



*The Royal Institute and
Thailand's new national
language policy: A work
in progress*

*Kirk R. Person, Ph.D.
Committee to Draft the
National Language Policy
Royal Institute of Thailand
& SIL International*

Searching for an Explicit Language Policy...

- 24 June 1940 Field Marshal Plaek Pibunsongkram declares Thai the national language (State Convention #9).
- Language status not mentioned in Thai constitution
- Practice



Does Thailand Need a Language Policy?

- May 2006: First World Congress on the Power of Language (Bangkok): Dr. Prasert Na Nagara, Dr. Udom Warotamasikkhadit (Royal Institute); Dr. Susan Malone, Dr. Dennis Malone, Dr. Kimmo Kosonen (SIL International)
- Additional consultations with Thai and international scholars (Spolsky, Tollefson, Bradley, Lo Bianco)
- December 2006: Committee to Draft the National Language Policy commissioned, under the Royal Institute

Committee to Draft the NLP

- “How can this resource of language be developed to benefit the country as a whole, as well as individuals within the country?”
 - Influenced by outlook of *Australian National Policy on Languages (1987)*
- 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


Activities

- Committee & Subcommittee Meetings
- Public Forums involving stakeholders (government ministries, NGOs, businesspeople, professional translators, ethnic minorities, United Nations agencies etc.)
 - Radio, Internet TV broadcasts
- International Conferences (in cooperation with UN Agencies, SIL International, others)

The Royal Institute - Thailand

http://www.royin.go.th/th/news/news-content.php?ID=300

Devotions for kids. lo carb ice cream JAARS Our Daily Bread AMEX e-Cards Nation United Mil BangkokPost Google WRR ECCU CNN.com



ราชบัณฑิตยสถาน
The Royal Institute

ร. "เพลินภาษา ๘ นาที" ทางคลื่น ๙๖.๕ MHz. ทุกวันจันทร์-ศุกร์ เวลา ๐๗.๐๐ น. + รายการ "ภาษาน่ารู้กับ"

◆ หน้าหลัก ◆ พจนานุกรม ◆ ศัพท์บัญญัติวิชาการ ◆ รู้รักภาษาไทย ◆ คลังความรู้ ◆ สิ่งพิมพ์ ◆ กระดานสนทนา ◆ ภาพ-สื่อ

◆ ข้อมูลหน่วยงาน

◆ ข่าวประชาสัมพันธ์

◆ ข่าวการจัดซื้อจัดจ้าง

◆ สรุปผลการสัมมนา ฯลฯ

◆ ข้อมูลข่าวสารทางราชการ

◆ คำถามที่ถามบ่อย (FAQ)

◆ E-Book

◆ ติดต่อเรา

◆ สมุดเยี่ยม

◆ รวมถึงที่น่าสนใจ

◆ คลังความรู้

◆ ข่าวประชาสัมพันธ์

◆ The International Conference on National Language Policy (Latest Information)



The International Conference
"National Language Policy: Language Diversity for National Unity"
July 4-5 2008, Bangkok, Thailand

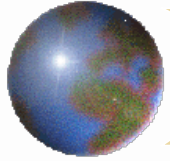
Call for Papers

National Language Policy

The Series of Research Questions

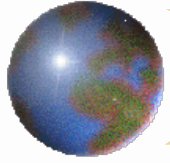
Conference Registration Form



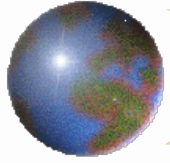
Thai for Thai Students and Thai Nationals

- ✦ Probably the “easiest” policy point, as it fits naturally into the traditional role of the Royal Institute



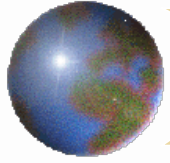
Findings

- ⊕ The Thai language will need continued development to mitigate impact of globalization
- ⊕ National test scores for the Thai subject go down every year, and many students report Thai as their “least favorite” subject.
 - ⊞ New approaches to teaching Thai are needed!
- ⊕ Trend for middle-upper class students to attend international and bilingual schools --> inadequate Thai language skills
- ⊕ Additional support for overseas Thai needed



