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'The big ones swallow the small ones.' Or do they? The language policy and practice of ethnic minority education in the Lao PDR: A case study from Nalae.

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of The Australian National University

by

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Acknowledgements

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Angela Rose Cincotta
1/6/2009
For my parents, who gave me what it took.
Abstract

The Lao People's Democratic Republic is one of the most ethnically and linguistically diverse nations in Southeast Asia. Since 1975, the Communist government has touted as its hallmark a discourse of interethnic equality and solidarity, particularly in the field of education. However, a critical reading of government policies and planning measures over the past 30 years reveals a persistent discourse of ethnic Lao cultural and linguistic centrality.

This thesis seeks to identify the various Lao government discourses on language, ethnicity and education, then to explore how these divergent official discourses are reproduced, adapted or contested on the ground through language practice in ethnic minority classrooms. It begins with a discourse analysis of selected policy texts, then moves on to an analysis of the code-switching practices of teachers and students in three ethnic minority primary school classrooms in relation to the official discourses. The thesis aims both to increase our understanding of language, ethnicity and education in the Lao context and to contribute to academic discussions on the relationship between the State, minority languages, education and power. It is based on one year's fieldwork in the ethnic Kmhmu primary school classrooms of Nalae district, northwestern Laos, and four years' previous experience working in the Lao education sector.

It will become clear in this thesis that teachers and students are aware of the official role of Lao as the language of education and signal this in various ways through their language choice. However, it will also be seen that they allocate significant roles to the mother tongue in the classroom, not only as a secondary and minor medium of instruction. The assertion by a Lao education official that, when it comes to language, 'the big ones swallow the small ones' does not appear to be supported by the evidence in this case.
Contents

Acknowledgements .............................................................................................................. II
Abstract .................................................................................................................................. IV

1 Introduction .......................................................................................................................... 1
  1.1 The research questions ................................................................................................. 1
  1.2 Rationale ....................................................................................................................... 3
  1.3 The researcher’s experience in the Lao context ............................................................ 6
  1.4 Theoretical framework and methods ............................................................................ 7
  1.5 Outline of the thesis ...................................................................................................... 8
  1.6 Ethnic groups in the study .......................................................................................... 9
  1.7 Education and ethnicity in Laos .................................................................................. 11

2 Methods .................................................................................................................................. 17
  2.1 Introduction ................................................................................................................... 17
  2.2 Official endorsement and collaboration ....................................................................... 18
  2.3 Research design ............................................................................................................ 18
    2.3.1 Ethnography ............................................................................................................ 18
    2.3.2 Beyond ethnography ............................................................................................... 20
    2.3.3 Ethnography or ethnographic case studies? ........................................................... 21
  2.4 Research site and participants ...................................................................................... 22
    2.4.1 Selection of the research site .................................................................................. 22
    2.4.2 Selection of participating classrooms ..................................................................... 23
  2.5 Research ethics .............................................................................................................. 26
  2.6 Research, part one: the policy ..................................................................................... 28
    2.6.1 Selection of policy texts ......................................................................................... 28
    2.6.2 Analysis of policy texts ......................................................................................... 30
    2.6.3 Policy interviews .................................................................................................... 32
    2.6.4 Selection of interviewees ....................................................................................... 33
5.3.4 Interethnic relations in Nalae today ............................................................ 141
5.4 Language in Nalae ......................................................................................... 146
  5.4.1 Languages and dialects of Nalae ............................................................... 146
    5.4.1.1 Lue/Lao .............................................................................................. 146
    5.4.1.2 Kmhmu ............................................................................................... 148
  5.4.2 Language contact in Nalae ........................................................................ 149
  5.4.3 Language proficiency across groups .......................................................... 152
  5.4.4 Language domains or switching? ............................................................... 155
    5.4.4.1 Kmhmu use in Nalae ........................................................................... 155
5.5 Language choices in community and classroom: An overview of the literature. 157
  5.5.1 Language in community and classroom: the literature on Laos .............. 157
  5.5.2 Language choice in bilingual communities: the early literature .......... 158
  5.5.3 Code switching: key contributions ............................................................. 160
6 Saisana: vigilance, resistance and acquiescence .............................................. 174
  6.1 Introduction ................................................................................................... 174
    6.1.1 Saisana .................................................................................................... 174
    6.1.2 Had Kha:o village and school ................................................................. 175
    6.1.3 Students’ Lao language proficiency ...................................................... 176
    6.1.4 Outline of the chapter ............................................................................. 177
  6.2 Saisana’s classroom language ....................................................................... 177
    6.2.1 Monolingual Lao vigilance ...................................................................... 177
      6.2.1.1 Kmhmu switches as backstage language ........................................... 177
      6.2.1.2 Kmhmu for interpersonal, non-academic purposes ......................... 182
      6.2.1.3 Rejection of Kmhmu responses ......................................................... 183
      6.2.1.4 Lao as safetalk .................................................................................. 188
    6.2.2 Student resistance .................................................................................... 196
      6.2.2.1 Students’ and parents’ use of Kmhmu for metacommunicative purposes 197
8.1.1 Ceng .......................................................... 266
8.1.2 Ceng's Kmhmu and Lao language proficiency ....................................... 266
8.1.3 Ban Phu: Khi:ao village and school ............................................................... 268
8.1.4 Students' Lao language proficiency .............................................................. 270
8.1.5 Outline of the chapter ................................................................................ 270

8.2 Signalling Lao Status ................................................................................ 271
8.2.1 Routine classroom language ........................................................................ 271
8.2.2 School discourse related code choice ............................................................ 275
8.2.3 Explicit Lao language teaching ..................................................................... 279
8.2.4 ‘On-stage’ Lao and ‘back-stage’ Kmhmu ..................................................... 285

8.3 Sharing Kmhmu identity: Kmhmu dominance in the classroom..................... 291
8.3.1 Borrowing from Lao as contact induced ..................................................... 292
8.3.2 Proportion of classroom communication in Kmhmu .................................. 294
8.3.3 Interpersonal dimensions of code choice ................................................... 299

8.4 Ceng’s language in the community .............................................................. 305

8.5 Conclusion ................................................................................................. 315

9 Conclusion ...................................................................................................... 317
9.1 Looking back on official discourses ............................................................. 317
9.2 Looking back on classroom language: policy and practice ......................... 321
9.2.1 Classroom case study one ......................................................................... 321
9.2.2 Classroom case study two .......................................................................... 323
9.2.3 Classroom case study three ........................................................................ 325
9.3 Theorizing the policy-practice relationship .................................................. 328
9.3.1 Rethinking policy ...................................................................................... 328
9.3.2 Official policy and teacher policy: Conceptualizing the divide ................. 329
9.4 Language-in-education planning in Laos: Looking back, looking forward ...... 335
9.5 Future research directions ............................................................................ 342
1 Introduction

This is a study of language, education, ethnic minorities and the Lao state. Its aim is twofold. Firstly, it seeks to identify the discourses on education, ethnic minority peoples and their languages which are articulated within the structures of the Lao state. In order to do this, it looks to policy texts, their interpretations by key actors working within the agencies of the state, and the policies’ implementation (or otherwise) on the ground. It does this in tandem with an analysis of the historical context of ethnic relations in Laos.

The second aim of the study is to explore whether the state’s discourses on language, ethnicity and education are reproduced by ethnic minority students and their teachers through classroom language use. The study considers code-switching practices in particular, and supports this analysis with the analysis of ethnic relations in the local community and of teachers’ own comments on the topic.

1.1 The research questions

The Lao People’s Democratic Republic is a small, landlocked country of fewer than six million people which lays nestled in the fertile river valleys and rugged mountains between China, Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand and Myanmar. With around 85% of its population engaged in subsistence agriculture (World Bank, 2005: 5), and ranked 130 out of 177 countries on the UNDP Human Development Index (UNDP, 2007-2008), it is one of the least economically developed countries in Southeast Asia. However, with up to 230 ethnic groups, it is one of the region’s richest in ethnic and linguistic diversity. The ethnic Lao comprise approximately fifty percent of the population (Lao National Statistics Centre, 2005), and the wider Tai family to which they belong approximately seventy-one percent (Gordon, 2005), while the remainder of the population belongs to three ethnolinguistic

1 This figure, like others on ethnicity in Laos, is unreliable. See section 1.6 below.
families: Austroasiatic, Hmong-Mien and Sino-Tibetan, and a myriad of smaller language
groups.

The Communist government of the Lao P.D.R., since coming to power in 1975, has
articulated a concern with ethnic minorities which appears greater than that of previous
regimes (Stuart-Fox, 2003). This concern has been expressed in the proliferation of policy
documents addressing minority issues, the appointment of ethnic minority cadres and staff to
its Party and government agencies, the creation of a multiethnic national image in
government sponsored visual media, and collaboration on a host of internationally funded
development projects which target ethnic minority communities.

Yet this heightened concern with ethnic minorities in Laos is accompanied by discourses of
ethnic Lao centrality apparent in those same policy documents, cultural representations and
planning initiatives. A closer reading of government policy reveals a tension between the
rhetoric of interethnic equality and solidarity, and the ideology of a culture hierarchy with
the ethnic Lao at the top. Likewise, an examination of planning measures in minority
education reveals a discourse of ethnic Lao cultural and linguistic dominance.

This leaves us with the question of whether there is a dominant official discourse on ethnic
minority cultures and languages in the Lao PDR and what it might be, and if not, how
apparently contradictory discourses are reconciled by government actors. It also prompts us
to ask whether and how the ambiguities and tensions in official discourses are expressed or
resolved on the ground by ethnic minority people themselves.

This thesis explores these questions with specific reference to language use in the context of
ethnic minority primary education in Laos. It examines the policy addressing ethnic minority
issues in general and education specifically, then moves on to a consideration of language
use in three ethnic minority primary school classrooms in Nalae District, Luang Nam Tha
province in northwestern Laos. The particular focus in the second part of the thesis is on
code-switching practices, as these code choices demonstrate the roles attributed to each language resulting from teachers' discourses on language use – whether or not these are consistent with the discourses articulated in the official policies. The thesis seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What are the official discourses on minority peoples, languages and education in the Lao P.D.R. as expressed in policy documents, readings by key actors, and educational planning initiatives?

2. How do teachers and students in ethnic minority communities reproduce, adapt or contest these discourses through their classroom language use, specifically through code-switching between Lao and the minority language, and what do they have to say about these responses?

3. What can we learn from this about ethnicity, language and education in Laos and about the nature of majority-minority cultural and linguistic relations more generally?

1.2 Rationale

To date, almost no academic research has been carried out in the field of ethnic minority education in Laos. Several reports by international donor agencies and non-government organizations working in Laos have addressed issues in ethnic minority education, one of which focused exclusively on language in education (c.f. Power, 2002), and the remainder of which included sections on minority education in general (c.f. ADB, 1993, UNICEF, 1996, ADB, 2000, ADB, 2001, Norway and Education, 2001, World Bank, 2005, World Bank and Lao Ministry of Education, 2007). However, none of these reports was based on extended ethnographic research or systematic linguistic data collection, none was in-depth or comprehensive, and none was an academic study. Only one academic paper has been published on the topic of minority education in Laos (Kosonen, 2005), and even this is a
brief overview of the context in comparison to other countries in the region, rather than an in-depth study of the Lao education policies and practices.

Despite this lack of academic research, there are currently several bi- and multi-lateral education development projects in the Lao education sector which focus on or include ethnic minority components\(^2\). In addition to this, there are many non-government organizations implementing smaller minority education projects, including Save the Children (UK) and Norwegian Church Service, among others. There is also an AusAID-funded program aimed at unifying education development approaches within the Lao Ministry of Education. That is, there are enormous efforts being made to improve education for ethnic minorities in Laos without any detailed understanding of what the Lao government’s policy and planning orientation is, and how teachers and students are currently responding to it in classrooms.

Understanding the Lao ethnic minority and language-in-education policy context, including its tensions, ambiguities and shifts, would assist aid donors, development workers and their Lao counterparts in collaborative policy development efforts.

To date there has been considerable confusion and lack of consensus in this area. Multi-million dollar education development project proposals from AusAID and the World Bank, to give just two examples, have been subjected to prolonged negotiations, significant revisions, and delays in commencement due to the conflicting goals of donors and the government\(^3\); key planning documents such as Education For All have been subject to different readings among government and foreign stakeholders (c.f. Cincotta, 2006); and

\(^2\) These include projects financed by the ADB, the EU, the World Bank, and the World Food Program, with an AusAID financed project and a Swedish International Development Agency funded project having been completed in 2007, and an Agence Française de Développement project completed in mid-2008.

\(^3\) Teacher training in bilingual education methods proposed under an AusAID education development project was denied permission by the Lao authorities at the commencement of the project in 1998, and a World Bank education development project underwent prolonged negotiations in 2003 – 2004 until the Bank’s proposed bilingual education activities were changed to a rather less controversial language mapping activity.
donor-initiated policy discussions have been refused permission at the last minute\textsuperscript{4}.

Increased understanding of the Lao government’s orientation to language, education and ethnic minorities would constitute a first step in improved collaboration and cooperation between the aid donors and recipients in this context.

Furthermore, many of the intended outcomes of the education development projects which are implemented, and of the Lao government’s own education initiatives, focus on the improvement of educational curricula and materials, teaching methods, enrolment, retention, performance, and completion rates for ethnic minority students. Yet neither the Lao government nor the donors have detailed information on what is currently occurring in ethnic minority classrooms, why, and how it is effective or ineffective. Understanding how teachers and students in these contexts respond to the policy would allow for improved language-in-education planning, teacher recruitment and deployment, teacher training programs, and curriculum and materials design: that is, it would guide the Lao Ministry of Education in devising and implementing planning measures which are in line with teachers’ and students’ actual needs and preferences.

On a more academic level, understanding of the official Lao policy discourses and how these are reproduced (or not) at the local level can contribute to our understanding of the nature of cultural and linguistic domination by majority groups within the nation state. Much has been said about structure and agency and the degree to which members of minority groups reproduce or resist their own economic and ideological subjugation. The present study contributes to this discussion. It also adds to the literature on code-switching both generally and more specifically in the classroom. It identifies some practices previously not emphasized in the literature and questions common characterizations of the role of minority languages in formal teaching and learning.

\textsuperscript{4} A UNICEF/SIDA sponsored symposium on mother tongue education in 2003 was denied permission by the Ministry of Education and carried out instead as an in-house forum for foreign development workers with no Lao government staff participation.
Finally, the study paints a picture of three unique individuals, their language practices and beliefs, and the communities and classrooms in which they live and work. It is as much a story of these people and my time with them as it is a contribution to education development in Laos or to academic discussion and debate.

1.3 The researcher’s experience in the Lao context

My relationship with Laos began at the end of 1999, when I went there as an Australian Volunteer Abroad to write curriculum, train teachers and teach in the English Department at the National University of Laos. I quickly developed a love for the country and after two years at the University decided to stay on. I moved to the countryside outside Vientiane to establish and run a language training program for a Luxembourg government-funded project there.

After six months doing this, I began work for the Lao-Australia Basic Education Project, a country-wide ethnic minority education development project funded by the Australian government aid agency, AusAID. I was based first in Salavan in the far South of the country, then in Luang Nam Tha in the northwest, both times at teacher training institutions. As part of this job, I was also fortunate enough to travel to some of the most remote parts of the country to work with ethnic minority teacher trainees and teachers in their own villages. It was at this time that I learned first-hand of the great challenges facing ethnic minority teachers and students in Laos, and of their great creativity and resilience.

After completing a year’s work with the Project, I returned to Australia to enroll in a PhD exploring some of the issues which had fascinated me in Laos. Before starting the PhD, I went back to Laos for a short time to assist with the organization of a symposium on mother tongue education jointly funded by SIDA and UNICEF, and to begin making preparations for the fieldwork I would do as part of my program. I went back again in 2004 to finalise fieldwork arrangements, research affiliations and visa documentation.
In 2005 I carried out one year of fieldwork in Nalae district, Luang Nam Tha province, a district which I had visited several times while working for the LABEP project and where I had friends and professional contacts. I returned to Nalae for some additional fieldwork in 2007 and since then have remained in touch with my friends and colleagues there by phone – a luxury which we did not have until 2007 – and by old-fashioned mail.

Fortunately my Lao language proficiency allows me to do this with ease. I speak, read and write Lao fluently and have taught Lao language in the Faculty of Asian Studies at the Australian National University for several semesters. My Kmhmu is less fluent as, apart from some initial and rudimentary research in Australia, I only learned the language during my fieldwork in Nalae. However, I am proficient enough to understand most of what occurs in the classroom in Kmhmu without assistance and to carry on everyday conversations in the language. More will be said on language issues in the research in chapter two.

1.4 Theoretical framework and methods

This research combines textual analysis and ethnographic methods to paint a picture of both the macro and micro levels of language, ethnicity and education in Laos. It draws on insights from the fields of history, anthropology, discourse analysis, descriptive linguistics, and interactional sociolinguistics and in turn may have a contribution to make to more than one of these fields.

The section of the thesis addressing policy discourses uses Critical Discourse Analysis of selected policy texts and of interviews with key Lao government officials, together with a synthesis of relevant information from the historical and anthropological literature on Laos.

The section concerned with classroom language practice is based on ethnographic data collection in local classrooms and interviews with teachers, in addition to ethnographic observation of the local community more generally. Analysis of the classroom data was based on the techniques used by other studies of code-switching in communities and classrooms, though the methods used here were ultimately the result of grounded theory.
A detailed description of the theoretical framework for the study is given in chapter three, the Literature Review, while a detailed discussion of the research methods is provided in chapter two, the Methods.

