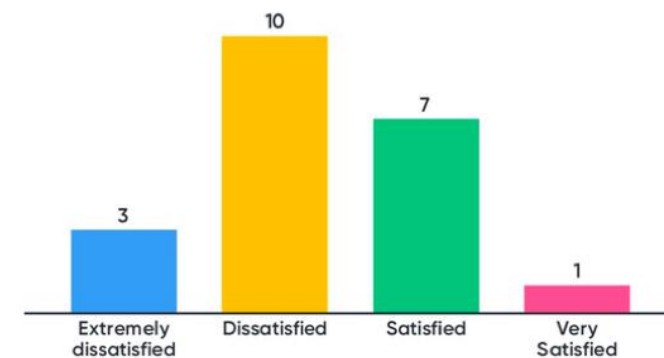
Mentimeter



20

How satisfied are you with children's English language learning in your country?

Mentimeter



21

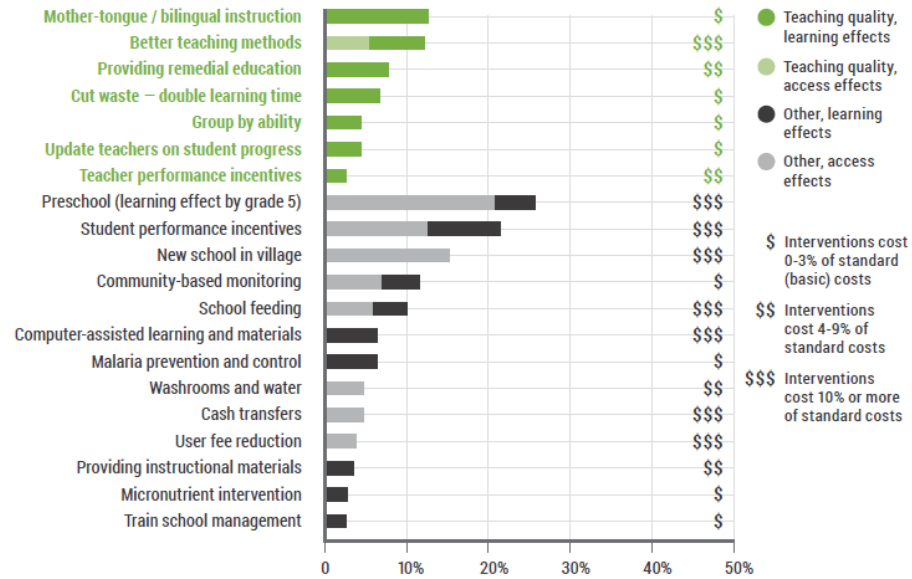
Expert input: MLE policy, statistics, pedagogy



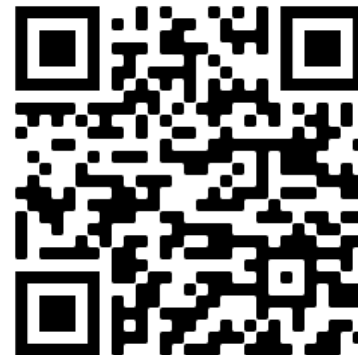
Dr. Dina Ocampo, fmr. Deputy Min. of Education, Philippines



Manuel Cardoso, UNICEF HQ



Source: Education Commission analysis (2016).¹⁸ Note: The improvements are based on a baseline of 50 percent (of enrollment, completion, or reaching learning targets) and measured as percentage points gained. The costs are estimated relative to average baseline costs – with average class size, materials, support, and salaries. The green bars pertain to those interventions that are related to teaching methods and teacher incentives, while the gray bars pertain to all other types of interventions.



Dr. Carol Benson, Columbia University

Contextualizing: these ideas are not new



Section 1: Preamble

1. We, the ministers and designated ministerial representatives of sixteen countries in Asia and the Pacific; representatives of United Nations agencies, development partners and civil society organizations; and members of research and teaching communities, gathered in Bangkok, Thailand, from 24 to 26 September 2019, to explore the role of languages for education and development.
2. **We acknowledge that the importance of language(s)-in-education policies, and multilingual education in particular, has been discussed in previous high-level meetings on education,** as reflected in but not limited to the Jomtien World Declaration on Education for All (1990), the Suzhou Conclusions (2014), the Asia-Pacific Statement on Education Beyond 2015 (2014), the Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action (2015), and the United Nation General Assembly’s challenge to “Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” (SDG 4).
3. **Further, we recognize the clear progress made in the development of multilingual education policies and practices throughout the region, including research validating this approach in Asia-Pacific and elsewhere,** as reported in previous Asia-Pacific multilingual education conferences (2003, 2008, 2010, 2013, 2016), and in policy forums convened co-currently with those conferences, beginning in 2008 and including this present gathering.