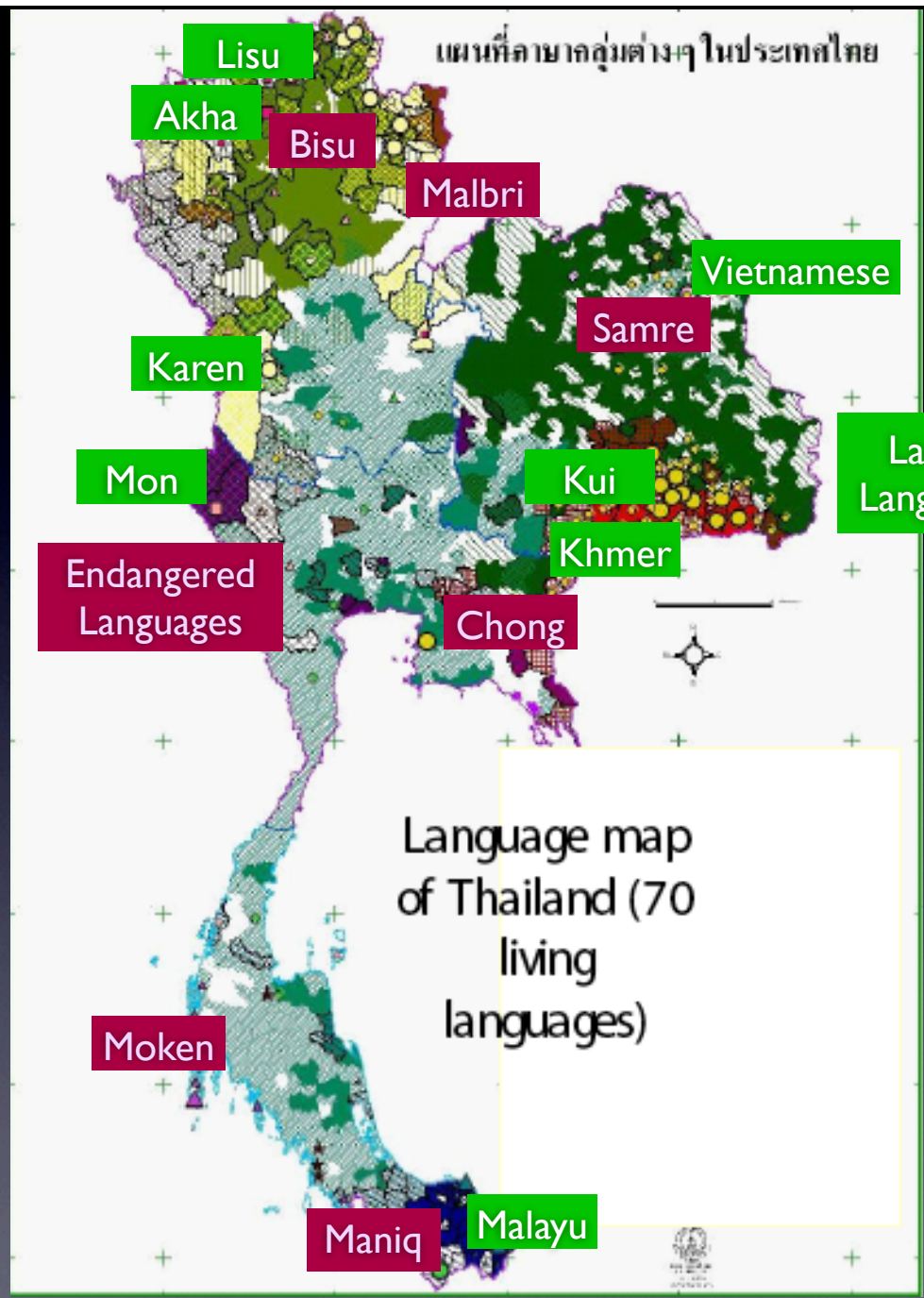
Policy Statement

- ✦ "Every Thai citizen will effectively learn and use the Thai language, which is the national and official language."



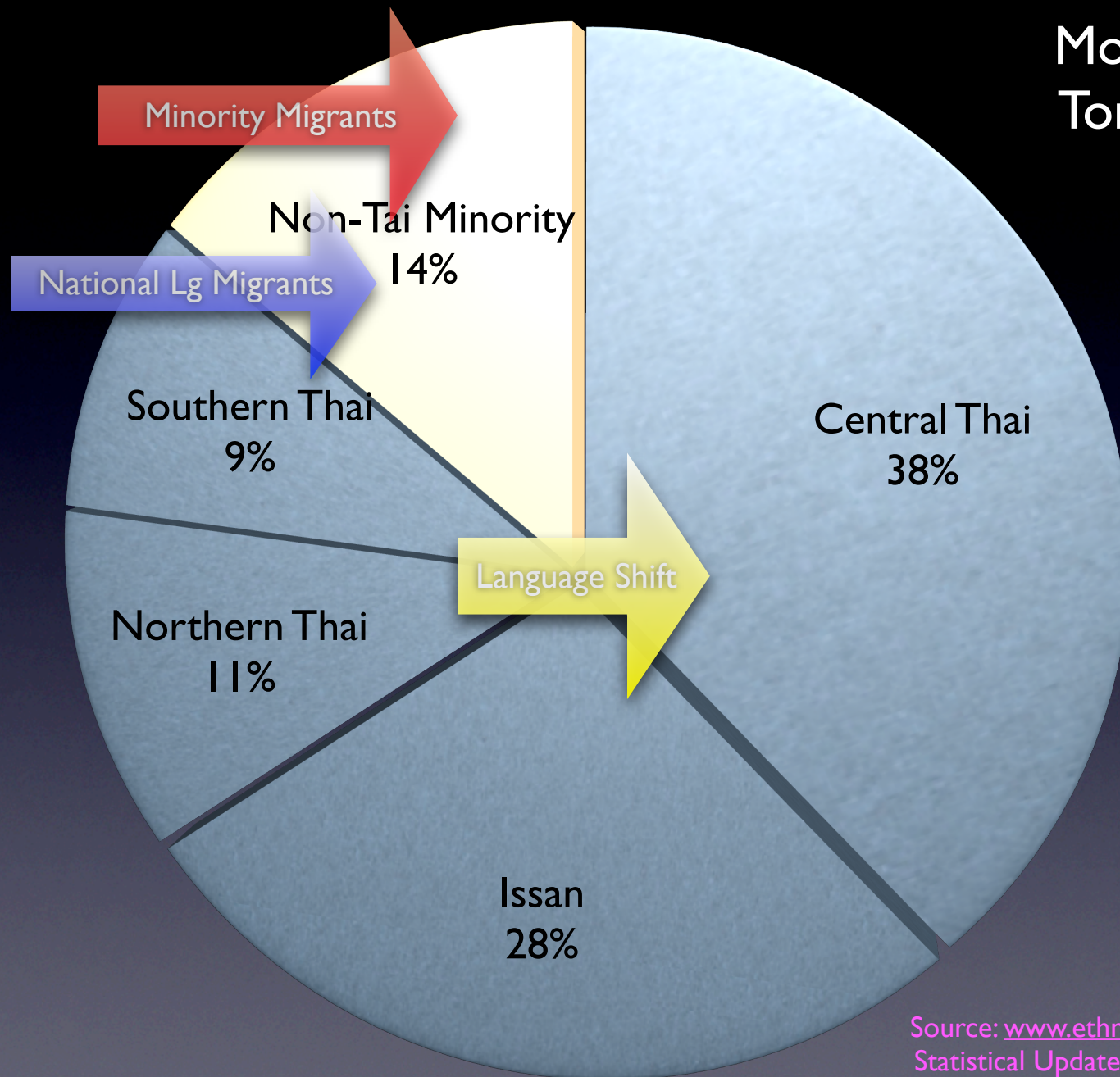
Regional/Ethnic Minority Languages

- ✦ Probably the most controversial policy point, due to language beliefs: “everyone speaks Thai” and “one nation=one language”