1.5 Outline of the thesis

The following chapter of this thesis is the Methods chapter, which presents the details of how the study was carried out and the rationale for this. It covers the research design, research affiliations and ethical procedures, the research site and participants, data collection and analysis methods, reliability and validity, and ends with a note on language.

After this is a brief review of the literature relevant to this study. As the study aims to provide a holistic picture of both language policy and practice in ethnic minority education in Laos, the literature reviewed in this chapter is drawn from a broad base. Other relevant literature is also discussed throughout the thesis as it becomes relevant. In particular, the literature on code-switching is discussed in chapter five, immediately before the thesis moves on to the analysis of classroom code-switching practices.

Following on from the Literature Review is the chapter titled ‘Solidarity and Power: Discourses on Language, Ethnicity and Education at the National Level’. This chapter discusses the policy around ethnic minorities and ethnic minority education in Laos. It begins with a historical overview of ethnic relations in Laos then moves on to a discussion of discourses articulated in current policy documents, and by their main producers and consumers.

Chapter five begins the part of the thesis concerned with local classroom practice. Titled ‘Language and Legitimacy at the Local Level: An Introduction to Nalae’, it provides an overview of the geography of Nalae and its ethnic composition before moving on to a discussion of ethnic relations in the district both historically and today. The chapter also
discusses language in Nalae and concludes with a review of the literature which will be relevant to the subsequent discussion of code-switching.

The next chapter, 'Saisana: Vigilance, Resistance and Acquiescence' is the first of the classroom case studies. It presents the case of a teacher whom I have called Saisana and her first and second grade students. In chapter seven, 'Khamsuk: Pragmatic Bilingualism', Saisana’s case is contrasted with the case of Khamsuk and his class. In chapter eight, 'Ceng: Signalling Lao Status, Sharing Kmhmu Identity', both cases are again contrasted with the case of an ethnic Kmhmu teacher and his students.

The final chapter of the thesis is the Conclusion, which draws together the analysis of policy and of classroom practice. It reviews the policy discourses and the classroom practices before theorizing the policy-practice relationship, commenting on the state of language-in-education policy and planning in Laos today, and suggesting topics for future research.

Before moving on to the next chapter, some background information on ethnicity and education in the Lao PDR is provided in order to familiarize the reader with the context of the study.

1.6 Ethnic groups in the study

Issues around ethnicity in Laos will be explored in depth in the chapters which follow; however, a brief introduction to the context may be useful to the reader at this stage. It was noted above that there are up to 230 ethnic groups in Laos. In fact, the number cited ranges from the official government number of 49, to Ethnologue’s total of 82 (Gordon, 2005), to Chamberlain’s estimate of 230 (ADB, 2001: iii) depending on the source. This is due to poor or insufficient linguistic data collection in the country, differences in the definition of what constitutes an ethnic (or a linguistic) group, and in some cases, inaccurate analyses and faulty interpretations. Whatever the number of groups, there are representatives of the four ethno-linguistic families mentioned above, with approximate percentages as follows: Tai-
Kadai – 71%, Austroasiatic – 24.1%, Hmong-Mien – 4%, and Sino-Tibetan – 1% (Gordon, 2005), although these figures too are contested.

The Tai-Kadai group in Laos includes the ethnic Lao, the politically dominant ethnic group in the country and the group generally considered to be the majority, although the ethnic Lao do not in fact constitute a numerical majority on their own. The Tai-Kadai group in Laos also includes the traditionally upland-dwelling Black Tai, Red Tai, White Tai, Tai Leu, Phuan, and Meuy, among others.

The Lao language is closely related to Thai, both in its spoken and written forms, although Lao speakers tend to understand Thai better than the inverse due to greater exposure through popular media. Members of the Tai-Kadai family in Laos traditionally speak dialects (or languages) close enough to each other to allow for some mutual understanding, although in some cases this is minimal.

The Tai group which inhabits the area where this research was carried out is not the Lao but the Tai-Lue (Lü, Lu). Traditionally, the Tai-Lue speak a language which, although closely related to Lao, would be difficult to comprehend for a Lao speaker with no prior exposure. However, most young Tai-Lue today speak a mixture of Lue and Lao with the degree of Lue influence often depending on the perceived linguistic competence of their listeners.

The students participating in this study were ethnic Kmhmu, an Austroasiatic group belonging to the Mon-Khmer family. The Kmhmu form the largest ethnic group in Laos after the ethnic Lao, making up approximately fifteen percent of the total Lao population (Gordon, 2005). The Kmhmu, like other Austroasiatic peoples in Laos, inhabited the area they currently occupy before the arrival of Tai groups from the north. They are in the same linguistic family as the Khmer of Cambodia, and are more distantly related to the
Vietnamese, although their language is not mutually intelligible with either of these and is traditionally without a script.

More will be said on the Kmhmu language in chapter five. However, for now it should be noted that this language is in a different family from Lao (and Lue) and thus not related or mutually intelligible, apart from some loan words which have moved in both directions. Many Kmhmu people, especially in the area where this research was carried out, speak very little or no Lao and for Kmhmu children entering school in the villages, Lao is effectively a foreign language.

1.7 Education and ethnicity in Laos

The Lao school system is three-tiered, with five years of primary schooling, five years of lower secondary, and three years of upper secondary, all officially delivered in the Lao language. In reality only a small fraction of the Lao population completes this cycle. Although Lao education indicators have been improving over the past forty years, they remain behind the indicators for its neighbours in the region, and abysmal in comparison to indicators for industrialized nations. There is also enormous discrepancy in the educational attainments of different groups in Laos, with ethnic minorities falling far behind their ethnic Lao counterparts on all counts.

On average, a Lao person aged between 18 and 60 years has received 5.5 years of schooling. This is a marked improvement on the average of 2 years in 1960. However, when disaggregated the current average becomes approximately 8.5 years for an urban 18 year old.

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5 Lao and Latin script orthographies have now been developed for Kmhmu but are not in usage among Kmhmu people aside from some researchers in the Lao capital and their small sample groups.
of the ethnic Tai\textsuperscript{6} group, just over 4 years for a rural non-Tai 18 year old man, and less than 2 years for a rural non-Tai 18 year old woman (World Bank, 2005: 3).

In fact, in 2002-2003, over 70\% of rural non-ethnic Tai women had never been to school (ibid: 16). In 2005-2006, the net primary school enrollment rate for Lao children was 83.9\%, which is slightly behind Cambodia and Myanmar (World Bank and Lao Ministry of Education, 2007: 9). However, when disaggregated the rate was 90\% for urban Tai males and approximately 92\% for urban Tai females, around 81\% and 80\% respectively for their rural counterparts, 60\% for rural non-Tai males and only 51\% for rural non-Tai females. When poverty is added to the equation, the enrollment rate is a shocking 46\% for poor, rural non-Tai females (ibid: 12).

These low educational levels for ethnic minorities, especially women, are reflected in literacy rates. The available figures show that 72.9\% of Tai self-report as literate, with a rate of 84.4\% for males and 62.3\% for females. However, the rate is only 36.9\% for the Mon-Khmer family, with 55.6\% for males and a mere 19.9\% for females. For the Hmong-Mien family the overall rate is even lower, at 26.5\% (m = 45.7, f = 8.1), and for the Tibeto-Burman family it is the lowest, at 17\% (m = 22.3, f = 12\%) (ADB, 2002: 24).

The low primary school enrollment rates for rural ethnic minorities are certainly related to school access: 86.4\% of ethnic Tai children have access to a primary school compared to 79.3\% of non-Tai children (World Bank, 2005: 38). However, these figures hide the disparity in types of schools to which Tai and non-Tai children have access. While 8.7\% of Tai children have access to a complete primary school (i.e. with all five grades), only 4.7\% of non-Tai children have the same (ibid: 44). While the difference may not seem great, most Tai children reside in less remote, lowland areas and are thus likely to have access to a

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\textsuperscript{6} The classification 'Tai' will be used here to refer to all groups in Laos which fall into the Tai-Kadai family, including the ethnic Lao. It does NOT refer only to non-Lao, highland Tai groups, as is the case in some of the literature.
nearby complete school, while the nearest complete school may be a few hours' to one day’s walk away for rural ethnic minority children. Tai children in urban areas are also more likely to have access to a school with electricity: almost half of urban primary schools (thus majority Tai) have electricity while less than one tenth of rural schools (including minority schools) do (World Bank, 2005: 41).

Low enrollment rates among ethnic minorities are not only related to issues of access. They are also caused by the inability of parents, especially those with large families, to pay for school materials and uniforms; the need for families to engage their children in agricultural and domestic labour; and sometimes, especially for girls, the perceived lack of usefulness of formal schooling (Lao Ministry of Education, 2002: 46).

Research has also shown the physical condition of school buildings to affect enrollment (c.f. World Bank, 2005: 67). Although much effort is being put into building new schools in Laos, the typical highland village primary school is still made of wood or bamboo with open windows and a tin or thatched roof – the former sweltering in the hot season and the latter often in need of repairs in the rainy season. There are usually homemade wooden benches and desks, and a damaged blackboard. Some might argue that the conditions are not very different from those in students' homes. However, students are not required to sit in one spot and pay attention for long periods in their homes, nor are parents required to deliver formal lessons there.
Figure 1: Case study school 1.

Figure 2: Case study school 2.
Most children in highland schools do not own their own textbooks but share with two or more of their classmates. It is not uncommon for the teacher to have the only textbook for a subject and to dictate or copy onto the board from that. Most schools do not have additional teaching materials or equipment unless provided by a donor-funded project, although larger schools may have a wordboard, an abacus, and some wooden counting sticks.

Despite this disadvantage and the sometimes negative perceptions of schooling, especially for girls in ethnic minority communities, schools in remote highland areas are full and the teachers and students there continue their daily efforts to work through the national curriculum against all odds.
Figure 4: Kmhmu children in one of the case study schools

Figure 5: Second graders in the case study school above singing a song
2 Methods

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study, as discussed in the previous chapter, is to investigate the discourses and practices around minority languages in Laos on the national, local, and classroom levels and to explore the relationships between them. Because the study aims to achieve a deep understanding of the social and cultural forces involved and to present what Clifford Geertz called ‘thick description’ of the processes being investigated, the overall design of the research is ethnographic. However, as the study is multi-levelled, exploring government policy, community speech practices and classroom language patterns, it is necessary to draw from a range of disciplines to arrive at an appropriate design for the data collection and analysis. The study thus draws on the disciplines of policy analysis, discourse analysis, anthropology, interactional sociolinguistics, classroom ethnography, microethnography, and critical post-structuralist approaches to the study of code switching practices. Much of the methodology and analysis has also been developed as grounded theory, emerging from the forms and patterns of the data rather than being imposed upon them.

The data sources and methods employed for the study included the following:

- collection and analysis of government policy texts addressing ethnic minority, language and education issues;
- interviews with Ministry of Education officials regarding the policy texts;
- observation of language use and attitudes to ethnic minorities and languages in the local community;
- observation, recording, analysis and interpretation of language use in ethnic minority classrooms;
- interviews with the teachers from those classrooms.
This chapter will describe the design and implementation of the research, including the selection of the research site and participants, procedures for ethical acceptability, methods for data collection and analysis, validity and reliability, and technical issues around transcription and orthographies, before the next chapter moves on to an analysis of the data.

2.2 Official endorsement and collaboration

This research was carried out with the official permission of the Lao Ministry of Education and under the supervision of the National Research Institute for Educational Sciences (Laos). Supervision involved initial consultations with Institute officials on the research and a final report (in English) and presentation (in Lao) by the researcher. At the research site, the Provincial Education Service of Luang Nam Tha provided a communication channel with the national level authorities and day-to-day support and collaboration were provided by the District Education Bureau of Nalae. This included the provision of accommodation, access to office equipment, initial accompaniment on school visits, assistance with transcription and translation of Kmhm, and other advice and assistance as required. Official endorsement and supervision was necessary for the undertaking of the research, but did not impact on the research design or methods, as NRIES had no involvement beyond initial consultations and the final report.

2.3 Research design

2.3.1 Ethnography

Governments and aid donors often display a preference for quantitative research, with its figures and charts which are easily comparable across contexts. Some may also accept research based on traditional sociological surveys and questionnaires, which can provide answers to specific questions across large population samples. However, the deepest investigation of research contexts and the richest interpretation of data is allowed not by these approaches but by ethnographic research. This is due partly to the ethnographer’s immersion in the research context for an extended period of time and to his or her role there
as a participant observer (or at times simply as an observer). It is also due to the ultimate aim of ethnographic work being what Clifford Geertz, borrowing from Gilbert Ryle, termed ‘thick description’ (Geertz, 1975): that is, a description which is context-based and considers all possible meanings of what has been observed.

The effectiveness of qualitative methods such as ethnography in educational research also lies in their ability to describe actual practice in schools and its convergence and divergence from policy (Vulliamy, 1990: 17). As Hornberger explains, an ethnographic approach:

‘offer[s] unique insights into [Language Policy and Planning] processes through thick descriptions of policy interpretation and implementation at the local level. Historical and intertextual analyses of policy texts can capture the confluence of histories, attitudes and ideologies that engender a language policy but, alone, cannot account for how the creation is interpreted and implemented in the various contextual layers through which a language policy must pass’ (Hornberger, 2007: 511).

This is not true of quantitative methods, including sociological methods such as questionnaires and surveys, which often start from the assumption that the policy is being implemented. The more accurate picture drawn by ethnographic studies in turn informs the development of more appropriate education policy. A further advantage of ethnographic design is that, in educational contexts where little or no research has been carried out (such as the Lao one), it can identify questions for future large-scale quantitative investigations where desired (ibid: 18).

It is for these reasons that an ethnographic model was adopted for the present research. The use of the term ‘ethnographic’ here should be clarified, however. The study grew out of four years experience working in the education sector in Laos and involved a one year sojourn in Nalae district, in which time I was able to become familiar with the cultural, linguistic and
educational context there. However, as the classroom research was carried out in seven schools, including three focal schools, it was not possible to be immersed in any of these classroom environments on a daily basis.

Lutz (1993) distinguishes between true ethnographies, in which the researcher is immersed in the specific research context every day for an extended period of time, and studies which employ ‘ethnographic methods’ but only involve occasional or periodic visits to the research site. According to this distinction, the present study can be considered an ethnography of the broader context, but a study which simply employed ‘ethnographic methods’ in the seven classroom contexts. However, this should not be taken to imply that the study was what has sometimes been called ‘blitzkrieg ethnography’ (Rist, 1980). Each classroom case study presented here is based on frequent and regular observation over the period of one year, as is explained in section 2.8.1 below.

A further issue in calling the research an ethnography, or even simply ‘ethnographic’, is that classroom contexts do not generally allow the researcher to adopt the prescribed role of the ethnographer as participant observer. Although some researchers have participated in the primary school classroom as students (e.g. Hornberger, 1988) in order to remain true to the spirit of participant observation, it is generally accepted that participation as a student in these contexts is problematic (Wolcott, 1988). Certainly participation as a teacher would impact strongly on the behaviour of the other teachers being observed and on the children’s attitudes to the researcher, and is thus ruled out. For these reasons, the role of the ethnographic researcher in educational settings has been referred to as ‘privileged observer’ (Wolcott, 1988). It is in this role that I attended lessons in the seven classrooms in Nalae.

2.3.2 Beyond ethnography

My aim as an ethnographic researcher was to observe and record as much as was possible of the particular pedagogical, cultural and linguistic features of each classroom and of the wider context in which the classrooms were situated, and to carry out as deep and rich an
interpretation of this data as was possible. The specific means I used to do that will be discussed in the following sections. However, it is important to note here that the research design did not involve only classroom ethnographic methods, but included the collection and analysis of policy documents and the interviewing of education officials and teachers. These techniques are commonly used in tandem with ethnographic observation in order to provide additional and supporting data. In this case, they were necessitated by the multileveled nature of the research question and allowed for the richest possible data collection, analysis and interpretation.

2.3.3 Ethnography or ethnographic case studies?

Until this point, the classroom component of the research has been described as ethnographic in design (albeit incorporated with other elements). However, unlike most ethnographic research, which is carried out in one setting over an extended period, this research was carried out in several classrooms. It might be more appropriate, then, to describe the design of the classroom research as a series of ethnographic case studies.

There were several reasons for carrying out a multi-sited study as opposed to a single sited one. Firstly, my prior knowledge of the context suggested that there was a wide range of approaches being taken to language use in the classroom. A series of case studies would capture some of this diversity among teachers and settings. Secondly, I (perhaps like most outsiders to these classroom contexts) assumed that one of the greatest differences in language use would be between ethnic minority teachers and lowland Lao teachers. It was thus important to include at least one member of a minority group and one lowland Lao teacher in my study. The third reason relates to the generalisability of the study.

Case studies have been criticised, mostly by proponents of 'scientific' research designs, for their apparent lack of generalisability due to the small sample size - usually of one. This criticism has been countered with several arguments. Firstly, as Spindler argues:
An in-depth study that gives accurate knowledge of one setting not markedly
dissimilar from other relevant settings is likely to be generalisable in
substantial degree to those other settings...it is better to have in-depth,
accurate knowledge of one setting than superficial and possibly skewed or
misleading information about isolated relationships in many settings (Spindler

A further argument for the generalisability of case studies is that any setting can be typical
or atypical and this is not readily predictable at the outset; it is up to the reader of the
research to determine \textit{a posteriori} to what degree the case study is relevant to his or her own
context (Walker, 1993: 167). Other educational researchers have argued that any case study
can be rendered more generalisable by taking one of three approaches: designing it to ensure
that the setting is typical and/or carrying out multi-sited studies; selecting a topic and site
which is relevant to future trends; or selecting a site which is ideal in some way and can
thus be used as a model for other settings (Hitchcock and Hughes, 1989: 326). The option of
carrying out a multi-sited study in order to increase generalisability was taken here.

