

States of Learning Experiences for Preschool Children Using Thai as a Second Language and Tendency of Bilingual Multimedia Development: A Case Study of Three Southern Border Provinces of Thailand

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Abstract. The three southern border provinces of Thailand have a cultural identity different from other parts. Most of these people use the Pattani Malay language in everyday life that has an effect on learning their achievement of all subjects which use Thai as a major language. Therefore, the objectives of this research are to study the states of learning experiences and the tendency of bilingual multimedia development for preschool children who use Thai as a second language in the three southern border provinces of Thailand. The instrument used is the questionnaire. The total samples are 511 participants which include 139 academic administrators and 372 early childhood teachers. The results found that there was no significant difference in learning experiences for preschool children who use Thai as a second language in all of 9 primary educational service areas in those three provinces. Also, it demonstrated that all of the selected sites have 3 major problems in common in terms of learning experiences for preschool children who use Thai as a second language: 1) Most of the students lack Thai language skills; 2) Some teachers have no educational background in early childhood curriculum; and 3) the deficiency of bilingual media in schools. In addition, there is no significant difference between administrators and early childhood teachers in the tendency of bilingual multimedia developments. They pointed out that the accuracy of both the Thai and Pattani Malay languages used in bilingual multimedia is the most important concern, and the design of multimedia should be fit with children's learning development and comply with the Thai Early Childhood Education Curriculum of 2003. According to this, it would suggest that training programs in bilingual learning experiences should be provided to all teachers in those provinces especially those have no background in early childhood education. Most importantly, the support from the government and related parties is critical for developing the proper bilingual multimedia. Finally, the implications for future research and study are discussed.

Keywords: Learning Experience, Preschool Children, Second Language Learning, Bilingual Multimedia

1. Introduction

Three southern border provinces, along the border between Thai and Malaysia, have cultural identity different from the other parts of Thailand. Eighty three percent of people in this area use the Pattani Malay language in their everyday life [1]. Pattani Malay language is one of the dialects which are influenced by the Malaysian language [2]. However, the official language used in schools is the Thai language. As a result, those students will face difficulty with learning content taught in schools because of their poor ability in using the Thai language. Besides this, the instruction that is not compatible with their way of life and traditions which may cause educational problems [3] as well. From [1], it was found that children's learning achievement is below the Thai standard level and, most importantly, it is the lowest score in the country. It

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can be said that up until now the educational level in those areas has not been satisfactory. As mentioned, the Office of the Education Council [4] has realized this significant issue and, therefore, they have launched the Education Plan in Specific Southern Region in 2009-2012 to integrate the local culture into the curriculum development. For example, they have combined Pattani Malay language into the instruction to serve the locals' needs and reflect the importance of local cultures [3]. Therefore, the Office of the Education Council also supports the using educational media, innovation, and technology in those areas and expects that it may develop a higher local educational quality [4]. Moreover, the growth of technology, such as the internet and computers, has had a focal effect on our living. Several types of computer software are widely used for young children both at home and school [5]. Educators and researchers agree that computer software especially multimedia can be a powerful educational tool for promoting young children's literacy and language outcomes [6][7][8].

Therefore, in this study we would like to know the states of learning experiences for preschool bilingual children in the three southern border provinces of Thailand, and the tendency of bilingual (Thai - Pattani Malay) multimedia development to promote Thai as a second language.

The hypotheses of this study are:

- States of learning experiences for the preschool children have no differences in all of 9 primary educational service areas in the three southern border provinces of Thailand.
- Both academic administrators and early childhood teachers in those three provinces have consistent views of the tendency of bilingual multimedia developments.

2. Method

2.1. Participants

This study is a survey research and the total samples are 511 academic administrators (n=139) and early childhood teachers (n=372). Stratified Sampling is used in this study classified as 9 primary educational service areas in three southern border provinces: Yala Province (area1 n=53, area2 n=42 and area3 n=27), Pattani Province (area1 n=87, area2 n=68 and area3 n=72) and Narathiwat Province (area1 n=45, area2 n=67 and area3 n=50).

2.2. Instrument

The instrument used in this study is a questionnaire that included 3 parts; the first part is a checked list for the general information of the samples, the second part is a 5 likert rating scale (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4 = agree and 5 = strongly agree) to ask about states of learning experiences for the preschool children and the tendency of bilingual multimedia development and the third part is an open-ended question (optional) for additional views and suggestions. The reliability value of the try out (n=30) is $\alpha = 0.89$ by Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient.