Source: Language Map of Thailand, Mahidol University

Mother Tongue

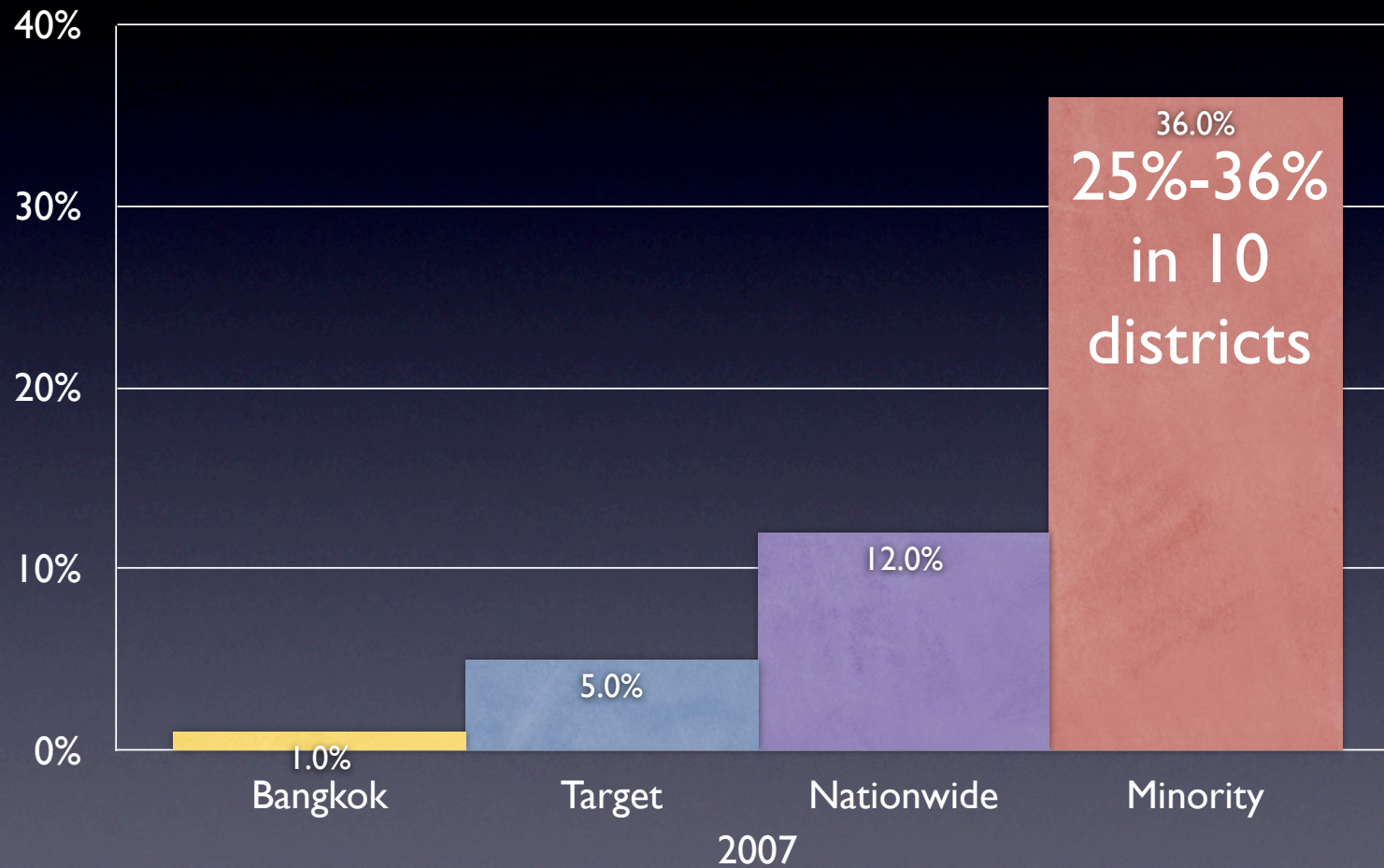


Source: www.ethnologue.com
Statistical Update in Progress

- School performance of children speaking non-Thai languages have lowest school performance, highest drop-out rates.
- 2006 Controversy: 400,000-1.2 million migrant/minority children are not in school (MOE and UNESCO)
 - MOE taking steps to correct the issue
 - World Bank: 50% of world's out-of-school children do not speak the school language

Thailand: 98% literacy rate?
Not everywhere!