2.4 Research site and participants

2.4.1 Selection of the research site

The research site, Nalae district in Luang Nam Tha province, northwestern Laos (see
chapter five for map), was a place already familiar to me before beginning this research. I
had visited the district several times for my work with an AusAID funded education
development project and had worked with the staff of the District Education Bureau there.
However, the selection of Nalae as the research site was the outcome of a long process of
elimination.

The first step in this process was the identification of a set of criteria for selection of the
research site. The final criteria were:
• that the district be populated mostly by ethnic minorities, and thus representative of upland districts in Laos;
• that the ‘minority’ language (i.e. not Lao) be one which could be learned to a moderate degree of proficiency in a short time;
• that there be year-round access by road or river;
• that the provincial and district education authorities be interested in the research, cooperative and reliable;
• that, if possible, the education authorities be people with whom I had already worked (true of 17 districts in Laos).

These criteria privileged Mon-Khmer speaking districts, as Mon-Khmer languages have relatively simple syntax which is generally quite similar to Lao, a language with which I was already very familiar (see section 2.10.1 below). However, they ruled out some of the southern Mon-Khmer districts of the country, which were inaccessible except on foot for months at a time during the rainy season. Other districts were not ideal due to my lack of close familiarity with the education authorities there.

In the end, there were two districts which met all these criteria and with which I was very familiar. After a phone call or meeting with the Head of each District Education Bureau (DEB), I selected Nalae due to the supportiveness and capability of the staff there and my greater familiarity with it. This selection was endorsed by the National Research Institute for Educational Sciences under the Lao Ministry of Education.

2.4.2 Selection of participating classrooms
The multi-sited design of this study was not chosen in order to carry out controlled comparison of language use patterns between classrooms with different characteristics, for example ethnic minority and majority teachers or remote and road-side locations. Rather, it was intended to give a fuller picture of the diversity of classroom language practices. For this reason, it was not considered necessary to strictly control variables in the selection of
classrooms. It was considered important, however, to include classrooms which differed from each other in significant ways in order to maximize the possibility of finding different language practices.

For this reason, it was ensured that each criterion below was met by at least one classroom, although of course each classroom would have its own particular configuration of several of these criteria:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnic minority teacher</th>
<th>Ethnic majority teacher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Remote location (no road or frequently impassable secondary road; over three hours walk from district centre)(^7)</td>
<td>Non-remote location (along main road or under three hours walk from district centre)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formally qualified teacher(^8)</td>
<td>Unqualified teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grades 1 – 2</td>
<td>Grade 3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Grades 1 to 3 were prioritized for selection as it was assumed that students in the higher grades would have a much higher proficiency in the Lao language and there would thus be less mother tongue instruction (although this assumption was subsequently proven to be wrong). No classes with a teacher who had less than three years teaching experience were chosen, as it was assumed that less experienced teachers would be less likely to have developed teaching styles which they considered effective and more likely to feel self-conscious under observation.

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\(^7\) Villagers from villages under three hours walk from the district centre, including young girls and boys, frequently visit the centre on their rest days, whereas those from villages further than this are less likely to visit frequently.

\(^8\) i.e. a teacher who had graduated from any teacher training program, from one to four years duration, at a Teacher Training School or College.
When discussed with staff at the DEB, the list of criteria above yielded eight classrooms for potential inclusion in the study, each in a different school and village. After meetings with the respective village authorities and teachers (see section 2.5 below), all of these classrooms were selected for inclusion, however persistent problems with the road leading to one of the villages, which was five hours away on foot, led to the classroom in that village being excluded after the first visit. Even with the exclusion of this village, each of the eight characteristics listed above was still represented in the sample.

The remaining seven classrooms were each visited periodically during the first three months of the research, which corresponded to the last three months of the academic year. In the new academic year, three of the seven case study classrooms were selected as ‘focal case studies’ due to the possibility of frequent access, and the apparent naturalness of the teachers while being observed. The four non-focal classrooms were visited two or three times each during the first semester of the new academic year, while the three focal classrooms were visited regularly (see section 2.8.1 below for details on classroom visits).

The three focal classrooms had the following characteristics:

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9 Some of the teachers in the larger group appeared nervous or asked during or after observation whether the way they were using the languages was ‘right’. The three focal case study teachers neither appeared nervous nor asked about the correctness of their language use, although they did occasionally ask for feedback on their teaching activities, which was given after the research was concluded.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classroom 1</th>
<th>Classroom 2</th>
<th>Classroom 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lowland Lao teacher</td>
<td>Lowland Lao teacher</td>
<td>Kmhmnu teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-remote, roadside</td>
<td>Non-remote 2.5 hours walk from centre</td>
<td>Non-remote, roadside</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multigrade 1-2</td>
<td>Multigrade 3-4</td>
<td>Multigrade 1-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unqualified teacher</td>
<td>Unqualified teacher</td>
<td>Unqualified teacher</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It can be seen from this comparison that the three focal classrooms differed on some important characteristics, such as teacher ethnicity and grade, but were similar in other regards. This allowed for the identification of differences in language use, were these to be linked to classroom characteristics, while still permitting some comparison across case studies. The inclusion of the non-focal classrooms made it possible to determine whether very different language practices were occurring in classrooms with other characteristics, such as remote location and qualified teachers, although it was found that in fact they were not.

2.5 Research ethics

Before this research was implemented, it was approved by the Human Ethics Committee of the Australian National University. Standard ethical considerations were addressed, including: informed consent; privacy; impact on the participants and research community, particularly on vulnerable participants such as children; cultural, social and legal constraints; and stakeholder risks and benefits.

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10 It became apparent during the research, however, that differences in classroom characteristics such as location and teacher ethnicity did not necessarily correspond to differences in language use.
However, ethics procedures differed from Australian norms in the process of obtaining informed consent. As many of the research participants were children under the age of seven, especially in the Lao context it was not considered appropriate to ask their consent directly. Nor in the Lao context could their parents be asked directly by the researcher, as political protocols require that permission be gained from the top down.

Thus permission for the research was obtained at the national, provincial, and district levels, then sought from the village authorities. This last step involved meeting with the village Head or, in his absence, the representative of the Lao Front for National Construction or the Lao Women’s Union, who together with the Head constitute the administrative unit of the village. Head teachers and class teachers were also present at the meetings, which were often also attended by several other villagers. At these meetings, a DEB official and I explained the nature and purpose of the research in Lao and Kmhmu. Village authorities were then asked to pass this information on to the villagers at a village meeting and ask their consent, then to relay the outcome of this meeting to the DEB. Consent was not obtained in writing as most villagers, including some village Heads, were illiterate and also due to the unfamiliarity of such a procedure in the Lao context.

Teachers were asked separately and directly for their consent after I explained the research in detail, including where and how the data would be viewed or published. They were not asked to sign consent forms due to their unfamiliarity with these and the fear of signing official documents which can occur in Socialist contexts like Laos. Teachers were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time.

An ethical issue of particular concern to me was that my presence in schools and villages not be taxing on teachers and villagers (or on the DEB official accompanying me), especially when I was required to stay overnight. For this reason, I usually brought food with me to share and contributed small necessities such as candles, torch batteries, soap and
sometimes basic items of clothing to the household. I also paid a per-diem rate to accompanying DEB officials equivalent to the rate paid by local development projects.

It was also important to me that teachers, students, villagers, and counterparts at the DEB receive something from the research not only indirectly and in the long term. I thus provided one-on-one feedback for teachers once the research had been completed; delivered a one-day training workshop for all teachers involved in the research and their colleagues from the same schools; provided ongoing English language and IT assistance and donated two printer cartridges to the District Education Bureau; hosted a dinner for all participating teachers in the district centre at the end of the research period; and took up a collection among friends and relatives which provided stationery and sports equipment for each non-focal classroom and new desks and chairs for each focal classroom. These gifts were selected in consultation with the Head of Nalae DEB and were not made public or presented until the research had been completed.

2.6 Research, part one: the policy

It was noted above that the classroom component of this research was complemented by a study of the policy context in which this teaching and learning occurs. The policy component of the research was based on the selection and analysis of Lao government policy texts and interviews with their primary producers and consumers, officials at the Lao Ministry of Education (MoE).

2.6.1 Selection of policy texts

Much discourse analysis over the past two decades has emphasized the importance of considering texts not as isolated and atemporal units of analysis but as links in an intertextual chain (e.g. Fairclough, 1992b). The notion of intertextuality – that all texts are created (both by writers and readers) in relation to other texts within an order of discourse has important implications for any study taking the text as a unit of analysis. It raises the
question of how the boundaries of a text are to be defined in relation to other texts, and once this is done, which texts are to be included in the analysis.

The view espoused here is that there is no set definition of a text, nor any predetermined specification for which texts are relevant to any particular social question. Rather, it is a matter of exploring the associations, definitions and interpretations made within texts and by their producers and consumers outside the text. The question is: what is a text – and then what is a relevant text – for the actors within our realm of interest? Of course, the inclusion of any text in a study can be constrained by access to information, both knowledge of the existence of texts and the relationships between them as well as the ability to procure desired texts (an illustration of Foucault’s ‘struggle over discourse’ at work). These are all issues which impacted on text selection in the present study.

In this study, each text is defined as such due to the way in which it is presented and referred to by its producers and consumers: policy texts are distinguished as individual units by value of their titles, their policy numbers, their distribution separately from other texts, and (oral and written) referral to them individually by officials in the Ministry of Education (MoE). The texts were selected on the basis of 1) referral to them by actors in this social context including Ministry officials, Lao and foreign development workers, and foreign consultants; and 2) my professional experience of their primacy in the context of language and education in Laos (through working under the MoE).

However, I acknowledge that this is not a complete ‘set’ of texts, or that any such thing exists, as texts refer to each other in a complex and ever expanding network. Nor can it be a ‘definitive’ set of texts, as this would raise the question of definitive of what and for whom. It is however a sample of key texts which might help us make sense of the processes with which the present research is concerned from a particular perspective.
The texts included in this study are: the Lao Constitution (People’s Supreme Assembly 1996); the ‘Resolution of the Central Party Organization Concerning the Affairs of Various Minorities, Especially the Hmong Minority’ (Central Party Organization 1981); the ‘Resolution of the Central Party Organization Concerning Ethnic Minority Affairs in the New Era’ (Central Party Organization 1992); the Education Law (Ministry of Education 2002/2005); the Education for All National Plan of Action (Ministry of Education 2005), and ‘Papers from the Meeting on Ethnic Minority Affairs in Provincial Governance’ (Lao Front for National Construction 1996).

2.6.2 Analysis of policy texts

The model used here for text analysis is based on Fairclough’s Critical Discourse Analysis (1989, Fairclough, 1992a), though taking into account some of the common criticisms of CDA and espousing flexibility in the selection of analysis tools.

One tendency which has been identified as a weakness of much CDA analysis is the presentation of the analyst’s reading of the text as the sole possible reading, excluding the possibility for multiple readings by different producers and consumers (Widdowson, 1995, 1996, 1998). As Blommaert and Bulcaen put it, ‘Texts are found to have a certain ideological meaning that is forced upon the reader’ (Blommaert and Bulcaen, 2000: 455). This fault is avoided in the present analyses by taking into consideration not only the analysts’ reading of the texts, but their producers’ and consumers’ readings, most particularly through the use of interviews (see the following section).

Another criticism of CDA is that it relies on less than rigorous analysis of social contexts, providing ‘sketchy’ and ‘common sense’ pictures of social and political relations, then projecting them onto discourse (Blommaert and Bulcaen, 2000: 456). This has been avoided in the present study by carrying out an in-depth historical and ethnographic study of the context in which the texts were produced and continue to be consumed, both at the national and local levels and incorporating this into the discussion of the texts themselves.
Although some Critical Discourse Analysts have insisted on a single, systematized framework for text analysis (e.g. Van Leeuwen, 1993, 1996, Martin, 2000), generally based on the Systemic Functional Linguistics of Michael Halliday (e.g. Halliday, 1985), Fairclough himself recognizes the value in allowing for a diverse range of methodologies for analysis (Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999: 17). In fact, each instance of text analysis is different depending on the particular text and context, and on the goals and interests of the analyst. As Fowler and Kress have explained:

There is no analytic routine through which a text can be run, with a critical description issuing automatically at the end. (Fowler and Kress, 1971: 197)

They argue that in each case, the discourse analyst begins with the hypothesis that the text in question has a social signification and then proceeds to find the analytical tools which are best suited to his or her exploration of this hypothesis (ibid.). He or she makes an individual choice of linguistic features for analysis rather than modeling linguistic analysis solely on any other linguist’s work or following any notion of a ‘complete set of analytical tools’ as a recipe for insightful analysis.

For the present study, the particular linguistic features which are discussed in the analysis grew out of the data as points of interest rather than being determined *a priori* then imposed on the texts. They stood out for what they can tell us about the ways in which the texts label ethnic groups and historical processes (lexis), the ways in which they construe relationships between the actors and processes they identify (transitivity), and the ways in which they express taken-for-grantedness (reference, adjectival modifiers), to give some examples. More will be said on the textual analysis of the policy in chapter four.
2.6.3 Policy interviews

Hodge and Kress write that:

‘those who read [a text] may or may not be the same as those who were invented by the original act of discourse, and they may be more or less obedient. The meanings that they construct are therefore not precisely in the text. But nor are they precisely ‘out’ of the text, or ‘in’ any other text. These meanings are realized in other texts which readers produce, which may or may not emerge in speech or in writing, and which are never transparent, never produced in social isolation’ (1993: 175).

Thus the discourse analyst cannot deduce how meaning is made by consumers of a text only through his or her own analysis of that text. Rather, he or she can arrive at some understanding of these meanings by carrying out a ‘reading of readings’: that is, a reading of consumers’ reading of the text. Of course this process could be infinitely regressive – a reading could always be done on each reading - but this does not diminish the value of the additional dimension one meta-reading provides. A reading of readings is particularly useful in cases such as the present one, where the discourse analyst is working cross-culturally.

These issues are addressed in the present research by the use of interviews with policy producers and consumers. The interviews are not subjected to a detailed discourse analysis per se. However, they are used to facilitate the exploration of how the policy documents are read by their primary (producers and) consumers, Ministry of Education officials. They are also used to uncover which policy discourses are shared, which contested and how, by those consumers. The interviews also help describe and explain language policy and planning measures which have been implemented. In this way, they contribute to a reading of discourse in the wider sense, as a form of social practice (Fairclough 1989: 23).
2.6.4 Selection of interviewees

As with the selected texts, the selected interviewees cannot be considered a complete ‘set’. Rather, they provide another point from which discourse analysts (including readers of discourse analysis) can engage in the process of making meaning of the policy texts and practices. The selected interviewees were people identified from my own professional experience in the context and by Lao Ministry of Education staff as key producers and consumers of the policy texts. They included people in positions of authority with decision-making powers who both write and make decisions regarding the implementation of the policies.

Interviewees included the Head of the Gender and Ethnic Minority Unit, MoE; the Deputy Head of General Education, MoE; the Head of Teacher Training, MoE; the Director of National Research Institute for Educational Sciences; and the Head of the Ethnic Minority Education Unit, MoE. Unfortunately, however, it was not possible to interview the writers of the Party policy documents as authors’ names were not provided on the documents and a significant amount of time has elapsed since their production, rendering it difficult to determine authorship. All interviews were recorded and transcribed in full.

2.7 Research, part two: the community

In order to understand the discourses around language (including the language practices) of teachers and students in classrooms, it was necessary to gain an understanding of language discourses in the wider communities in which those teachers and students lived. For this reason (and for my own enjoyment), I lived and worked closely with local people in Nalae every day, whether this was in the district centre or in the outlying villages, aiming to take on as fully as possible the role of participant observer.

Although I rented a small house on my own and had research equipment there, I spent most of my time in the district centre at the District Education Bureau or at friends’ and colleagues’ homes, gardens and shop-fronts. I worked, ate and socialized with them and,
once back in my home, wrote field notes not only on how they used language, but on what
they said about it and about being Kmhmu or Lao in Nalae. Similarly, when in the villages I
stayed in the homes of teachers or village Heads and bathed, ate, and socialized with them
and their families – experiences which added to the richness of my data on language,
ethnicity and education in Nalae and to the richness of my own experience there.

2.8 Research, part three: the classroom

2.8.1 Classroom visits
During the initial three months of the research, visits were made to at least two classrooms
each week, including focal and non-focal classes. With the beginning of the new academic
year and the selection of the focal classes, an alternate weeks system was adopted: one week
would be spent making visits to focal classrooms and the next week spent transcribing the
lessons recorded there. Occasional visits to non-focal classrooms or unexpected events
sometimes disturbed this routine, but it was for the most part maintained. At the beginning
of the research or for visits to the further villages, I was accompanied to the village by a
DEB official who did not observe lessons. However, after the first couple of months (sooner
for the nearby villages) I was allowed to visit the three focal classrooms on my own.

On each classroom visit, I was generally able to video record up to three hours of lessons.
Additional recording was impossible due to the lack of electricity in the villages, limited
electricity in the district centre (for charging batteries), and a limited number of batteries.