3. Results

Table 1: The states of learning experiences for preschool children who use Thai as a second language divided by primary educational service areas

Opinion	Primary Educational Service Areas																		df	f	p
	Yala Province						Pattani Province						Narathiwat Province								
	area1		area2		area3		area1		area2		area3		area1		area2		area3				
	(n=53)		(n=42)		(n=27)		(n=87)		(n=68)		(n=72)		(n=45)		(n=67)		(n=50)				
X	S.D.	X	S.D.	X	S.D.	X	S.D.	X	S.D.	X	S.D.	X	S.D.	X	S.D.	X	S.D.				
States Learning Experiences for the Preschool Children using Thai as Second Language	3.70	0.42	3.77	0.29	3.75	0.27	3.65	0.27	3.66	0.27	3.69	0.30	3.66	0.40	3.59	0.35	3.60	0.39	8	1.52	0.15

A value of 0.05 significance in statistics

According to Table 1, the result showed that there are no differences in all of the 9 primary educational service areas with statistical significance at the level of 0.05 (p-value = 0.15).

In addition, 3 major problems in common in terms of learning experiences for the preschool children using Thai as a second language are 1) Most of the children lack Thai language skills. 2) Some teachers have no educational background in early childhood curriculums. 3) The deficiency of bilingual media in schools.

Table 2: the tendency of bilingual multimedia development is divided by participants.

Participants	n	\bar{X}	S.D.	t	p
Administrators	139	4.46	0.46	0.82	0.41
Early childhood teachers	372	4.42	0.46		

A value of 0.05 significance in statistics

According to Table 2, the result revealed that there is no significant difference between administrators and early childhood teachers at the level of 0.05 (p-value = 0.41).

In addition, both academic administrators and early childhood teachers pointed out that the accuracy of both the Thai and Pattani Malay languages used in bilingual multimedia is the most important concern, and the multimedia design should be fit with the children's learning development and comply with the Thai Early Childhood Education Curriculum of 2003.

The conclusion with additional views and suggestions is as follows:

- For students having trouble communicating in the Thai language learning speed can be very slow. Teachers have to translate content into Pattani Malay and provide interesting media for educating the students.
- Provide a reference guide of bilingual materials for teachers to use effectively.
- The parents should be involved in bilingual learning experiences of their children.
- Promote innovative media to encourage young children to love learning and have fun.
- The bilingual media should be suitable for the applications in school.
- Training programs in bilingual learning experiences should be provided to the local preschool teachers, especially for teachers that have no experience in bilingual education and the professional supervision should follow up on their progress and results.

4. Discussion

Two results emerged from our research. First, there is no significant difference in learning experiences for the preschool children who use Thai as a second language in all of 9 primary educational service areas in the three southern border provinces of Thailand. We found that there were 3 major problems in common in terms of learning experiences: 1) most students lack Thai language skills, and for that reason, any learning experiences provided cannot be successful. Therefore, it is urgent to increase the students' Thai language skills as soon as possible by promoting the second language skills to those children, especially in early childhood [9]. The extant research has shown that young children will develop the second language skills by transferring their mother language to gain the second language skills [10]. 2) Some teachers have no background in early childhood education and some teachers have been assigned to teach subjects that they not familiar with. This is because of the shortage of teachers in the southern provinces. This situation will affect the efficiency of the children's learning experiences [11]. 3) The deficiency of Thai – Pattani Malay bilingual media affects the learning experiences. This is because the Thai – Pattani Malay bilingual media is very specific for ethnic minority children [2]. Therefore, availability of this type of media produced by local teachers is limited. The media producers also might not have language teaching skills and might not be able to create proper media for those children.

Second, as expected, there is no significant difference between administrators and early childhood teachers of the tendency of bilingual multimedia developments. The results show that the accuracy of both Thai and Pattani Malay language used in bilingual multimedia is the most important factor, and the design of multimedia should fit with children's learning development and comply with the Thai Early Childhood Education Curriculum in 2003. It should be taken that bilingual multimedia should have the concepts of the

culture, language, and values of bilingual children [12]. So, it is necessary for educators to select the appropriate multimedia or to develop quality multimedia to promote the second language skills for the ethnic minority children.

According to the current study, we would suggest that training programs in bilingual learning experiences should be provided to all teachers in these provinces especially for those teachers who have no background in early childhood education. Most importantly, the support from the government and related parties is really needed for developing the proper bilingual multimedia. For future study, bilingual multimedia development will be designed to integrate with the ways of life, the identity of language and cultural links into the knowledge for those ethnic minority children. If young ethnic minority children have good skills in the official language, it may help them be ready for primary school in the future.

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6. References

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