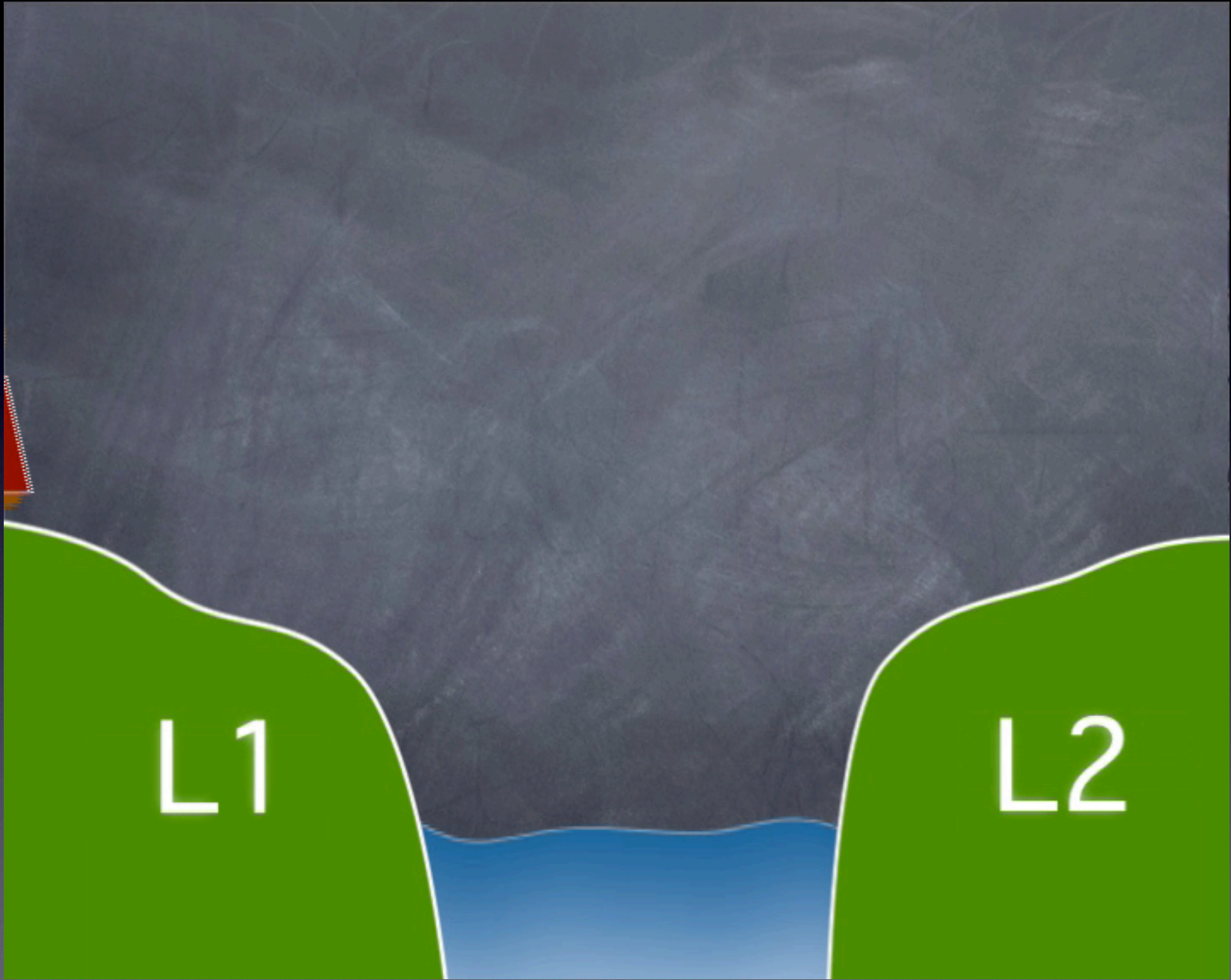
Second Grade Illiteracy in Thailand (2007)

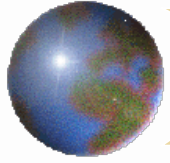


Source: *The Nation* July 9, 2007

Dr. Ko Chi Tung. UNESCO Institute of Statistics: “During the past 30 years, many initiatives for literacy, health, and economic development, have been launched. However...they have not always been as successful as was hoped. We now realize that this has been especially true among ethnic minority groups—people who often have very little understanding of the national language...In order to meet their Millennium Development Goals therefore, many countries must bridge the language gap.”