2.8.2 Classroom data collection
For the first month of the research, classroom visits involved only observation and some
note taking. From this initial period of unstructured observation, a structured observation
code was developed. This code was then further refined throughout the research period and
used in tandem with the video recording of lessons.
2.8.2.1 The observation code

Some researchers who have used ethnographic methods in classroom contexts argue that units of analysis should be based on how participants themselves name their behavior (e.g. Mehan, 1979: 27-28). Other researchers have attempted to devise inventories of classroom behaviors which can be applied universally regardless of who the particular participants (or 'subjects') are (e.g. Sinclair and Coulthard, 1975). The first approach is considered inappropriate here as the unit of interest in the present study – the code switched utterance – generally occurs too frequently and too spontaneously for teachers and students to be acutely aware of and thus able to comment on (Heller, 1988a: 6). The second approach is also considered inappropriate as regular behaviors can vary greatly from context to context, except at the most general of levels. I thus developed my own system of naming and manually recording classroom language behaviors, which can be classified as a 'category' system (Chaudron, 1988: 17).

This 'category' system of coding not only recorded selected behaviors every time they occurred, but recorded all speech behavior in the classroom using a series of codes. The codes are listed in appendix one. The coding system noted the time (in increments of approximately 5 minutes or when something especially noteworthy occurred), the participant (teacher, student, students, with numbers to differentiate students where necessary) speech behavior (what the speaker was actually doing with each utterance), language (Lao or Kmhmu), and any other issues of interest, including but not limited to movement, gesture and prosody, for example:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>participant</th>
<th>Speech behavior</th>
<th>Language</th>
<th>notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15.32</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>Ch.pr</td>
<td>L</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>T</td>
<td>Rt</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Teacher raises voice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>S1</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>L</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>S2</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>K</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ch. pr. = check progress (teacher checks students' progress on task)
rt = repeat utterance
r = reply (students reply to teacher question/check)
L = Lao
K = Kmhmu

Although detail was sometimes limited due to time constraints, the main purpose of the coded observation notes was to support the video recordings, in particular by noting down any information which was not picked up on the video, especially gestures off screen and other contextual information, as well as gaps between tapes. In this regard, they were particularly useful. The system was also useful in increasing my familiarity with what was occurring linguistically in every lesson.

2.8.2.2 Video recordings

Video recordings were used here to obtain as full a record as possible of classroom interaction, including proxemics and kinesics as well as purely oral communication.

Although in the past this method was a hallmark of microethnography (Watson-Gegeo, 1997: 138) and not generally pursued by those less concerned with visual cues, it seems that technological advances have made it common place in classroom research today.

Recordings were begun after the initial familiarization period of the research (approximately six weeks). The camera was placed as inconspicuously as possible, usually on an
unoccupied desk at the back of the room, in order to cause minimal distraction to the teacher and students and to obtain a wide shot of the classroom. It was occasionally moved to a desk nearer the front when students were reading at the board with their backs to the room. Of course the students (and teachers) were fascinated with the video camera on first seeing it and loved to see themselves on the screen. However, when engaged in their classroom activities, they quickly became oblivious to its presence, a phenomenon which has been noted by other classroom researchers (e.g. Plowman, 1999).

2.8.3 Transcription of classroom data
All the classrooms recordings were transcribed in full, including pauses and significant proxemic, kinesic and prosodic features such as changes in body position or speech volume. For some recordings, a native Kmhmu speaker was enlisted to assist with this task by repeating recorded utterances slowly and sometimes providing Lao translations of the Kmhmu. However, actual transcription was always carried out by me.

2.8.4 Analysis of classroom data
Using the classroom data, I was able to compile a coded transcript for each recorded lesson. This was modified and developed from the original observation code to include: a margin for footnotes, speaker, transcript, language, act, interaction type, and participants. An example of a completed analysis table is given in appendix two. Below is a short extract.

Lao language is written in normal style text, Kmhmu is in bold, and words or phrases which could be either Lao or Lao words borrowed into Kmhmu are underlined.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>Leo tit təm go meh (?) ti.</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Inst</td>
<td>Mgt</td>
<td>3:cl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yèèng (?) hnaay, ci lav ca’ g’mé’?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ee. Tit təm yo’.</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Meh me’ pe khoa cháî lè maañ, aan ge gi pe bwan/li lav ca’ g’me’.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>[reading aloud] [loud] Tha:o Yangli:</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>R al</td>
<td>Cont</td>
<td>3:cl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[quiet; fast] Ge gi meh thaco Yangli ci lav, te va leuang (?)</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Fr</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

T = teacher  
K = Kmhmµu  
L = Lao  
Inst = instruction  
Rt = repeat  
R al = read aloud  
Fr = frame  
Mgt = management  
Cont = content  
3:cl = third grade, whole class

The speaker, language and act columns were all taken from the original observation code, although the term ‘act’ has been used here instead of ‘behavior’. This is because the notion is akin to the idea of the ‘speech act’ first described by Austin (e.g., 1962) and further
developed by Searle (e.g., 1969), among others. Most basically, the idea of the speech act is
derived from the fact that when people say things, they are not only speaking but doing
something. For example, by issuing forth a particular utterance a speaker may be taking the
action of thanking, apologizing, or promising, or in a classroom setting, affirming a
response, correcting or scolding. Searle emphasized the significance of the speech act to the
point of asserting that it is the performance of the speech act which ‘constitutes the basic
unit in linguistic communication’ (Searle, 2000 [1957]: 254).

Speech act theory has been criticized for the vagueness of the concept of the speech act,
particularly with regards to grammatical units of speech: what does a speech act look like?
Can it be a word or a phrase or a sentence or even a series of sentences (Leech, 1983)? The
concept has also been criticized for the overly constraining taxonomic model which requires
that an utterance have a fixed classification as only one speech act. It has been argued that
some utterances could be classified as a variety of speech acts depending on the context and
the intentions of the speaker, which can be difficult if not impossible to determine (ibid).

However, here the aim was not to break classroom discourse down according to a fixed
inventory of speech acts, or to label utterances as definitively one act or another. Rather, the
sorting of classroom discourse according to speech behaviors, or acts, was used tentatively
as a heuristic tool among others to assist in the exploration of patterns and tendencies.
Where the nature of an act was uncertain, it was given multiple or new categorisations and
marked as such. Speech act classifications used in the analysis of classroom transcripts are
listed under the ‘classroom observation codes’ in appendix one.

A further classification used in the analysis table was the ‘interaction type’. This allowed
utterances or exchanges to be coded at or above the level of the act according to the general
type of interaction which they constituted. The interaction type classification was based on
Ferguson’s (2003) three functions of classroom code switching, which were derived from a
survey of the literature on code switching in post-colonial classroom contexts and included
'curriculum access', 'classroom management' and 'interpersonal relations' (Ferguson, 2003: 39). In the present study, these were called 'content', 'management' and 'interpersonal' interactions. A fourth interaction type was also added: metalinguistic. This included any utterance or exchange in which teachers and/or students specifically and explicitly engaged in second language teaching and learning. For example, the questioning and explanation of the meaning of an unfamiliar word, or the drilling of pronunciation are metalinguistic interaction types, although in a Lao language lesson the pronunciation drill could also be considered a content teaching interaction.

As the above example indicates, like classroom speech acts, interaction types were not used as definitive categorizations, and nor were they considered mutually exclusive. Although some acts or exchanges were generally classified as a particular interaction type, at times they may also have had other purposes. Thus a joke may have been both interpersonal and content, or interpersonal and management; a language teaching exchange may have been content and metalinguistic; and a comment in the mother tongue may have been interpersonal and metalinguistic. Like speech acts, interaction types were used tentatively and flexibly in the exploration of patterns of language use, not as definitive categorizations or as an analytical end in themselves.

Other classifications which were made on the analysis tables included the speaker, participants, and language. Speaker obviously refers to who made the utterance, in this case noted as the teacher, the students, or one student. The 'participants' column allowed for more specific details to be given. For example, if the utterance was made by a pair or small group of students, this was noted. Also, as classrooms were multigrade and teachers were generally moving back and forth between grades, it was necessary to note with which grade the transcribed interaction was occurring. Thus the participants may have been 'grade 1' or 'grade 2' for example.
The 'language' column, although apparently straightforward, posed certain difficulties. In this column, the language of the utterance(s) was noted as Lao or Kmhmu. However, due to a considerable amount of lexical borrowing from Lao into Kmhmu, it was not always simple to distinguish a string of borrowed items (Kmhmu speech) from a code switched utterance (Lao speech), particularly as Kmhmu does not have grammatical inflection which would distinguish borrowed items from switches, and usually no phonological assimilation of borrowed items occurs. This problem is discussed in more detail at the beginning of chapter seven. At this point, it will be noted only that problematic stretches of speech were not coded in the language column and that uncertainty was indicated on the transcript by dividing transcribed text into Lao in normal style text, Kmhmu in bold text, and 'indeterminate language' in underlined text.

2.8.5 Teacher interviews

As with the policy interviews, the teacher interviews provide a 'reading of readings'. That is, they allow us to consider how teachers read the (spoken) texts of the classroom: what their conscious motivations and understandings are of the ways in which they and their students use language. Teacher interviews were also designed to provide some insight into teachers’ more general attitudes and orientations to minority ethnicity and language in the local and national context. This was intended to contribute to a richer understanding of their classroom language choices in relation to official discourses: what teachers say they do and why they say they do it does not always correspond to what they actually do and what their deeper motivations and rationales might be. The interviews allow us to consider teachers’ language use in terms of their own explanations as well as our interpretations of their more general language ideologies. Added to the analysis of classroom language data, this gives us three layers of information to explore, compare and combine: how teachers and students talk, how teachers say they talk and why, and what else might be influencing how they (say they) talk and why.
Interviews were semi-structured, allowing for some comparison across interviewees while still allowing teachers to take the discussion in their own directions. Interview questions focused on teachers’ backgrounds, including education and training; their language use in the community; their attitudes to languages in the community and the country; their beliefs regarding classroom language use; their classroom language practices; and their understandings of and attitudes to education policy. The duration of the interviews was approximately one hour and all interviews were recorded and transcribed in full.

2.9 Reliability and validity of the research

2.9.1 The community and classroom research

The reliability and validity of case study research is sometimes questioned by those who favor large-scale quantitative studies. However, as noted in section 2.3.3 above, the case study can provide in-depth and accurate information where larger scale studies may provide greater scope but with less richness, particularly in the field of education. As Vulliamy (Vulliamy, 1990: 12) explains, the case study can maximize ecological validity; that is, it can accurately represent ‘the realities of teaching in a natural or conventional setting’ whereas quantitative methods such as questionnaire surveys cannot penetrate what Deutscher called ‘the gap between words and deeds’ (Deutscher 1973 in Vulliamy, 1990: 12); that is, the gap between what people say they do and what they really do. This gap can be especially large with respect to code switching practices, where speakers are often unaware of their language choices (Heller, 1988a: 6). It can also be significant when respondents are being asked to report behaviors which they may understand to be in conflict with government or school policy, as is the case with mother tongue education in Laos.

This is not to argue, however, that the methods employed in any case study are necessarily valid and reliable. Rather, it is up to the researcher to design a study which maximizes validity and reliability and to implement checks on these throughout the implementation.

Sturman (1999: 110) provides nine guidelines for maximizing the credibility of case studies:
a) Procedures for data collection should be explained.

b) Data collected should be displayed and ready for re-analysis.

c) Negative instances should be reported.

d) Bias should be acknowledged.

e) Fieldwork analyses need to be documented.

f) The relationship between assertion and evidence should be clarified.

g) Primary evidence should be distinguished from secondary and description from interpretation.

h) Diaries or logs should track what was actually done during different stages of the study.

i) Methods should be devised to check the quality of data.

These guidelines were adhered to for the present study, as can be seen in the preceding description of the methods employed, in the presentation and discussion of data in the following chapters, and in the appendices to this thesis.

Regarding the last point listed above, a common method for checking the quality of the data in case studies is triangulation; that is, the checking of data and data sources against other data and other sources (Sturman, 1999: 110). Because of the great variation in language practices among teachers, however, triangulation across classrooms and teachers would not have been a fruitful technique of quality control: just because teacher A’s language use was or was not paralleled by teacher B’s would not mean that it was or was not teacher A’s genuine approach. However, as was mentioned above, focal case study classrooms were chosen for the apparent naturalness of the teachers, for their demonstration of their
understanding of the purpose of the research, and for observed consistency in teaching practices over time.

The quality of the data analysis and interpretation was checked in consultation with participants. Each focal case study teacher was given a summary of initial analyses and interpretations (face to face) and asked whether these were plausible. All teachers agreed that they were plausible and occasionally provided extra explanation, which was then incorporated into the interpretation presented here.

2.9.2 The policy research
As with the community and classroom research, the validity and reliability of the policy research derive from its adherence to Sturman's (1999) nine guidelines. In particular, it derives from the explanation of policy data collection and analysis procedures, the displaying of textual evidence, and the explanation of the relationship between evidence and assertion. The quality of the data was ensured through the consultation with several sources within and outside the Ministry of Education in the selection of policy texts for analysis, and through the selection of several interviewees to allow for the triangulation of interview data across respondents. For the interviews, validity was also increased through the selection of interviewees already known to me personally and with whom I had built a close working relationship over the previous four years.

2.10 A note on language

2.10.1 Language proficiency of the researcher
This research could not have been carried out without a degree of fluency in both Lao and Kmhmu. English is not spoken by the vast majority of people in Nalae, and certainly not by primary school teachers, students and villagers. Nor did my two counterparts at the DEB speak the language. Even if English speakers had been available as interpreters, interaction with participants, observation of everyday language use, and analysis of data would have been severely impeded by the inability to speak and understand Lao and Kmhmu.
Fortunately, having worked in Laos for four years already and having studied the language while there, I was already fluent in spoken and written Lao at the time of my fieldwork. I was not, however, fluent in Kmhmu. I had learned some basic Kmhmu in Australia before leaving for the fieldwork and spent my first two to three months there developing a working fluency in the language. Although my Kmhmu language proficiency has never been high, by the time I began recording and transcribing lessons it was enough to allow me to understand most of what was being said in the classroom in Kmhmu and to have everyday conversations with students and other villagers in the language. In those cases where I did not understand some or all of a recorded utterance, I relied on my native Kmhmu-speaking counterparts and their relatives to provide slow repetitions and translations into Lao after watching the video recording. This meant that I now understand all the Kmhmu (and Lao) in the lesson transcripts used in this study.

2.10.2 Transcriptions and orthographies

Lao speech has not been transcribed here in the Lao alphabet, as it is assumed that most readers of this thesis will not be Lao-speakers. Another reason for this is that an extra level of transcription would have further complicated the visual representation of the texts, which is already rather dense. Instead, Lao speech is transcribed using a Latin orthography.

As no standard Latin orthography for Lao exists, and those employed by well-known scholars of Laos tend to be internally inconsistent or fail to represent the entirety of phonemes in the language (c.f. Evans, 2002) an orthography has been developed specifically for use here. This orthography aims to be complete and consistent while remaining close to the English alphabet and easy for non-linguists to read. A list of letters used in this orthography, their corresponding Lao letters, and International Phonetic Alphabet symbols is provided in appendix three.

This orthography has not been used, however, for Lao words which are commonly used in English and already have well-known transcriptions. This is the case, for example, with
place names such as ‘Nalae’ and ‘Vientiane’ and the names of ethnic groups such as ‘Tai Lue’.

For Kmhmu, the orthography developed by Simana et al (Simana et al., 1994) is used here, as this is perhaps the most well established Latin orthography and is easy for non-linguists to read. A list of symbols and their corresponding phonemes in Kmhmu is also provided in appendix four.

Text samples in the following chapters are presented in the original language and with a translation, but with no detailed interlinear gloss of individual linguistic units. This is also to avoid unnecessary complication, particularly as the analyses here do not focus on the structural characteristics of code switching. However, in cases where the gloss of individual units is necessary in order to understand the particular motivations for or characteristics of a switch or to shed light on the analysis in any other way, it is provided.

It should be noted that descriptions of speaker movement, gestures, prosody or other significant cues are given in English in square brackets ([...]) in the transcription of the original utterance, but not in the English translation beneath it.
3 Language policy, ethnic minorities and education: A review of the literature

3.1 Introduction

This research combines the analysis of Lao government policy discourses with the analysis of ethnic minority classroom code switching practices in order to explore the ways in which those practices reproduce, contest or adapt national level discourses on ethnicity, language and education. Until now, there has been no research published on this topic in Laos. In fact the literature on language in the Lao state consists of only one book chapter (Enfield, 1999) and the literature on ethnic minority education in Laos is limited to one academic paper (Kosonen, 2005), one NGO report (Power, 2002) and some brief sections of a few other donor reports.

The literature mentioned above from the fields of historical anthropology, social theory and discourse analysis will be discussed in this chapter in order to provide a background and framework for the present research and to identify the gaps which it seeks to fill. The literature on code-switching practices will be discussed at the end of chapter five, immediately before the classroom case studies are presented.

3.2 The state, minorities, and national identity

Over the past two decades, the way in which nation states and their members produce and reproduce discourses of national identity has been at the centre of academic discussion. Much of the discussion has been inspired by the work of Benedict Anderson (e.g., 1983), which drew attention to the importance of the print media and thus language standardization in the creation of shared national identities. Other work in the field has explored the ways in which governments include and exclude minorities through the articulation of different discourses on nationhood (e.g. Grillo, 1998), and the many ways in which national identity is marked by governments and individuals alike in everyday practice (e.g. Bilig, 1995). This work on discourses of identity within the nation state is relevant to the present research in that one of the central aims of this research is to identify how the Lao state imagines itself and how it imagines the role of ethnic minorities within it. The research presented here thus takes as given that members of the state, as institutions and individuals, actively produce and reproduce, or 'imagine', discourses on what it means to be a nation state and a member of a nation state through avenues ranging from the media to the education system, the arts, the entertainment industry, and everyday ways of talking and being.
However, beyond this point the work of Anderson, Grillo, Bilig and other theorists of nationalism is limited in relevance to the present research. Critiques of Anderson’s writings include the point that he refers to the process of identity creation which occurs through discursive means without exploring how those discourses are created and legitimated (Silverstein, 2000), and the point that his textual examples are limited in scope to precisely those texts which form part of the national literary canon rather than including those with different, or dissident voices (ibid.). Anderson has also been criticised for ignoring linguistic heterogeneity in the nation state, arguing not that linguistic homogeneity is a necessary condition for the creation of a nationalist consciousness but that it is an emergent effect (Kroskrity, 2000b).