Normalizing: diversity is real & impacts learning



Section 2: Towards Evidence-based Policies

4. **Asia-Pacific is linguistically diverse.** Our region is home to 3,615 languages (more than half of the world's 7,105 languages). People from all languages and cultures are valued citizens of our respective nations, in order to “Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development” (SDG 16).
5. **Multilingualism is a reality, as well as an asset that should be fostered to benefit all.** Throughout Asia-Pacific, citizens are exposed to a variety of languages—local, regional, national, international. Proficiency in more than one language is prerequisite to decent work for the individual, and economic growth for the nation (SDG 8).
6. **Language and learning are linked.** Research demonstrates that the learning of children, youth and adults can be severely limited when they lack understanding of the language used by teachers, textbooks, and digital learning resources (SDGs 4.4, 4.6). This language gap contributes to higher dropout rates among vulnerable populations. School language policies can thus act as barriers preventing access to inclusive and equitable quality education (SDG 4), thus exacerbating social inequality (SDG 10).
7. **Policies related to language(s) of instruction impact learners at several key junctures,** including early childhood education and school readiness (SDG 4.2), the transition to primary education (SDG 4.1), and carry-through into secondary, tertiary, vocational, and lifelong education of various forms (SDG 4.4). Language policies at each level play an important role in creating a positive learning environment, while fostering enduring peace (SDG 16), gender equality (SDG 4.5), and sustainable development (SDG 4.7).

General Principles

8. **The main language of pre-primary and primary classrooms should be the one the children understand best.** In cases where children no longer actively speak the “heritage language” of older generations, the “heritage language” can be taught as a subject, with the language understood best by the children used as the main language of instruction. Parents should encourage children to maintain their home language and culture, even as they study other languages and cultures.
9. **Multilingual education does not distract from the study in and of national and international languages, but rather makes the learning of all languages more efficient.** This is supported by longitudinal research conducted in several Asia-Pacific countries and elsewhere, which has found better learning outcomes in all subjects, including the national language and international languages such as English, among children in strong multilingual education programs which included the systematic introduction of additional languages at developmentally appropriate times.
10. **Language(s)-in-education policies and practices are most effective when based on evidence.** Twenty-first century realities demand that our citizens master more knowledge and develop new skills more quickly than any previous generation. Therefore, decisions on which language to introduce when, and how each language should be taught, should be based on scientific evidence and a clear understanding of local sociolinguistic realities. This is of particular importance to learners from disadvantaged language communities, including ethnolinguistic minority and migrant populations, as well as to better-resourced learners who may be prematurely compelled into learning academic content communicated exclusively in an international language they have not yet mastered.



Section 3: Action Plan for Language(s)-in-Education Policies and Practices

11. We hereby declare our commitment to the realization of “inclusive and equitable quality education” (SDG 4) in relation to the language needs of all learners, while respecting and enhancing current policies in each country, by:
 - i. **Highlighting language(s)-of-instruction issues**, including relevant research, policies and practices, in the national education discourse.
 - ii. **Fostering investment for quality multilingual education** by strengthening financial systems to focus on effective practices, prioritizing the systematic expansion of successful multilingual education pilot programs.
 - iii. **Enhancing the quality of multilingual education** by developing clear policies, strategies and guidelines, including monitoring systems and action plans, particularly for pre- primary and primary, with the option for continued first language maintenance support through secondary, and tertiary studies, as well as adult education, even as other languages (national, international) are introduced.
 - iv. **Diversifying the teacher workforce and building teacher capacity** through clear policies, strategies and guidelines, including action plans for the recruitment and deployment of teachers who are native speakers of local languages, acknowledging that the identification of such individuals may need to begin while they are in secondary school, and that additional mentorship and support will be necessary through the teacher preparation process.
 - v. **Gathering data disaggregated by home or first language**, correlated to the school attendance and learning outcomes of primary-aged children (SDG thematic indicator 4.5.2).
 - vi. **Strengthening partnerships with relevant stakeholders and partners**, including parents, local communities, non-state actors, academics, the Asia Pacific Multilingual Education Working Group, and international development organizations, to develop pedagogically sound multilingual education programs, supported by well-trained teachers and quality learning materials in all relevant languages.
 - vii. **Preparing national progress reports** for future Asia-Pacific Multilingual Education Working Group conferences, to be held every three years throughout the 2030 agenda. Additionally, we will encourage our respective governments to track developments in language(s)-in-education issues, including progress on thematic indicator 4.5.2, in future Voluntary National Reports and regional ministerial-level meetings.

Conclusions

Bangkok Statement

- Focused on quality education for all children (not rights *per se*)
- Useful advocacy tool (Malay translation available)
- UNESCO will invite high-level delegates to the Second Asia-Pacific Regional Education Ministerial Conference (APREMC-II--2022) to endorse → ?MLE advocates talk to policy makers beforehand?

Thailand

- National Language Policy Action Plan (2021-22) and recent MOE documents give space for NGOs and local schools to initiate MLE programs
- Strengthening teacher recruitment, training and deployment will be vital to long term MLE success
- Malaysian interest in Thai/Cambodian/Philippines MLE helps everyone!

ขอบคุณ ครับ *Terima kasih* 謝謝你 நன்றி