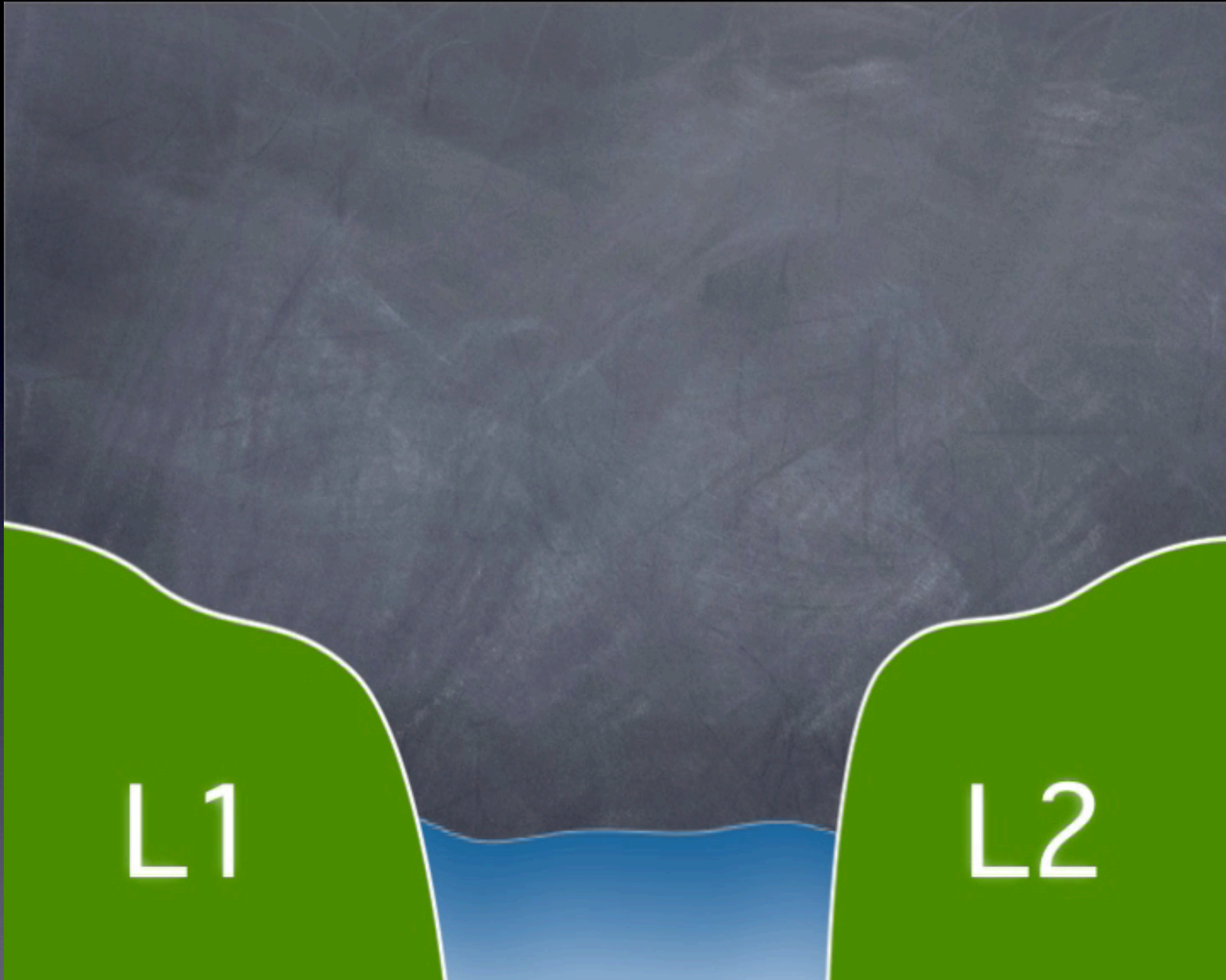






Key Policy Recommendations

- ✦ Language revitalization projects in endangered languages
- ✦ Mother-Tongue First, Multilingual Education (MLE) in larger groups where suitable
 - ✦ Children (and illiterate adults!) learn to read and write their mother tongue first, then learn the national language.

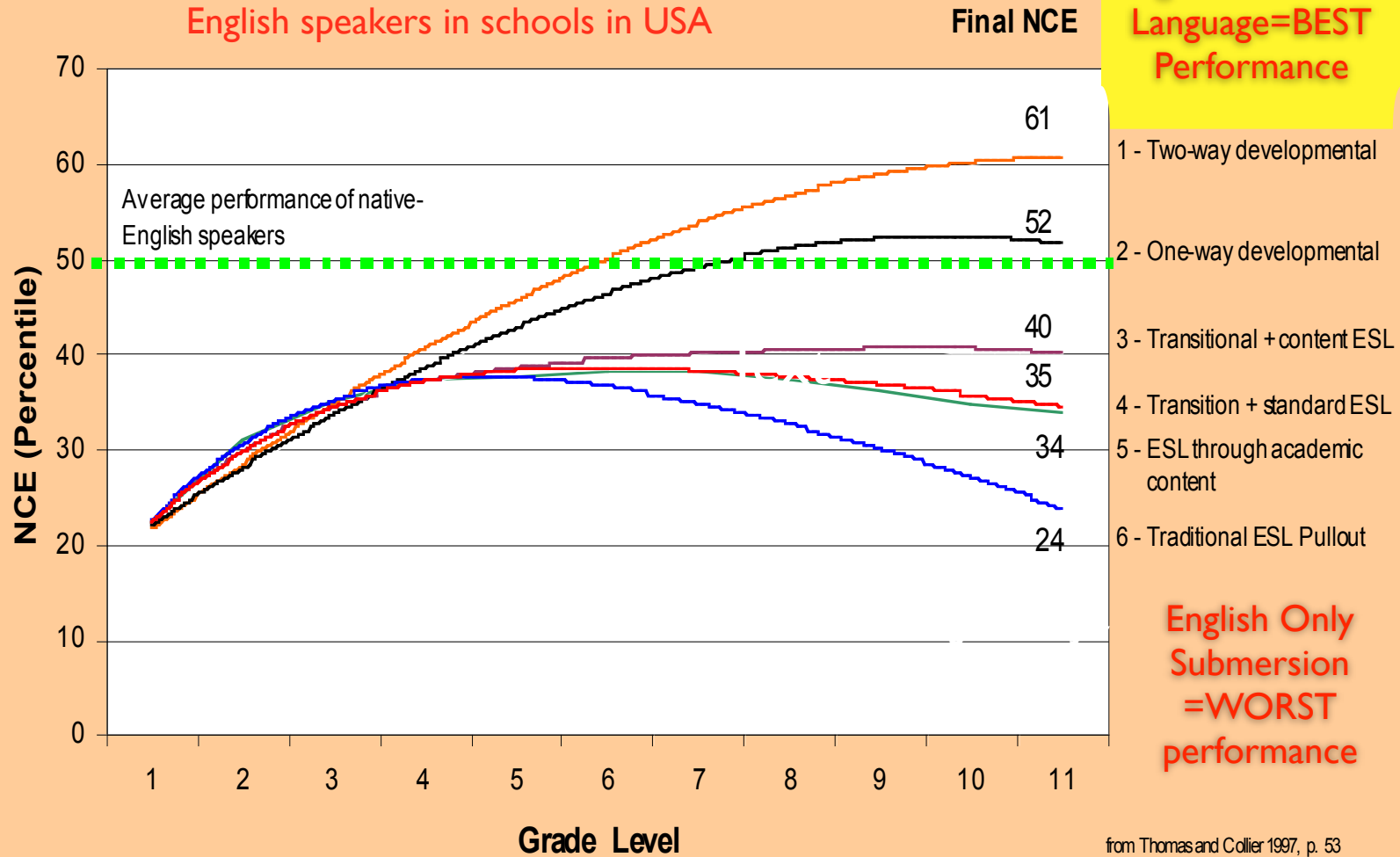


MLE Language Bridge

K1	K2	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6
Build L1 Listening, Speaking Skills LOI=L1	Continue L1 Listening, Speaking Skills Begin L1 Reading, Writing LOI=L1	Continue L1 Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing LOI=L1	Continue L1 Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing LOI=L1	Continue L1 Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing LOI for some subjects	Build capacity in oral and written L1; L1 as LOI most subjects	LOI some subjects	LOI some subjects
				L2 as Second Language: Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing LOI for some subjects			
L2 Songs	L2 Songs, TPR	L2 as Second Language: Listening and Speaking	L2 as Second Language: Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing	L3 Listening, Speaking	L3 Reading, Writing	Continue	Continue