Furthermore, although Anderson does consider the role of oral communication in the (re)production of nationalist discourses, his research was carried out in a context where literacy was well-established and the print media were strong. In fact, his focus is precisely on this media as instrumental in the creation of ethnic and national identities. The relevance of Anderson’s work to the Lao context, where illiteracy is the norm and the consumption of print media is almost negligible, is thus limited.

Yet perhaps most importantly, the work of these theorists, although it sometimes draws attention to the role of language practices in reproducing discourses on national identity, does not aim to focus on language as a specific area of concern in itself. Their work discusses language practices in order to build a picture of nationalism, while the present research refers to discourses on national and ethnic identity in order to build a picture of language practices: how the state regulates language use and why, how representatives of the state talk about language, and how language practices in local minority communities are consistent or otherwise with official orientations.
3.3 Language and power in the state

Language use within the state and its relationship to power differentials between groups was theorised by Bourdieu (e.g., 1977a, 1977b, 1991), whose work in the field of social theory is now commonly cited in discussions of minority language practices. Bourdieu recognised that the mastery of certain languages (the languages spoken by socially dominant majorities) serves as a form of capital: it is an avenue to economic advantage due to the fact that it is those languages which are used in educational institutions and prestigious workplaces.

According to Bourdieu’s theory, the value of these languages as capital in a purely economic sense is paralleled by a value as symbolic capital. That is, the majority language does not only have value as a path to economic advancement, but as a symbol of social and cultural advantage. The economic particularities underlying its symbolic value are then misrecognized as natural conditions: the majority language is seen to be inherently superior to other languages, and its legitimacy as the language of the state is justified by this fact.

By enforcing the majority language as the standard language of communication in the national context (in the government and bureaucracy, in state-owned institutions, in the media), and as the medium of instruction in schools and universities, the state reinforces the legitimacy of that language as opposed to others, and its economic and symbolic dominance. The education system serves to entrench this dominance by reproducing (through teaching) the misrecognition that it is a natural fact rather than a historical particularity.

For Bourdieu, the greater legitimacy of the majority language is a ‘fact’ accepted not only by its native speakers, but by speakers of minority languages too, whether those languages be sociolects such as the language of the working class, or regional languages and dialects such as Breton and Provençal in France. That is, even those whose languages (and cultures) are delegitimized by the dominance of the majority language and who are thus most disadvantaged in the process of domination participate in their own economic and symbolic
subordination. This is what Bourdieu calls 'symbolic domination' (Bourdieu, 1991). For Bourdieu, prices on the 'linguistic marketplace'—the higher value of French than Breton, for example—are unconsciously inculcated in speakers to the point that they become widely accepted within a society more or less regardless of linguistic or cultural affiliation. Bretons aspire to mastering the French language and esteem it more highly than their own language in all contexts except those very intimate ones in which the values of the 'linguistic marketplace' are temporarily 'suspended' and in-group solidarity takes precedence.

Bourdieu's conceptualisation of every linguistic exchange as a potential 'act of power' (Bourdieu, 1991) which expresses economic, social and symbolic relations of dominance and subordination is highly pertinent to the present research. It is clear that within the Lao context, Lao is the language which provides access to education and employment, which is reinforced as legitimate by the state, and which is presented as naturally superior by the education system. Minority languages, on the other hand, are iconically linked with social disadvantage and the marginalization of their speakers is maintained as a result. It thus seems fitting to apply Bourdieu's theory of linguistic marketplaces and symbolic capital to this situation, and the research data will certainly be examined in relation to these ideas later in the thesis. Yet Bourdieu's theory, although relevant and useful to some extent, is problematic.

Firstly, Bourdieu's theory was based on the French context. From the establishment of the French Republic, linguistic integration of the territory was a priority, and one which has been achieved to an impressive degree. Today, regional languages and dialects are spoken only by a few relatively small minorities, and always in tandem with the national language (although migrant languages are certainly widely spoken). Laos, on the other hand, contains vast areas of land, inaccessible except on foot, on which hundreds of small ethnic minority groups live. Although some of these groups are now being given access to formal education and Lao language media, they cannot be said to have been integrated into the wider Lao
‘linguistic market’, or indeed any market. The notion of commonly accepted language values in Laos is thus dubious at the very least. In fact, the degree to which we can speak of any territory being linguistically integrated has been questioned in the literature (c.f. Woolard, 1985: 740) – even well established national languages and their associated language values do not permeate every corner of every site of social interaction.

Perhaps more importantly, Bourdieu’s theory may have been based on familiarity with French history and the French tertiary education system, but it was not grounded in empirical micro-level linguistic research. In fact, Bourdieu never carried out any research among the minority language speakers to whom his work refers. The research which has been done in those contexts suggests that Bourdieu’s theory is in fact ‘overly deterministic and monolithic’ (Woolard, 1985: 746), and that ‘a less totalizing conception of societal reproduction’ is required (Gal, 1989: 354). As these researchers and others in their field have shown (see for example Martin-Jones and Heller, 1996, Rampton, 1999a, Roberts and Sarangi, 2004), speakers of minority languages, although they may reproduce discourses on the superiority and desirability of majority languages to some extent, do accord high value to their own languages and do not simply ‘suspend’ the rules of a single established, integrated linguistic marketplace, but operate alternate marketplaces altogether.

One of the aims of the present research, then, is to determine whether local language practices in Laos are consistent with Bourdieu’s theory or whether, like the studies mentioned above, the data provide evidence that Bourdieu’s theory is indeed overstated, if not flawed. Either way, this research on Laos contributes to filling the empirical gap in Bourdieu’s work.

We have seen that the ways in which governments and minorities reproduce discourses of identity within the nation state, and the unequal power relations between them as expressed and reproduced through language, have been extensively theorised (if somewhat unsatisfactorily in the case of the latter). It remains to explore, however, what has been
written about these issues specifically in the Lao context and how this might relate to the present study. Unfortunately the literature is very limited, as will be seen below.

3.4 Ethnic minorities, minority policy and language in Laos

The European literature on ethnic minorities in Laos begins with the brief ethnographic accounts included in reports by early French explorers such as Delaporte (1998 [1873]) and Garnier (e.g., 1996 (1885)). These accounts describe the various ethnic groups with which the explorers came into contact, often focusing on appearance, and offering mostly naïve hypotheses on group origins, as well as evolutionist comments on their degree of civilization. The ethnolinguistic classifications and cultural evaluations made in these reports provide insight into the historical context of present-day Lao classifications and attitudes and are occasionally referred to in the thesis for this reason. Beyond this point, however, these early studies are of little relevance to the present research, and unfortunately few other ethnographic explorations have been done in Laos since this time.

One study which was done is Izikowitz' (1951) classic monograph on the Lamet. This is interesting for the picture it draws of the traditional culture and livelihood practices of a people from the same ethnolinguistic family and geographical area as the Kmhmu, and perhaps even more so for the insight it gives into historical relations between the ethnic Lao and highland peoples in the area. Unfortunately, however, no ethnographic monographs were produced on the Kmhmu themselves during this period.

In fact, remarkably little ethnographic work has been done with the Kmhmu at all. Lindell et al. have published a series of folktales collected as a result of Lund University's Kammu Language and Folklore project (Lindell et al., 1977, 1980a, 1989), a description of Kmhmu festivals and music (Lindell et al., 1982), and a description of the Northern Kmhmu kinship model (Lindell et al., 1979a). These publications made the first inroads to recording Western Kmhmu tradition on paper, and to stimulating an increased interest in the preservation of Kmhmu culture even among the bearers of the tradition themselves.
However, the data for these studies were collected (or in the case of Tayanin, recollected) outside of Laos, often from Kmhmu people who had not lived in Nalae for decades. The studies themselves are likewise removed from the Kmhmu context: the stories and other folklore are not situated in a Kmhmu society changing in time. Nor are they analysed in terms of belief systems and other cultural practices. Furthermore, these projects like the ones before them leave the relationships between language, education, ethnicity and the State in Nalae uncharted. Other descriptive pieces on the Kmhmu in Laos have been published by Damrong Tayanin (1991, 1994), a Kmhmu man himself and colleague of Lindell’s at Lund University in Sweden, and by Souksavang Simana and Elisabeth Preisig (1997b) at the Lao National Cultural Research Institute under the Ministry of Information and Culture. However, these pieces likewise fail to theoretically situate or explain the cultural practices they describe or the discourses they transcribe. Nor do these books address the issues of minority languages and power in the Lao state, as the present study aims to do.

One excellent ethnographic study of the Kmhmu Rok has been done by Olivier Évrard (2006). The book focuses on livelihood practices in southern Nalae in relation to national forestry and agriculture policies, and was based on detailed and extended ethnographic research followed by careful and insightful analysis. The study is useful for the discussion presented in this thesis in terms of the valuable ethnographic information it provides on the Kmhmu people of Nalae. More particularly, Évrard’s work is of value to the present study in that it too examines discourses on the national level and the local level, and the relationship between the two: that is, the relationship between policy and practice and the power dynamics between ethnic Kmhmu people and the government in the Lao state. It therefore provides an interesting point of comparison for the data presented here. What the book ultimately presents, however, is a study of livelihood practices and not a close examination of policy discourses. Nor, of course, is it a study of language and ethnicity in the classroom.
The work which has been done on Kmhmu language in Laos is mostly in the field of descriptive linguistics. Simana et al (1994) have produced a Kmhmu Ou - Lao dictionary and Svantesson et al (1994) a Kmhmu Yuan – Lao dictionary as well as a series of papers on Kmhmu grammar and morphology. Suwilai (e.g. Suwilai, 2006) has analysed tonogenesis (the development of tones) in Kmhmu, while Proschan has published several papers on Kmhmu grammar and semantics (e.g., 1997, 2001). Proschan's work, however, also deals with issues of Kmhmu identity as expressed in emic ethnonyms (Proschan, 1997) and origin myths (Proschan, 2001). His insightful semantic analyses are referred to in the following chapters, yet once again this work cannot be said to fill the gap in the literature on the Kmhmu (or ethnic minorities in general) in relation to government policy, language and power in Laos.

Some of the most significant work to have been done on ethnic minorities in Laos has been undertaken as part of the broader project of writing Lao history. Perhaps the most well-known historians of Laos are two Australian academics whose work is referred to extensively in the present study: Grant Evans and Martin Stuart-Fox. Stuart-Fox's contributions to the literature on Lao history include a series of articles and book chapters (e.g. Stuart-Fox, 1993, 2003, 2004) and several comprehensive historical volumes (c.f., 1986, 1996, 1997).

One argument running through Stuart-Fox's work is that ethnic minorities were largely excluded from the Lao state prior to the 1975 Communist takeover (see for example Stuart-Fox, 1997: 2, 77, 109). Stuart-Fox argues that it was only under the new government that efforts were made to address the social and economic needs of the minorities and to include them in official discourses on Lao history and identity (see for example Stuart-Fox, 1997: 80, 103, Stuart-Fox, 2003: 85-86). He claims that this was necessary due to the fact that the Communists relied heavily on the support of the minorities during the struggle to take power (Stuart-Fox, 1997: 79, Stuart-Fox, 1993: 115). According to Stuart-Fox, despite the efforts
of the Communist Pathet Lao during the war, and later the Communist government of the Lao PDR, Lao chauvinism and exclusivism have persisted to some extent and an ethnically-Lao oriented nationalism has re-emerged in present-day Laos. These must be combated by the government’s promotion of a non ethnically-defined Lao nationalism (Stuart-Fox, 1993: 116).

Stuart-Fox’s arguments are not particularly contentious. In fact, it is these arguments which are commonly heard in academic and non-academic discussions of the Lao revolution and the role of minorities therein (Evans, 2002: 134). Certainly the data collected for the present study—official government texts, spoken commentaries on those texts, interviews with teachers and other villagers, and observation of language practices—support the view that the war was fought largely in minority areas and by minority people, and that the Lao Communists actively and explicitly included (and continue to include) those minorities in their social development programmes and official representations of the state, unlike previous regimes.

Despite the popularity and apparent veracity of the views he proffers, Stuart-Fox has been criticised for overstating the role of the minorities in the Communist victory and failing to recognize the importance of other factors such as Vietnamese military support (c.f. Evans, 2002: 134). While he may not emphasize the role of the Vietnamese in particular, Stuart-Fox does recognize the importance of factors other than ethnic minority support in the Communist takeover of 1975 (c.f. Stuart-Fox, 1997: 64). Furthermore, as already noted, the central role of ethnic minorities in the revolution is confirmed by much evidence. It is also confirmed by other historians of Laos (Pholsena, 2006: 4). The criticism that Stuart-Fox focuses excessively on the revolutionary role of the ethnic minorities thus appears rather harsh. His work on Lao history and historiography, and particularly his accounts of interethnic relations, are made ample use of in the following chapters. They are, however, combined with the work of Evans.
Evans' writings include several books (Evans, 1995, Evans, 1998a, Evans, 1999c, Evans, 2002) and a variety of articles and book chapters (e.g. Evans and Rowley, 1990, Evans, 2003), which take an anthropological approach to the narration and analysis of history, the examination of Lao historiography, and the exploration of revolutionary discourses. With regard to ethnic minorities, some of Evans' main points include the arguments that: 1. pre-Communist regimes, particularly the Royal Lao Government, did make efforts to interact with and include ethnic minorities in the state; 2. while minorities were instrumental in the Communist victory, their role is generally accorded too much importance; 3. while the Communist leadership articulated discourses of interethnic equality, discourses of Lao-centrism persisted in some sites even from immediately after the Communist take-over; and 4. the revolutionary discourse of interethnic solidarity and equality is contradicted in present-day Laos by re-emergent ethnic Lao-centric government discourses to form a strange melange of cultural and civic nationalism (Evans, 1998a, 2002).

As was noted above, Evans criticises Stuart-Fox for failing to recognize the first two of these arguments, however, this criticism seems excessively harsh. In fact Evans' arguments can be accepted without discrediting Stuart-Fox's, and vice versa: Evans' points that pre-revolutionary regimes did make some efforts to appeal to the ethnic minorities and that the minorities were not the main factor in the Communist victory do not negate the fact that the Communists were overwhelmingly more focused on minority issues than their predecessors, or that they relied heavily on minority support to win the war. Nor do these two facts negate Evans' points. Evans' third argument regarding ethnic minorities is echoed in the work of another anthropological historian of Laos (c.f. Pholsena, 2006: 57-60) and borne out in the data presented here, and his fourth is corroborated by the work of both Stuart-Fox (2003) and Pholsena (2006). Evans' historical analyses are thus considered to be valid and relevant, and are referred to frequently in the chapters which follow.
There are, however, some fair criticisms of Evans’ work on Lao history, the two most notable being that it has an ethnic Lao bias, ignoring the perspectives of ethnic minorities in the state, and that it has a geographical bias toward Vientiane and Luang Prabang at the expense of the rest of the country (Pholsena, 2006: 12). These two shortcomings are significant, and it is one of the aims of the present research to compensate for such biases in the literature on Laos by offering close analysis and discussion of the discourses articulated by ethnic minority people themselves, living in predominantly ethnic minority areas of the country.

The only researcher to date to have produced a book-length study of the nationalist discourses around and of ethnic minority peoples in the Socialist and post-Socialist Lao state is Pholsena (2006). Pholsena states that the aim of her book is

   to study the nationalist discourse of the post-socialist Lao state... looking at the ways the state is uttering its discourse of legitimation within a context of multiethnicity. (Pholsena, 2006: 6)

and that

   analysis [is] structured around two poles: the state and individuals (i.e. educated members of ethnic minorities); between structure and agency, at the interface of nationalism and ethnicity. (Pholsena, 2006: 7)

Pholsena’s work is important for several reasons. Firstly, as was noted above, hers is the first detailed academic study of ethnic minorities and official discourses in Laos which explores historical and contemporary processes of nation-making not only from the perspective of the ethnic Lao majority, but of ethnic minority individuals themselves. It is the multisited structure of Pholsena’s study which allows her to do this: not only does she examine official state documents such as the Constitution and the national census, but she
carries out ethnographic research among ethnic minority people who have participated and continue to participate in the creation of the state.

Pholsena’s simultaneous focus on the national and the local, or state and individual and structure and agency, is shared by the research presented in this thesis. For this reason, the outcomes of her research provide an interesting point of comparison. Furthermore, one of the methods which Pholsena uses amounts to a discourse analysis of sorts. She pays close attention to the terminology of official texts and the ways in which the taxonomies the texts present are taken up outside those texts. She also examines comments and conversations as ‘narratives’, looking carefully at the agents and processes constructed therein. This is done not only in her book, but also in the several articles which she has published (e.g. Pholsena, 2002, Pholsena, 2004). In this regard too her work is highly relevant to the present study.