Bilingual Programs - Comparison of Achievement on Standardized Tests

Longitudinal Study of 42,000 non-native English speakers in schools in USA



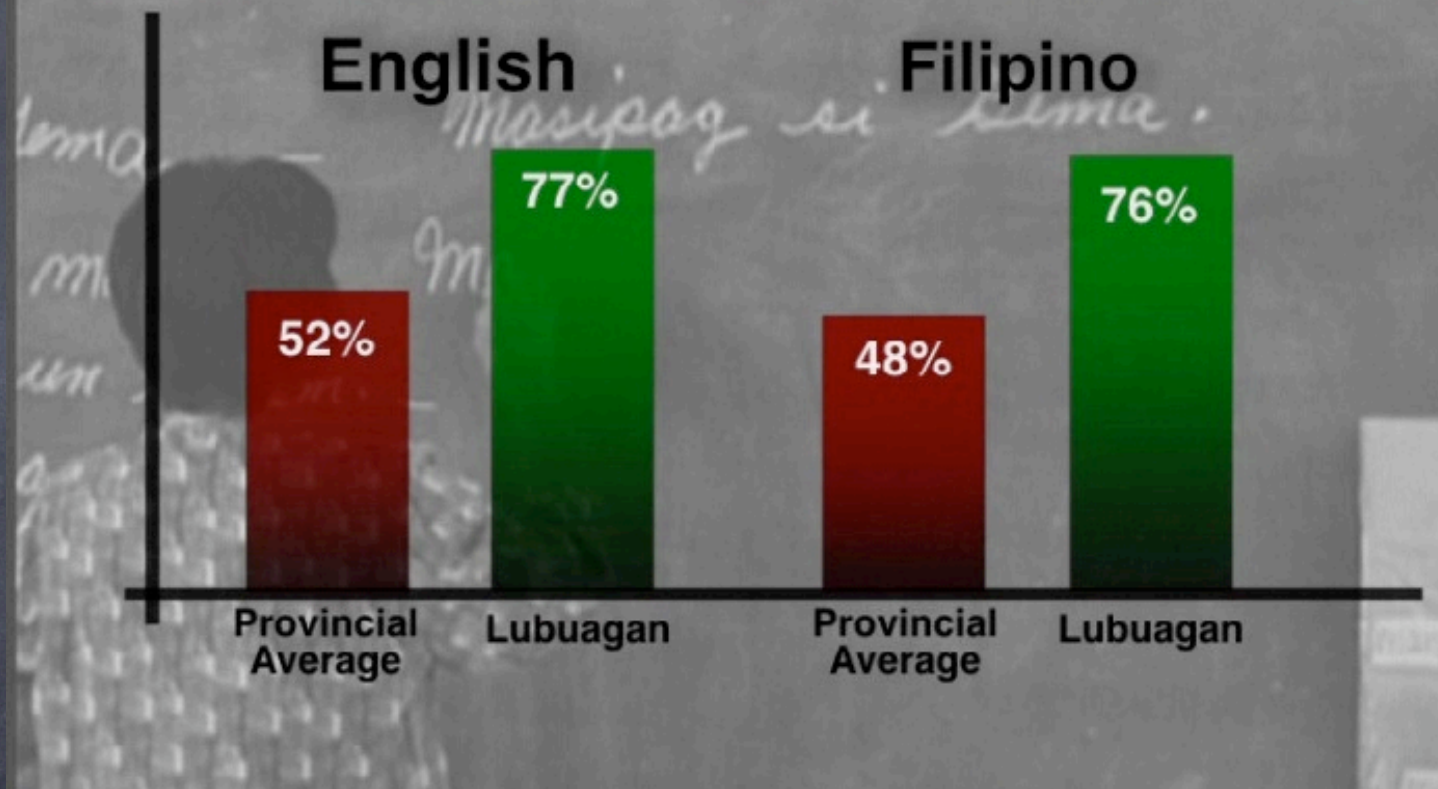
Mother tongue + English as Second Language=BEST Performance

Time spent in mother tongue classes ↑

English Only Submersion =WORST performance

from Thomas and Collier 1997, p. 53

2006 NAT Grade 3 Reading Tests - Kalinga



Ethnic Minority Children in the “First Language Component” Multilingual Education (MLE) Program in the Lubuagan Language Outperform non-MLE Children on the Grade 3 National Exam.

Source: Department of Education, Republic of the Philippines and SIL International

MLE in Thailand...

- Languages: Hmong, Mon, Pwo Karen, Malayu, Thai Khmer
- Main Actors: Local Communities, Mahidol University, Foundation for Applied Linguistics, SIL International, UNICEF, Ministry of Education (formal and non-formal systems)
- Early results show:
 - Improved attendance
 - Increased enjoyment of school
 - Improved academic performance (40% higher Thai scores in South!)



23 June 2005

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UNESCO urges teaching from earliest age in indigenous mother languages



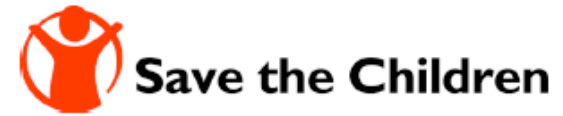
20 February 2004 – With an average of two indigenous languages dying out every month, the United Nations cultural agency has called for national education systems to teach children in mother tongues from the earliest age as a means both of stimulating learning ability and preserving the world's rich heritage of linguistic diversity.

"It is widely acknowledged nowadays that teaching in both the mother tongue and the official national language helps children to obtain better results and stimulates their cognitive development and capacity to learn," the Director-General of the UN Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization ([UNESCO](#)) Koïchiro Matsuura, said in a message for International Mother Language Day, which is celebrated on 21 February.

UNESCO's General Conference 1999 proclaimed the Day in recognition of the importance of the world's linguistic diversity and to promote mother tongue languages. But a survey being undertaken by the agency indicates that although the use of mother languages as a medium of instruction is gaining ground, few countries have incorporated the idea into their education systems.

The study shows that India is one of the world leaders in the development of multilingual education systems, with about 80 languages being used to teach children at different levels of schooling. But across Africa, where an estimated 2,011 languages are spoken, the languages of the former colonial powers - English, French, Spanish and Portuguese - still dominate education systems. A similar situation prevails in Latin America.

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**An International Conference on:
Language, Education and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)**
November 9-11, 2010 * Bangkok, Thailand

3rd Announcement & Call for Papers

An international conference on “Language, Education and the Millennium Development Goals” will be held November 9-11 in Bangkok, Thailand sponsored by a consortium of organizations from the Asia Multilingual Education Working Group, including: UNESCO, UNICEF, SEAMEO, Mahidol University, SIL International, Save the Children, CARE, Asia Pacific Basic and Adult Education, Asia Institute of Technology and the Royal Thai Institute.

Promoting Mother Tongue-based Multilingual Education



Multilingual Education
Channel (YouTube)

Resources from UNESCO-Bangkok

MLE Toolkit: Information for Policy Makers,
Implementers, and Communities

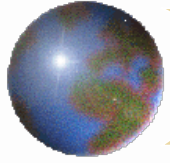
The cover features a red top half with white text and a green bottom half with a white wave-like pattern.	The cover shows a group of people in traditional attire against a purple background.	The cover has a blue background with a photo of two girls looking at a book.	The cover features a photo of a woman in traditional dress against a green background.
Mother Tongue-based Teaching and Education for Girls (2005)	First Language First: Community-based Literacy Programmes for Minority Language Contexts in Asia (2006)	Girls, Educational Equity and Mother Tongue-based Teaching (2005)	Manual for Developing Literacy and Adult Education Programmes in Minority Language Communities (2004)

Free Downloads from
www2.unescobkk.org/elib/publications



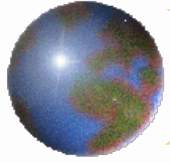
Areas for Research

- School performance by ethnic group
- 2010 Census results and language (first time since 1960 there has been a language question!)
- How differences in phonetics, phonology, and grammar impact minority students' learning of Thai



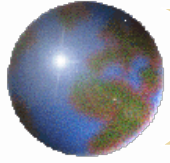
Languages of Commerce, Neighboring Languages, and Working Languages

- ✦ English in paramount position, with Chinese gaining in importance, alongside Japanese and Korean
- ✦ Trade with neighboring countries increasing



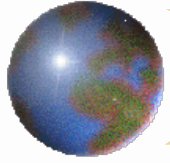
English Concerns

- ⊕ Thai children study English starting in grade 1, yet English levels remain low
- ⊕ Increasing numbers of middle-upper class children attending “bilingual” and “international” schools
 - ⊠ Questions about quality of some such--“Illiterate in 2 languages”
 - ⊠ British Council: warning that too much English too soon can be worthless or even damaging
- ⊕ Detailed research required to determine best approaches



October 2010 English Controversy

- ✚ Minister of Education declared he would...
 - ✚ Make English the official “second language” of Thailand effective 22 October 2010
 - ✚ Import thousands of native-speaker teachers
 - ✚ Teach high school math and science in English
- ✚ Storm of protest
 - ✚ Policy Lessons
 - Simplistic “solutions” are dangerous
 - Language specialists need to speak against “language myths” (such as “submersion is the best method,” “native speakers are the best teachers,” etc.)



But...

- ✚ English is not the only language Thailand needs

Chiang
Saen
Port







North-South Corridor

Chiang Khong Bridge 2011

Western Corridor (proposed)



Kunming-Hanoi



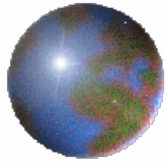




East-West Corridor
(Japan, S Korea)



Southern Corridor



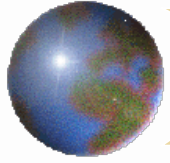
Thailand's resources?

- ✦ Most Thais are not interested in studying these languages (but neighbors are studying Thai!)
- ✦ 40-50,000 ethnic Vietnamese in Northeast Thailand (since 1940s)
- ✦ Nearly 1 million Thai-Khmer speakers



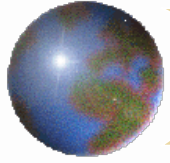
- ❑ Heritage language classes to maintain language, special "Vietnamese/Cambodian for Business" classes
- ❑ Produce translators, as well as business workers





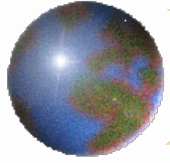
Other language resources...

- ✦ Burmese migrants
- ✦ Malayu language/culture a resource for trade with Indonesia
- ✦ Muslims who speak Arabic=bridge to Arab world
- ✦ Lahu in Thailand and western Yunnan
 - ▣ Therefore, linguistic diversity can be seen as a national resource, not a problem!

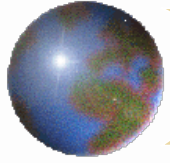


Policy Statement

- ✦ “The government shall encourage the populace to attain abilities in the use of important languages, including such official and national languages that offer occupational benefits.”

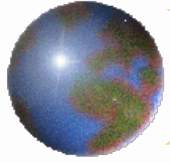


Translation, Interpretation, and Localization



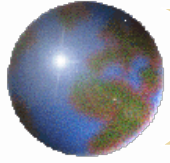
Findings...

- ✚ Thailand's strategic position as "crossroads of Southeast Asia"
 - ✚ MICE Industry (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, Events_
 - ✚ UN Agencies (3000-4000 people)
 - ✚ International Businesses
 - ✚ Machine translation



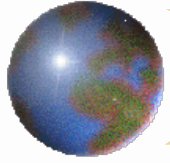
Issues to Address...