Pholsena’s work has, however, been criticised on several counts: for ignoring ethnic Lao attitudes to ethnic minorities while focusing on minority attitudes to Lao; for homogenizing ethnic minorities as a group and ignoring age and gender differences within that group; for ignoring the experiences of northern ethnic minority people, many of whom were on the side of the Americans during the war; and perhaps most significantly, for underestimating the researcher’s subjectivity as an overseas Lao and as officially endorsed by the central authorities, which must render her something more in the eyes of her informants than the ‘mere witness’ she claims to be (c.f. Mayes, 2007).

Although significant, these criticisms are perhaps of less concern here than the fact that Pholsena’s work pays almost no attention to language issues in the Lao state’s project of nation-building, or in the consideration of minority people’s participation in that project. The only points made in relation to language in Pholsena’s ethnographic studies are that one of her informants never spoke his native (minority) language except with visitors from his home village, and that his daughters did not understand the language and found it amusing or strange (Pholsena, 2006: 195). Her discussion of government discourses includes no
specific reference to language policies, despite the fact that a consideration of these policies and their (non-) implementation would support her arguments on the ethnocentricity of Lao government approaches. More alarmingly, Pholsena takes for granted the status of Lao as the common language of the state. She asks whether rather than defining national membership in religious terms, as has been the case with the recent political instrumentalization of Buddhism in Laos, it might be preferable to conceptualise national identity on the basis of ‘a shared language and institutions’ (Pholsena, 2006: 72). To label Lao ‘a shared language’ is highly problematic in light of the fact that it is the native language of only around half the population and is not spoken at all in many parts of the country.

Admittedly Pholsena is not a linguist, but attention to language policy and the use of minority languages by the people she is studying would lend even greater weight to her arguments, in addition, of course, to adding greater depth to her study. The present research makes frequent reference to Pholsena’s insights into government discourses on ethnicity in Laos and into minority people’s own discourses on the same. However, it also aims to counter Pholsena’s lack of attention to language issues by presenting detailed, text-based analysis of government discourses, and close analysis of linguistic and other ethnographic data within a social, cultural and historical context.

Some historical and ethnographic work has, however, been done on the subject of language in Laos. Nick Enfield, whose main research concerns centre on formal linguistic description and processes of language contact and change (e.g. Enfield, 2003a, , 2005), has written a historical account of the establishment of Lao as a national language since 1975 (Enfield, 1999). Enfield’s chapter also considers contemporary language planning issues in historical perspective and provides interesting insight into the politicisation of particular features of the Lao language. The study is certainly important, being the only published academic work on the topic of historical and contemporary Lao language planning and a well-supported
overview of key language planning issues in Laos. However, it does not address minority language policy or planning issues, being focused rather on the development of the Lao language. Nor, of course, is it a study of minority language use, as is the research presented in this thesis.

3.5 Education in Laos

If to date ethnic minorities, minority policy and language in Laos have been given scant attention academically, studies of education in Laos have been almost absent from the literature on that country. There is one article which has addressed language-in-education issues in Laos with a focus on medium of instruction for ethnic minorities (Kosonen, 2005). This article provides a concise overview of current language-in-education policies and their implementation in Laos in comparison to the situations in Thailand and Cambodia. It also presents a useful summary of vernacular education initiatives carried out by non-government actors in these contexts, highlighting the fact that Laos is behind its neighbours in addressing the language needs of ethnic minority students and predicting that change will be difficult as long as current political orientations persist.

Kosonen’s article is useful as a brief introduction to language in ethnic minority education in Laos, and in particular as a comparative overview of the situation in these three neighbouring countries. It is also relatively comprehensive in that it mentions policy texts, the actual approaches of policy implementing agencies, and implementation on the ground, albeit brief in each area. However, this article necessarily constitutes only a first step in exploring the topic, being a short piece and being based on secondary data sources rather than ethnographic research or discourse analysis of the Lao policy texts themselves. The article also fails to note some important details, for example the fact that attempts to incorporate oral use of the mother tongue into Lao classroom teaching using the Concentrated Language Encounters method were initiated as part of an AusAID funded (and donor-designed) project rather than by the Lao Ministry of Education independently.
Prior to Kosonen’s work, a piece was published in 1982 on the state of Lao education following the Communist takeover (Chagnon and Rumpf, 1982). However, this book chapter was based only on official figures collected from government ministries and involved no independent observation of the situation: the authors of the research were limited by government restrictions on travel and independent movement, as were all foreigners at the time. Government figures from that period are clearly unreliable, as is demonstrated by the claim of a 100% literacy rate in 1984 (c.f. Evans, 1998b) and even now official statistics are somewhat questionable due to the inaccessibility of many parts of the country, which hinders data collection efforts, and to unsystematic collection methods. The conclusions of the study — that education access and enrolment rates had been vastly improved since 1975 — are thus rather dubious, although the authors’ suggestions that education quality may have been compromised and education development was the only way forward for the country remain pertinent.

More recently, Evans included a chapter on education in Socialist Laos in his book *The Politics of Ritual and Remembrance: Laos since 1975* (Evans, 1998a). This chapter clearly illustrates the role of institutionalised education as a political project in Socialist Laos and insightfully observes the educational changes which have occurred since 1975 with changes in political orientations and allegiances. Evans gives particular attention to the move away from Socialist propaganda and militaristic themes in primary school reading materials and the inclusion of religious and other (Lao) cultural content since the mid 1980s. He also notes the establishment of scholarship programmes in English-speaking countries and the establishment of private educational institutions, both far from the Socialist education model of the revolutionary period. Evans argues that these changes are consistent with the government’s shift away from Socialist discourses and toward a ‘retraditionalizing nationalism’ in the context of the collapse of the Socialist world and increasing globalisation.
Evans’ analysis of teaching materials provides indisputable support for his arguments. His insights into the overtly political aspect of Lao education are especially valuable for the present study, as is his account of changes in political and educational discourses since 1975. However, in this chapter Evans does not examine policies or curricula relating to ethnic minority education. This is unfortunate, as the observation of changes in this field would have lent further support to his arguments on the politicisation of Lao education and the shift away from revolutionary discourses. Related to this, there is no discussion of changes in language-in-education policy, apart from a mention of the necessary move away from Eastern-bloc languages toward English, which accompanied changes in scholarship programmes. This is also regrettable, as changes or otherwise in language policies likewise reflect the wider political changes which Evans notes. On the whole, while valuable, this chapter demonstrates the author’s urban, ethnic Lao bias, which has been noted elsewhere in the literature (Pholsena, 2006: 12) and which the present study aims to avoid.

Together with two studies focusing on the politics of English language teaching and development in Laos (Appleby et al., 2002, Sithirajvongsa and Goh, 2004b), a book chapter describing the context and development of an AusAID-funded ethnic minority teacher training project¹¹ (Souvanixay et al., 2002), and another chapter on a teacher upgrading project (Lachanthaboun et al., 2005), an article on secondary education policy in Laos (Sisavanh, 2003), a very brief description of education policy and planning in Laos from the French period until now (Sithirajvongsa and Goh, 2004b), and my own previous work (Cincotta, 2006), this is the extent of the English language academic literature on education in Laos. Aside from this meagre literature, there is an unpublished study (Bouasivith et al., 1996) into the history of Lao education, written by four Lao authors and sponsored by the Toyota Foundation. However, while the study outlines major education trends from the pre-colonial period to the present, and cites some key policy and planning documents, it lacks

¹¹ The Lao-Australia Basic Education Project, with which I worked before undertaking this research.
any considered analysis of these. Rather, it articulates the standard government line on society and education pre and post-1975 (inequalities pre-revolution, improvements post). Its structure and expression are also less than clear, rendering the content confusing at times. In sum, it falls short of generally accepted academic standards.

The only other work to have been published on education in Laos is a rather impressive number of donor reports, or sections of reports, on the subject. Only one of these, a report commissioned by Save the Children (UK) (Power, 2002), is focused specifically on ethnic minorities, language and education in Laos. In this report, Power provides a useful overview of language issues in education in Laos, including: a collection of significant statistics on ethnicity, language, and minority student education indicators; a review of relevant government policies; and data from interviews with education officials, teachers, parents and students. Her discussion at times demonstrates insight into the array of sensitive political issues around ethnic minority education in Laos. However, the study has several shortcomings.

Power is not experienced in the Lao context and nor is she an expert on Laos in the academic sense. She therefore presents the information and arguments she has elicited from her informants, but is unable to identify misinformation when faced with it. For example, she quotes a high-ranking Ministry of Information and Culture official who told her that speakers of Austroasiatic languages have more difficulty than speakers of Hmong-Mien or Sino-Tibetan languages when learning Lao (Power, 2002: 20): a statement which is contradicted by the evidence and by the typological similarity of the languages concerned12. She also quotes the same official claiming that the Ministry of Information and Culture was at the time developing ‘scripts’ (i.e. orthographies) for Hmong and Kmhmu, a project which

12 Unlike Hmong-Mien languages, the Mon-Khmer languages in Laos share a lack of inflection with Lao and an SVO sentence order. There is also a high degree of calquing from Lao and a high proportion of Lao-origin lexis in some of the Mon Khmer languages. Furthermore, some of these languages are tonal (eg Western Kmhmu), unlike the quoted official claims.
will 'take a long time to develop' (ibid: 27). In fact, Lao script orthographies already exist for these languages and were used by the government for education and propaganda during the late 70s and early 80s. The same official is quoted claiming Lao is used as a lingua franca between Akha and Lolo speakers in Phongsali province, when personal observation by myself and an American linguist working in Laos for forty years indicates that in fact it is Phunoy, Ho and the Akha dialects which most commonly serve this purpose (James Chamberlain, personal communication).

Furthermore, many of the arguments which Power presents on behalf of her informants have strong counterarguments; however, these are not mentioned. For example, one of the main arguments against mother-tongue education quoted by Power is that minority people need to know Lao, and that a mother-tongue education ‘to the exclusion of Lao’ would be unhelpful (Power, 2002: 29). However, the mother-tongue education models proposed by advocates in the Lao context are transitional programmes, which would make use of both languages from the early years and would facilitate rather than hinder the learning of Lao. Power also claims that the ‘most likely explanation for the continued use of Lao in primary school education are [sic] the financial and technical constraints within the system (ibid: 30). This does not explain the resistance to bilingual education programmes or related training even when grant (i.e. free) funds are readily available\(^\text{13}\). Perhaps Power’s greatest misunderstanding is to suggest that the policy climate is becoming more favourable toward minority languages in education. She bases this claim on a document by the UNDP in consultation with the Lao government (UNDP, 2001a). However, other policy and planning documents and their Lao producers’ interpretations of them suggest the opposite, as will be seen in the chapters which follow.

\(^{13}\) The Lao-Australia Basic Education Project, funded by a grant from AusAID, proposed a bilingual education component which was rejected by the Ministry. A symposium for Lao government officials on mother-tongue education, also funded by a free grant from the Swedish International Development Agency and UNICEF, was likewise rejected as was the provision of travel funding by SIDA for Lao officials to attend a conference in Thailand on minority language maintenance.
These misunderstandings and misrepresentations are perhaps due to the severe methodological limitations of Power's research: it was carried out in Vientiane province only, involved short visits to villages or institutions rather than prolonged ethnographic research (an issue with serious implications for the reliability of interview data), and relied mostly on informants' accounts of practice rather than first-hand observation. What little observation was done in schools was limited by the fact that Power does not speak Lao or a minority language and could therefore not follow easily what was going on. This also limited her access to texts and required that she rely on interpreters—sometimes one from English to Lao and another from Lao to the minority language, making her data third-hand by the time it reached her. In short, despite occasional insights such as the observations that current education practice in Laos is far from international understandings of best practice (Power, 2002: 37) and that Lao language policy is 'detrimental to the socio-economic development of the country and the empowerment of minority people' (ibid: 45), the report's usefulness is limited. It is not an in-depth academic study but a brief overview produced within the constraints of development consultancy. For this reason, its observations are noted and occasional reference made to its quantitative data, but beyond this its findings are not applied to the present study.

In addition to Power’s study, several other reports dealing with education and ethnic minorities have been published by donor agencies and NGOs working in Laos, although none of these addresses language in ethnic minority education exclusively. One of only two reports focused on ethnic minority education which take an ethnographic approach is titled Listening to the Village: Community Understandings and Attitudes Toward Education (Norway and Education, 2001). This report, while brief, presents a sensitive discussion of issues around education for ethnic minority people, often in those people’s own words. Unfortunately, however, it does not consider language issues in particular. Furthermore, village research was carried out by district and provincial education officials, which may have impacted on reliability. The second of these ethnographic reports was produced by the
Gender and Ethnic Minority Education Unit in the Lao Ministry of Education (UNESCO, 2004) but unfortunately lacks any sophisticated analysis of the issues which it identifies, many of which would have provided very useful starting points for further exploration.

An excellent summary of education policy, ethnic minorities policy, the Lao education system, education indicators, and challenges related to ethnic minority education is provided in the ADB’s Health and Education Needs of Minorities in the Greater Mekong Sub-Region: Lao PDR (ADB, 2000). Attention is also given to ethnic minority education in CARE International’s Indigenous Peoples Profile (Chamberlain et al., 1995), which gives an overview of education (including language-in-education) policy and planning, education indicators for minority groups, and education development projects focusing on minorities, as well as an annotated bibliography of development reports on ethnic minority education. The ILO’s Policy Study on Ethnic Minority Issues in Rural Development (ILO, 2000) is another report which features a useful section on ‘Ethnic Minority Policy and Education’, while the Participatory Poverty Assessment (ADB, 2001) also includes several pages dedicated to education.14 The World Bank’s ‘Schooling and Poverty in Lao PDR’ (2005) likewise provides detailed education statistics disaggregated by ethnicity and the report ‘Teaching in Lao PDR’ (World Bank and Lao Ministry of Education, 2007) presents an excellent overview of teacher issues with some reference to disparities among ethnic groups and between urban and rural populations. Some statistical information and a brief commentary is given on literacy rates among minorities and teacher ethnicity in the second National Human Development Report for Laos (UNDP, 2001b), and more comments are made on the state of Lao education in the third report (UNDP, 2006a). However, the 2002-2006 United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) for Lao PDR (UNDP, 2002) makes only passing mention of the specific educational challenges facing ethnic

14 Although the Assessment did not aim to focus only on ethnic minorities, most of the poorest regions and villages in Laos are inhabited by minority people and the study is thus primarily centred on those groups.
minorities and the 2007-2011 UNDAF notes in only a few lines the need to address majority-minority disparities in education (UNDP, 2006b). Similarly brief mention of ethnic minority issues is made in UNICEF’s report Children and their Families in the Lao People’s Democratic Republic (UNICEF 1996).

Like Power’s report, these documents provide useful overviews, statistics, and sometimes interview data and observations which can contribute something to our understanding of education issues for ethnic minorities in Laos. However, none of them is an academic study, all are limited in scope and depth, some mentioning minority education only in passing, and furthermore, most are more than a few years old. They therefore constitute a stimulating starting point for research into language in ethnic minority education in Laos, but not a reliable, in-depth and theorised body of literature on the topic.

The present work aims to contribute to the establishment of such a literature. In order to do this, it begins with a detailed text-based analysis of Lao policy, informed by a Critical Discourse Analysis model. Just what this model is will be discussed in the following section.

3.6 Reading Discourse Analysis

As explained above, the research presented in this thesis focuses both on government policy discourses and local practice. It is worth exploring here how the terms ‘policy’ and ‘discourse’ have been used in the literature and how policy discourses have been identified and analysed by various scholars.

The term ‘policy’ can be taken to refer to various things: official documents issued by governments; active measures taken by government agencies, for example the provision or denial of funding; and government directives as implemented by local actors on the ground. This problem in the definition of what constitutes policy and where its boundaries lie is common in the literature (Ball, 2006) and renders clear and consistent argumentation on the issues difficult.
The problem has been addressed by Davis, who suggests three levels of policy activity: the intended, the enacted, and the experienced (Davis, 1994). This three-fold distinction allows us to examine policy at multiple levels: as issued by its producers; as implemented (or not) by social actors engaged in the relevant activities, including policy makers themselves and those closer to the ground; and as lived by those whom it affects. A different distinction has been proposed by Stephen Ball (Ball, 2006), who analyses policy as text and as discourse. In Ball’s model, the contrast is between what is codified through written or spoken language, often ‘crude and simple’, and what is enacted in practice, usually ‘sophisticated, contingent, complex and unstable’ (Ball, 1993: 10 in Lo Bianco, 2008: 157). Ball’s definition is further refined by Lo Bianco, who distinguishes policy as text (in the same sense as Ball); policy as discourse, meaning the public talk around policy such as speeches and debates; and policy as performance, referring to the public enactment of policy (Lo Bianco, 2008: 157).

Researchers working on classroom practice have argued from the other end for definitions of policy to include teacher decision making (e.g. Cummins, 1986, Skilton-Sylvester, 2003), a dimension which could be included under Lo Bianco’s ‘performance’.

The three-fold definition of policy proposed by Lo Bianco is considered to be the most effective resolution of the confusion around definitions in the study of policy, and is taken as the cue for the multi-levelled design of this study. The present study considers the policies first as texts and as discourses around those texts articulated both by policy producers and consumers; then as performance, in this case by teachers and students, although the performative aspect of policy is generally referred to here as practice.

Problems of definition, however, do not end here. The notion of ‘discourse’, as Lemke (1995:7) notes, is likewise a protean one. It is sometimes used by linguists to refer to units of language above the sentence level: a meaning not far removed from that of ‘text’, although less bounded. At other times, and often by those working outside the field of linguistics, the word ‘discourse’ is used in the much broader sense to refer to a social
practice which involves but is not limited to language, as in the Foucaultian sense of the term (c.f. Foucault, 1980).