- ❖ No standards or certification system for professional translators
- ❖ Few university translation programs
- ❖ Labor laws discourage international translation professionals/businesses
 - ❖ Ministry of Public Health frustrated in efforts to hire Burmese, Mon translators/interpreters
 - ❖ Hilltribe, migrant communities at high risk for starting epidemics



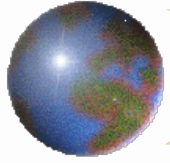
Court Interpreters

- ✦ Currently no right to have a court interpreter (for Thais or foreigners!), although can be requested
- ✦ Activists claim some ethnic minorities in prison (up to 80%?) because of language barrier
- ✦ ASEAN 2011 meetings called attention to need for translators/interpreters to fight human trafficking



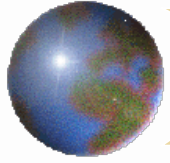
Teaching Thai to Migrants Seeking Employment in Thailand

- ⊕ Least active subcommittee
- ⊕ 1-2 million legal and illegal migrants working in Thailand--most from Myanmar
- ⊕ Office of the Non-Formal Education Commission has begun offering classes



Visually and Hearing Impaired

- ❖ Strong rights-based policies already in place
- ❖ Emphasis on equal access to information



Policy Statement

- ✦ "The government shall ensure that people with disabilities are able to access and understand the media."

Policy Status

- 7 February 2010: Prime Minister approved policy, ordered formation of a strategic implementation committee (to begin meeting October 2011)
- National Economic and Social Development Board will include some points in next 5-year plan
- National Security Council head, Army chief supportive

จึงเรียนมาเพื่อโปรดพิจารณา หากเห็นชอบขอได้โปรดสั่งการให้ราชบัณฑิตยสถาน
ดำเนินการจัดทำแผนยุทธศาสตร์ตามนโยบายภาษาแห่งชาติต่อไป.

กนกนที ชูชัยยะ

(นางสาวกนกนที ชูชัยยะ)
เลขาธิการราชบัณฑิตยสถาน

จินตนา



(นายอภิสิทธิ์ เวชชาชีวะ)
นายกรัฐมนตรี

Video of PM's Speech

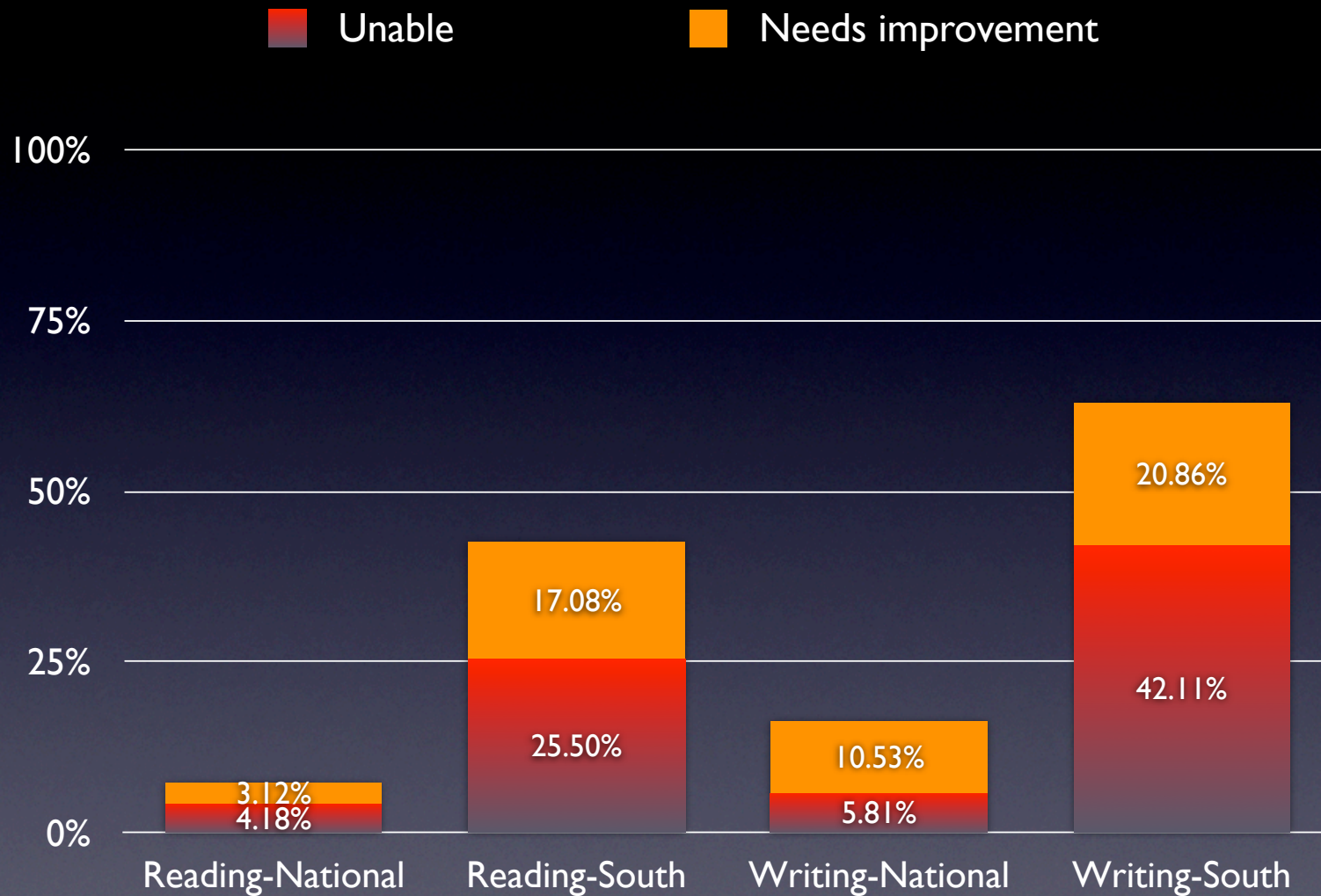
Please Help!

- Become informed of the issues
- Consider doing research/assigning thesis topics related to language policy issues
- Defeat the language myths!

ขอบคุณครับ



Grade 3 Thai Reading /Writing Abilities in South (2008)



Source: *Bangkok Post* October 3, 2010