Some discourse analysts interested in both the micro-level linguistic aspect and the macro-level social one have preferred to distinguish the two by referring to ‘discourse’ and ‘Discourse’ (c.f. Gee, 2004: 46). Of course ‘Discourse’ and ‘discourse’ are not neatly separable into the social and linguistic realms: what’s linguistic is social and what’s social is often linguistic. However, this distinction has allowed some analysts to focus their analyses through a wider or narrower lens as they consider the complex relationships between language and society. For the purposes of this thesis, the wording ‘policy discourses’ is used in its broader sense to refer to the combination of linguistic and other practices which produce and reproduce a set of social meanings and power relationships. The term ‘text’ is used to refer to a particular instance of discourse in the small ‘d’ sense of the word.

This use of the words ‘discourse’ and ‘text’ originates in a theoretical orientation which stresses the importance of both the social aspect of any piece of language – who its producers and consumers are and why they created it, their power relationships, the other pieces of language in relation to which they make meaning of this one – and the particular features of this piece of language – the lexical, syntactic and generic choices its writer or speaker made from all those available to her. Furthermore, the theoretical orientation taken in this thesis is one which emphasises not only analysis of the social aspects of discourses and the linguistic aspects of texts, but the relationships between the two. This emphasis on macro and micro-level analyses and a theory which integrates them is one which might seem obvious to the reader, but in fact it is a goal which has been neglected in much of the discourse analysis literature.

Discourse as understood by Foucault is ‘ways of organizing meaning that are often, though not exclusively, realized through language’ (Pennycook 1994: 128). For Foucault, discourses are ‘systems of power/knowledge within which we take up subject positions’
This view of discourse is one of the most useful and influential to be taken up by discourse analysts in two regards. Firstly, it facilitates a move away from conceptions of discourse only at the micro level and as somehow 'purely linguistic', to include other semiotic systems as well as the range of (especially institutional) power relationships and social practices which contribute to and constrain the creation of texts. Secondly, as suggested by the last statement, Foucault's theory challenges traditional notions that texts are created through a series of choices made by independently acting individuals, rather than by agents both constricted and empowered by the network of social and textual relations in which they act. As Pennycook (1994: 116) notes, such a view of discourse has lead to a shift in the questions being asked by discourse analysts from 'what' and 'how' to 'why', and in the task of discourse analysis from description to explanation.

However, what has made Foucault's view of discourse such a powerful notion for discourse analysis is at the same time his theory's greatest weakness. Foucault moved so far beyond conceptions of language as a system in itself and distinct from the social, or even as simply determined by the social, that he avoided the detailed linguistic analyses which might illustrate his arguments. His preoccupation with systems and structures in the production and reproduction of discourse lead to a neglect of the communicative practice of discourse. Despite the role of language in his conception of discourse, Foucault never specified how the principles of his theory of discourse are expressed in actual instances of language use. He never indicated how a text might be analysed linguistically, nor did he ever analyse one in this way. This is a significant impediment to carrying out Foucaultian analyses at a level of detail which satisfies the requirement for a macro-micro balance. Thus while Foucault's theory of discourse as a social practice has usefully expanded the object of discourse analysis beyond relationships within texts and between individual 'authors' and texts, his work does not provide a complete enough framework in itself for the analysis of policy (or other) texts at any level of linguistic delicacy.
One discourse analyst whose work is influenced by Foucault but who provides a detailed model for the analysis of texts is Norman Fairclough (e.g., 1989, 1992a, 1992b, 2004). One of the main strengths of Fairclough's work in Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is precisely its specificity regarding linguistic analyses. This is a characteristic which he emphasizes by referring to his work as 'textually oriented discourse analysis' (TODA), as compared to more abstract approaches such as Foucault's (Fairclough 1992: 37). In *Discourse and Social Change* (1992), for example, Fairclough explores the process of constructing social relations through text by considering a range of 'Interactional Control Features' (p.152), including turn taking, exchange structure, topic control, setting and policing agendas, formulation, modality, politeness, and ethos. He then moves on to analyzing the construction of social reality (p.169) in some sample texts through a consideration of connectives and argumentation, transitivity and theme, word meaning, wording, and metaphor. Much of this analysis is grounded in Halliday's (1985) 'functional grammar', though Fairclough also draws here on conversation analysis.

Thus unlike Foucault, for Fairclough discourse analysis is centred on a range of detailed linguistic analyses of texts. Just as importantly, he grounds these analyses in the framework of a model of discourse as social practice. Fairclough's model is inspired by Foucault's in that he recognizes the constitutive nature of discourse, whereby language 'signifies reality in the sense of creating meanings for it' rather than simply referring to an external reality (1992: 42). He also shares with Foucault an emphasis on intertextuality, a belief that power is often imposed discursively, an emphasis on the 'political nature of discourse' both as a site of and an object of struggle, and an interest in the relationship between discursive change and social change (ibid: 55-56).

Fairclough's linguistic analyses are not only somehow situated within such a theory of discourse, they are determined by it: he analyses features such as turn taking and topic control in order to examine how the particular text is a site of struggle, and features like
transitivity to consider how the subjects and objects of the text are constituting and being constituted by others. Thus Fairclough provides the means by which we can determine how Foucault’s principles of discourse are being expressed in real communication, if at all.

In addition to formulating micro level analyses so as to illustrate discursive processes at the level of text, Fairclough advocates a model of multi-layered analysis which focuses on the relationship between text and context. He states that analysis must consider "the relationship between texts, processes, and their social conditions, both immediate (situation) and remote (social structures)" (1989: 26). In this model, the analysis of social structures is carried out at the level of a particular language, and analysis of social practice is carried out at the level of particular orders of discourse. An order of discourse is comprised of people, actions, social relations, the material world and semiosis, the latter including genres, discourses and styles. At the lowest level is the social event, which is analysed at the level of text (Fairclough, 2004). Elsewhere (Fairclough 1989: 164), the same distinctions are expressed in terms of discourse, orders of discourse and texts corresponding to the societal, the institutional and the situational context. Represented either way, Fairclough specifies levels at which analyses are to be carried out, and provides a model for what can be analysed at each of these levels. In this regard, his conception of layers of analysis is another practical realisation of Foucaultian principles.

However, Fairclough’s approach departs from Foucault’s theory at two important and interrelated points. Firstly, although Fairclough conceives of the subject/object-discourse relationship as constitutive, he sees this as ‘a dialectic, in which the impact of discursive practice depends upon how it interacts with the preconstituted reality’ (1992: 60). That is, unlike Foucault, he gives as much weight to how preconstituted objects and social subjects shape texts as to how those texts shape subjects and objects. Thus the world is not only in the discourse, the discourse is in the world. This view is not an uncommon reaction to Foucault’s work and is adopted by the current research, which recognized the significant
impact of subjects and objects which exist prior and external to the policy texts, although some of these are at the same time manipulated and remodelled by those texts.

A second and related departure from Foucault’s work is Fairclough’s idea of ideology. For Fairclough as a neo-Marxist, ideology is determined by socio-economic relations and in turn determines orders of discourse and discourses. Ideology is a world view which is shaped by (economic) power relations and which in turn maintains those relations. Ideology is conceptualized here in contrast to a real and unbiased reality, unskewed by unequal access to resources, the revelation of which is the ultimate goal of discourse analysis and other social projects. This view is in contrast to Foucault’s and indeed most other non-Materialist theories, which would posit the inevitability of bias and skewing, economic or otherwise, in the production of any discourse. Rather than ‘ideology’, proponents of such views might discuss ‘orientation’, which, no matter where we stand, is always present (c.f. Lemke 1995: 11).

Fairclough’s notion of ideology may be the cause of criticisms that his CDA fails to allow for multiple readings of texts, instead proffering what is one selective, partial, and prejudiced interpretation (see Widdowson, 1995, , 1996, , 1998). Blommaert explains that, according to such criticisms, ‘texts are found to have a certain ideological meaning that is forced upon the reader’ (Blommaert and Bulcaen, 2000: 455).

This thesis also rejects Fairclough’s notion of ideology as masking the one true reading of any text, which the analyst has the privilege of unveiling. It also rejects the concomitant neo-Marxist view espoused by Fairclough that the primary location of social struggle is class relations (c.f. Fairclough 1989: 34-35). In the present study class relations are of little importance, if any. Rather, ethnicity is the primary measure by which subjects and objects here construct identities and are constructed, although it certainly interacts with a multiplicity of other factors.
A further criticism of Fairclough's work and of CDA more generally is that it makes use of simplistic understandings of political and social relations as 'context', uncritically accepting them as fact and projecting them onto the data, rather than carrying out a truly critical analysis of these relations, or alternatively doing away with any 'contextual' material which cannot be proven to be immediately relevant to the textual participants (Blommaert and Bulcaen, 2000: 456). Whether or not this is the case in Fairclough's work, and it may indeed be so to some extent, the present study aims to avoid such faults by relying on detailed ethnographic and historical research into the contexts of the policy analysed here. It also takes policy producers' and consumers' descriptions and interpretations as the starting point for the researcher's own interpretations, rather than vice versa.

The research presented in this thesis thus seeks to make use of the specificity of Fairclough's model for linguistic analysis in a multilayered framework, based as it is on an adaptation of Foucault's view of discourse, while avoiding some of the weaknesses of his work. Perhaps most importantly, the research rejects Fairclough's view of ideology as a 'mask' and the role of the discourse analyst as 'unmasker' and purveyor of a singular truth. Rather, it takes up Lemke's view of all meaning making as having an inescapable 'orientational dimension' (1995: 11). According to this view, the role of the analyst is to 'lay down a number of tracks along which different... readings might run, tracks which constrain but do not determine readings' (Hodge and Kress 1993: 180). That is, like the writer of the text being analysed, the discourse analyst presents a text which derives from a particular orientation and can be interacted with in many ways, accepted, contested, or rejected.

### 3.7 Discourse in the classroom

To realize the goal of multileveled discourse analysis, this study moves from a discussion of language and ethnic relations in Laos over time, to a focused analysis of policy documents and their implementation, and then to a detailed analysis of language use in three ethnic
minority classrooms. In the last section on classroom language use, the literature on code-switching in general, and in the classroom particularly, becomes highly relevant. In order to maintain the link between the body of literature on code-switching and the classroom language analysis, this literature is reviewed in chapter five, immediately before the discussion of classroom practices begins.
4 Solidarity and power: Discourses on language, ethnicity and education at the national level in Laos

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 Reading policy

Government policies on ethnic affairs and language in education not only respond to the socio-economic and education development needs of the State, but originate from and (re)produce discourses of ethnicity, language and education which operate at a much more fundamental level than this.

In the first place, official policy documents articulate the government’s orientation to minority cultures and languages and to education. This is most explicit in what policies address and don’t address and how. However, it is also implicit in the ways in which policies categorise and name people, objects and events; how they construe relationships between these elements; and how they create a narrative upon and around them.

In addition to this, government policy can produce and reproduce official and popular discourses by presenting and legitimising new taxonomies and narratives and disseminating these to bureaucratic audiences. The policy texts are then further disseminated in whole or in part to other members of the state through their interaction with individual bureaucrats or state agencies.

Simultaneous to these processes, government policy creates the material conditions for the reproduction of official discourses. For example, policy on education can contribute to the creation of an inequitable education system leading to poor educational outcomes among minorities, thereby supporting the reproduction of discourses on their social inferiority.

The power of language policies in particular in reproducing unequal social relations was recognized by Bourdieu (e.g., 1977a). He described what he termed ‘linguistic marketplaces’, in which some languages are accorded greater symbolic value than others as
a result of their providing access to economic advantage. That is, what begins as the result of particular historical conditions (i.e. economic power relations between language groups in a given territory) is represented as part of the natural order of things, a consequence of inherent superiority. The symbolic value which is accorded dominant languages in turn maintains their central role in those social arenas such as education which contribute to economic advantage. According to Bourdieu’s theory, the symbolic value of a language is established not only through government policy and planning documents, but through the day to day workings of institutions such as universities and government offices. Yet policy documents often regulate action in these sites and, if we are to accept Bourdieu’s model, should be considered integral to the reproduction of values in the linguistic marketplace.

However, it is not the reading of policy documents alone which will afford us a deep understanding of government discourses on ethnicity, language and education in the Lao context. Ultimately, the meaning of the policy texts cannot be found only in the texts themselves, but in how they are read (and implemented) by their main producers and consumers at the Lao Ministry of Education. As Lo Bianco argues, expanding on the work of Stephan Ball (Ball, 2006), policy is not only text but ‘discourse’ and ‘performance’ too (Lo Bianco, 2008). Comments from interviews with Ministry of Education officials are thus discussed below in order to provide a ‘reading of readings’: that is, a reading of producers’ and consumers’ readings of the policy texts. This meta-reading is combined here with direct readings of the texts themselves in order to reinforce the direct readings and to provide insight into the meanings made by local policy actors.

4.1.2 Outline of the chapter
The purpose of this chapter is to identify and explore government discourses on ethnicity, language and education in Laos in order to determine in subsequent chapters whether these discourses are reproduced, adapted, or contested by teachers and ethnic minority students, and how. The chapter presents a discussion of Lao government discourses first historically and then with a focus on the present day Lao PDR.
Firstly, prevalent orientations to ethnic minorities, languages and education are identified for what have been presented below as discrete historical periods. This is not to imply that these periods are naturally discrete units, or to suggest a lack of continuity between the periods, but is merely for the purposes of convenience. Following this, an overview of important policy documents in the Lao PDR is given. The subsequent sections of the chapter present in turn a series of discourses common to these Lao policy texts and their discussion. The chapter ends with a brief conclusion summarising the government discourses which will then be referred to in the analysis of classroom practices in the following chapters.

4.2 Ethnic minorities, language and education in Laos: A historical overview

It is generally agreed in the literature that the establishment of the Lao People’s Democratic Republic in 1975 marked the beginning of a new era in political discourses on ethnicity in Laos (c.f. Stuart Fox 1993, 1997, 2003; Pholsena 2002, 2004, 2006; Evans 1999, 2002). This is evident in the proliferation of policy documents, or sections thereof, specifically addressing ethnic minority issues from this time, as well as the new, markedly inclusive language of those documents. It is also seen in the implementation of measures to integrate ethnic minorities into the new state, including health, education, social welfare, and communications programmes. In contrast, despite the fact that previous regimes maintained traditional ritual relationships with ethnic minority peoples, and despite the incorporation of some ethnic minority individuals into the Royal Lao Government in particular, these regimes focused their social and economic programmes on lowland areas, which were predominantly ethnically Lao. For the most part, they ignored ethnic minorities in the discourses in and around official policies and programmes.
4.2.1 Traditional Lao polities

From shortly after the arrival of Tai groups in the area some time in the first millennium (Evans, 2002: 2), ritual ties were established between ethnic Mon-Khmer groups and the ethnic Tai (including the Lao). This is often exemplified in the literature with reference to the ritual participation of Kmhmu people at the Luang Prabang court during official Lao New Year celebrations. During the ritual celebrations, the Lao king recognized the Kmhmu as ‘elder brothers’ before literally and symbolically banishing them from the palace, back to their village on the outskirts of the capital (c.f. Stuart-Fox 2003). This metaphor of primogenesis is consistent with the Lao origin myth of Khun Borom, in which the Kmhmu were the first to emerge from the primeval gourd, followed later by the Lao.

Several historians and ethnographers have also discussed the trade and labour relations established between Tai and Mon-Khmer groups from an early point (e.g. Izikowitz, 1951, Evrard, 2006, Pholsena, 2006). However, social and economic policies before French colonisation (‘policy’ here referring to a general political approach rather than codified documents), did little to socially integrate the minorities into Tai polities (Pholsena, 2006: 21), the main purpose being the collection of tax and corvee labour. This is not to argue that integration and assimilation of minority people into Tai communities did not occur. On the contrary, individual cases of intermarriage were probably not uncommon and the systematic incorporation of non Tai people into Tai communities has been noted (c.f. Evans, 1999b). However, these cases occurred at the village level and were community-driven rather than centrally planned processes of integration. Due to their ambivalent relationship to Tai polities, on the one hand ritually and economically important, but on the other subjugated

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and (for the most part) physically peripheral, the position of Mon-Khmer peoples in early Lao polities has been described as ambivalent: simultaneously included and marginalized (Stuart-Fox, 2003: 78).

With regard to the education system before French colonisation, in the Buddhist Tai polities education was institutionalized in the temple, where young men learned literacy in Pali as well as religious doctrine. Thus non Buddhist minorities such as most Mon-Khmer and some Tai groups were completely excluded from the traditional temple system. These groups carried out education at the family and village level, and thus remained for the most part socially and linguistically unintegrated with the ethnic Lao.

4.2.2 The French colonial period

If non-Tai ethnic minorities were in a position of ambivalence before, French colonial policies facilitated the reproduction of discourses on Tai and Lao superiority, intensifying Mon-Khmer status as subjugated. This was achieved most particularly through the colonial taxation system, which was not implemented on the ground by the French, but rather by ethnic Lao and other Tai intermediaries (Pholsena, 2002: 177). Tayanin (1994: 42-44) notes an excessively exploitative taxation system from the 1930s, with ethnic Lao and Lue dominating the Kmhmu. Izikowitz (1951) also describes an administrative structure during this period with French at the top, Vietnamese, Lue then Kmhmu and other Mon-Khmer groups at the bottom, an arrangement which has become famous in the literature (c.f. Stuart-Fox 1997).

This period may have minimally lessened the marginalization of the Kmhmu by drawing them into the colonial system, but as Stuart-Fox notes, they were drawn in as subjects, not

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17 The Tai-Lue of Sipsonpanna, along what is now the border of north western Laos and China, and the Tai-Phuan of Meuang Phuan in present-day Xiang Khuan, along with some smaller Tai groups such as the Tai-Neua in present-day Huaphan province were/are Buddhist. Many of the Kmhmu Khwaen from present-day Luang Nam Tha province also converted to Buddhism when incorporated under Tai-Lue rulership during the 19th century. Other Tai and Mon-Khmer peoples for the most part followed their own religions.
equals (Stuart-Fox, 2003: 81). In fact, the colonial system served to widen inequalities and increase resentment between the Kmhmu and the ethnic Lao and Tai. Stuart-Fox writes: ‘Traditional relationships were...undermined and new ethnic antagonisms fostered whose implications spilled over into the post-colonial period’ (1997:31).

On an even more fundamental level, not only did the French system establish inter-ethnic conflict, but it influenced the very ways in which groups identified themselves and others. Pholsena writes that:

[The French] classification inscribed their image of the Lao population on the post-colonial censuses. Indeed, the latter kept the same pattern, i.e. the naming and the categories... which meant that the racial lines were insidiously perpetrated among the natives (Pholsena, 2002: 179).

During the early years of colonisation, little attention was given to education. In fact, education only became a specific item of expenditure in the Lao budget in 1905 (Stuart-Fox, 1997: 43). Even after this date, the French approach was to support temple schools as a means of literacy education, but in reality these rarely accomplished effective literacy education of their students, and perhaps more significantly, were totally irrelevant to the huge majority of ethnic minority people (c.f. Evans, 2002: 49, 71). French primary schools were established in only a few provincial centres, with only one secondary school being established during French rule, in Vientiane in 1921. These schools were mostly attended by French and Vietnamese children and teachers were likewise of these nationalities. Until 1918, textbooks were printed in France in French. Meanwhile, the provinces of Sayaboury, Phongsali and Luang Namtha were entirely without schools during the early French period (Bouasivith et al., 1996: 41). It is notable that these three provinces were and are still populated predominantly by ethnic minorities.
Later in the French period, attention was turned to the cultural and linguistic differentiation of the Lao from the Thai (Evans, 2002, Ivarssson, 2002). This focus was reflected in policies such as the ‘National Renovation’ campaign of the 1930s. The campaign, fostered by the French and propelled by the French-educated Lao intelligentsia, aimed to create a new national consciousness

‘stress[ing] the oneness of the population from north to south with regard to history, race, language and religion...that is, an identity defined in pure ethnic-Lao terms to which the other ethnic groups were to be assimilated’ (Pietrantoni 1943 cited in Ivarsson 2002: 65).

Minorities were not featured in the discourse on national unity, or were reduced to insignificance in an effort to construe Laos as a historically and culturally unified territory, distinct, separate (and at times prior to) Thailand. Hence Katay Don Sasorith’s (a prominent Lao politician and nationalist) characterisation:

‘If we leave out a few ethnological Minorities (Khas, Meos, etc) that are scattered here and there, generally in the heights, the whole of Muong Lao spoke the same language, honoured the same genii, cultivated the same religion and had the same usages and customs’ (in Stuart-Fox, 2003: 85).

The external (Thai) focus of social policy and cultural activity at the time was paralleled in issues around the Lao language. The same priority of demarcating Lao identity as separate from Thai, thereby marginalizing the issue of ethnic diversity within Laos, was evident in language planning initiatives. Efforts were focused on the development of a Lao grammar, a task which was pursued by the now revered Sila Vilavong; various language committees were established (Ivarsson, 2002: 72, Enfield, 1999); and debates appeared in the Renovation Movement’s periodical Lao Nyay on issues such as the relationship between the Lao and Thai languages, and in particular, which was derived from the other. Such
initiatives and arguments were made with the aim of legitimating the Lao language and therefore the Lao state, but in the process excluded a large proportion of the members of that state by rendering them, in Pholsena’s words, ‘invisible and unbounded until the Communist revolutionaries decided otherwise’ (Pholsena, 2004: 244).

During the same period, the French pursued a policy of expanding education beyond its previously very limited reach. This move was certainly at least in part related to the National Renovation drive to create a national consciousness among the Lao population, schools being one of the most effective means for such a task. Stuart-Fox writes that:

‘The French did... make some effort to make amends for past neglect... New primary schools were constructed. The College Pavie was upgraded to a lycee... while junior high schools were opened at Pakse, Luang Prabang and Savannakhet. Fully 17 per cent of the national budget was devoted to education’ (1997: 69).

Evans corroborates this by pointing out that the five years from 1940 to 1945 saw more school construction in Laos than had occurred in the preceding 40 years (2002: 78).

However, it seems that ethnic minorities were not much affected by this educational expansion. Evans (2002: 72) notes that the national symbols propagated in schools reached only a small, primarily urban audience. He lists the following numbers of minority students in schools in 1937: 110 Thai Neua, 65 ‘Kha’, 43 ‘Meo’, 35 Phu Noi, 22 Phu Thai, and 7 Red Thai (2002: 49), which indicates that the numbers of minority students, particularly from non-Tai groups, were almost negligible even late in the colonial period. Stuart-Fox (1997: 52) similarly states that there was a ‘near complete lack of education’ among the rural population, especially minorities.
4.2.3 The Royal Lao Government

The Royal Lao Government gained full sovereignty in 1953, and under its rule such conditions persisted. Stuart-Fox characterises the Royal Lao regime as 'partial in its selectivity and elitist and conservative in its thrust' (2003:85). He writes that:

'Nothing was done to improve living conditions for the mountain peoples – only 8 percent of US aid had been spent on schools, clinics, roads and other development projects, and of that virtually none in the highlands' (1997: 109).

In contrast, Evans identifies RLG attempts to create some form of national consciousness which was inclusive of ethnic minorities. He cites the 1947 Constitution, which stated that:

'Citizens of Laos are all those individuals belonging to races that are permanently established in the territory of Laos and do not possess already any other nationality' (in Evans, 2002: 135),

Evans also refers to the similarly inclusive national elections of 1960, in which all citizens had the right to participate regardless of ethnicity (ibid: 129). The RLG’s adoption of the tripartite ethnic classification system of ‘Lao lum’ (lowland Lao), ‘Lao theung’ (upland Lao), and ‘Lao sung’ (highland Lao) can likewise be seen as an attempt to prioritize Lao citizenship over ethnic identity: under this classification, all groups are ‘Lao’ regardless of ethnicity. Pholsena describes the system as ‘a stroke of genius’, arguing that:

it was clearly a political attempt to emphasis the unity of the country by suppressing the pejorative nature and the racial connotations attached to the previous naming system, and by denying the reality of the cultural differences among peoples (Pholsena, 2002: 180).

However, Evans acknowledges the limited scope of these changes: the constitution had little effect on the bulk of the people and elections did not reach about half the population (2002: 129). Similarly, the tripartite classification can be seen as much as a subjugation of non-Lao
ethnicities under the Lao umbrella as an elevation of ethnic minorities to equal status with the Lao.

During the RLG period, government sponsored language initiatives continued to be focused on the legitimation and development of Lao in opposition both to Thai and French. Other languages in the Lao state were for the most part absent from official agendas. Evans characterises the activity around language during this period as 'largely an urban phenomenon', being centred on corpus planning and literary publication in Lao (2002: 151-52).

Education policies and programmes implemented at the time show a similar ethnic Lao bias. The government established the National Council for Education and later the National Commission for Education, both at the Ministry of Education (Bouasivith et al., 1996: 88). These bodies were charged with drafting education policy, and developing curricula and materials respectively, but these tasks focused on educational management, teaching and learning in already established educational institutions, which were still predominantly in lowland, ethnic Lao areas. The government also established Sisavangvong University, but again, its students were drawn mainly from those privileged lowland Lao families who had access to high quality primary and secondary education for their children. In 1960, a Prime Ministerial Decree on Education was issued establishing guidelines for compulsory education (ibid.), but with many rural and remote areas still lacking schools and/or teachers, this directive appears to have been out of touch with educational realities and of little consequence to those without school access, albeit well-intentioned.

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18 In 1972 20 000 Hmong readers were printed for use by Hmong children in government schools. Although this was approved by the Ministry of Education, these had been prepared and funded by foreign missionaries.
In 1962 the government, with the support of UNESCO, undertook large-scale education reform. The reform programme, drafted by (non-Lao) UNESCO experts, included the recommendation that:

If possible, children of ethnic minority groups should learn in their own language in parallel with the national language (cited in Bouasivith et al., 1996: 80).

However, this recommendation was not followed, much as similar calls in recent collaboratively drafted documents have been ignored (see section 1.2 above). During the same time, a nationwide USAID sponsored teacher training project was implemented in which training programmes were revised and the one-year post-primary training programme abolished (Bouasivith et al., 1996: 83). While this may have raised the standard of graduate teachers by requiring all trainees to have at least a lower secondary school education, it limited the number of ethnic minority teacher trainees especially from remote areas, as few young minority people were educated beyond primary school level.

Thus education initiatives during the RLG period, although important for the Lao education system overall, were largely irrelevant or even detrimental to most ethnic minority people.

4.2.4 The Pathet Lao

During the later years of the Royal Lao Government, social, language and education policy was simultaneously being issued and implemented in the ‘liberated zone’ by the Pathet Lao (PL), the Vietnamese backed Communist soldiers who would later go on to be the founders of the Lao PDR. The Pathet Lao actively produced new discourses of inclusion and ethnic equality that challenged the old elite order based on ethnic hierarchies. Among PL policies was that of installing prominent Hmong and Mon-Khmer men in positions of political leadership (Stuart-Fox, 2003: 80).

19 By 1964 this covered approximately half the country, mostly in mountainous and remote areas (Evans 2002: 128).
At a more grassroots level, PL cadres were ordered to work closely with villagers, who in the PL held areas were usually ethnic minorities, on village construction projects and training (Stuart-Fox, 1997: 103). In the area of language, Phoumi Vongvichit wrote his *Lao Grammar* (1967) and devised reforms to the Lao language which were concerned both with national unification against the Americans and the Thai through the consolidation of a ‘progressive, modern, and scientific’ national language (Enfield, 1999: 270), and with rendering literacy more accessible to the local population through greater standardization and a phonemically rather than etymologically based spelling system. This especially privileged ethnic minorities, most of whom, unlike temple-educated Lao, were not familiar with the Pali words on which the original etymological spellings were based.

In education under the Pathet Lao, emphasis was placed on increasing the accessibility and relevance of primary schooling and increasing literacy among adults. As early as 1950, the Lao People’s Party (later the Lao Revolutionary Party) adopted a 12 point strategy including one point stressing the eradication of illiteracy and the ‘development of education and national culture’ (cited in Bouasivith et al., 1996: 92). In 1956, education was identified as a priority at the general congress of the Lao Front for Nationalism and in 1961 the Party established primary teacher training schools in the PL zone which, the following year, included ethnic minority trainees as 10% of the schools’ student body (ibid: 97). The PL government also established non-formal education programs both for government staff and for the general population, the latter focusing on literacy skills and, in 1967, including 5000 participants (Bouasivith et al., 1996: 98).

Unlike RLG education drives, this focus on education was not limited to the ethnic Lao population, perhaps for the obvious reason that the PL zones were primarily in ethnic minority areas. By the 1962-63 school year, there were 32 047 ethnic minority school students in the ‘liberated’ zone and in the 1969-70 school year, 33% of teachers in the PL zone were ‘teachers of Lao Theung [upland Lao]’ (Bouasivith et al., 1996: 97). By 1971
there were 23 schools for ethnic minority students, with a total student population of 1230 (ibid: 104). The PL replaced French with Lao as the language of schooling (although teacher training and tertiary education were in Vietnamese), but in 1967 16 000 grade one textbooks and 20 000 adult readers were printed in the Hmong language for use in the PL zone. Unlike the printing of Hmong language primers under the RLG, printing in the PL zone was initiated and funded by the (revolutionary) government rather than by charitable foreigners.

Thus from the beginning, the Communist leadership in Laos articulated a discourse of inclusiveness which differed markedly from the discourses of ethnic Lao centrality and superiority articulated by other regimes. However, this discourse of inclusiveness was perhaps not motivated entirely by an egalitarian socialist ideology. Certainly ideals of interethnic equality and solidarity against the capitalist American-allied regime formed a central part of the PL ideology, but the PL also had pragmatic concerns such as the continued recruitment of troops and continued support from villagers.

As mentioned earlier, the areas in which the PL was most active were inhabited predominantly by ethnic minorities. It was mostly from this population base that the PL recruited, and on this base that it depended for survival. Furthermore, even until now elements of the minority population of Laos have actively opposed the Communist regime and rendered parts of the country highly insecure. During and after the revolution, a major concern was drawing these subversive minority elements into the national fold (or failing that, eliminating them). Thus efforts to appeal to ethnic minorities can be seen to have had an instrumental as well as an ideological rationale. Pholsena writes that:

"The propaganda for socialism became an appeal for a united patriotic front.

The ethnic minority members were called upon to join the struggle for the

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20 In 2007 a coup attempt was planned by several high profile Hmong dissidents now residing in America. The attempt was uncovered by American law enforcement agencies and made international news, not least because the dissidents had been trained and supported by the CIA during the Indochina war.
triumph of socialism against the 'imperialists and the reactionaries' (Pholsena, 2002: 181).

Recent shifts away from minority language education suggest that the Communist leadership's early commitment to ethnic minorities may indeed have been primarily instrumental: now that the political situation is more stable and the government legitimate, efforts to appeal to minorities have been largely abandoned. Comments from a highly placed Ministry of Education official support this analysis. When asked why the government has shifted away from support for minority language education, he said:

It [use of minority languages in education] was like publicity. There were two sides fighting, so we weren’t equal yet. So they wanted to create this so people could see that, oh, we have a policy – our policy is broad. Every ethnic group should know, should be equal, should come together as one.

PL efforts to expand the education network overall can likewise be seen as tactically driven. This is not surprising: the effectiveness of institutionalised education as a political tool has been well established (Bourdieu, 1977b, , 1991). What is somewhat surprising is how explicitly the Pathet Lao authorities recognized this political aspect and the degree to which it was prioritised over other ends, such as content teaching and learning. PL documents from the time refer overtly to the political goals of education. For example, the Policy of the Lao People’s Revolutionary Party on Education (1974) states that:

The objective of education in the new era is to educate people in line with the People’s Democratic Regime (cited in Bouasivith et al., 1996: 108, emphasis added)

and that:

The guidelines of the new education system are based on three main principles: nationalism, science and public [sic] (ibid; emphasis added).

In the same policy document, it is written that teachers must:
[H]ave the quality of nationalism; be honest to the revolution; be responsible to the Lao People's Revolutionary Party and the Lao People; have the attitude of trustfulness [sic] to the policy of the Lao People's Revolutionary Party for the duty to educate new people with new thinking' (ibid.)

It will be seen below that these same values are overtly articulated in current policy and planning documents.

4.2.5 The Lao People's Democratic Republic

The current government, a continuation of the Socialist regime which came to power in 1975 with the Pathet Lao victory, has issued a plethora of policies and planning documents, many of which address ethnic minority issues and education. The most widely known and easily procured is the Constitution of 1996 (1991), which of course is broad in scope, but does include articles specifically targeted to minority issues, language and education. The Constitution is examined in the discussion below.

In addition to the Constitution, which was issued by the People's Supreme Assembly, the Party issues a variety of decrees, two of which are considered below: the Resolution of the Party Central Committee Concerning Ethnic Affairs, in Particular the Hmong (1981), and the Resolution of the Party Central Committee Concerning Ethnic Affairs in the New Era (1992). The first of these decrees was issued in response to the massive population movement and continued security threats resulting from Hmong involvement in the war, while the second is for the most part a reiteration of the first decree, but addresses ethnic minorities in general. The 1992 Minorities Policy was reissued in 1996 together with a Party document titled 'The Development of Human Resources in Ethnic Minority Areas', which is also referred to below.

While Party decrees address specific problems and/or sectors and are thus issued irregularly according to perceived need, the Prime Minister's Office regularly issues its Five-year National Socio Economic Development Plan. This document summarises the government
and Party’s general vision for national development as well as noting problems to be solved and approaches to be taken in each sector. In addition to the generalised vision provided in the National Plan, the ministry responsible for each sector issues its own Five-year (and sometimes ten- and twenty-year) Development Plan, which details more specific programmes of action. The Sixth Five-year National Socio Economic Development Plan, the Sixth Five-year Education Development Plan, and the Education Strategic Vision 2020 are considered in the discussion below.

Also considered is the Education Law (2000, 2002), likewise issued by the Ministry of Education. This document is the one cited by Ministry officials as their working guide and is understood by Ministry staff to override all other policies and plans issued within or outside the Ministry.

Finally, the discussion below includes reference to the Education For All National Plan of Action 2003-2015, which was produced jointly by Ministry of Education staff and foreign advisors.

It will become apparent in the discussion below that while discourses articulated by the current government of Laos demonstrate continuity with the radical discourses produced by its parent organisation, the Pathet Lao, they also resonate on a deeper level with ideologies of ethnic Lao centrality and dominance which have been present in the Lao territory for many centuries. The representation of contemporary discourses simply as continuations of past ones is perhaps dangerous: Pholsena (2006: 11) criticises such ‘perennialist’ views of history, which she claims cast events as significant as the Lao revolution as mere ‘accidental’ interruptions to a perceived historical continuity. However, just as a strongly perennialist position ignores the radical differences and disjunctures between past and present, a strongly anti-perennialist position ignores striking and undeniable continuities over time. This chapter aims to avoid both extremes.
4.3 Policy discourses

Policy and planning documents issued from shortly after the revolution to the present demonstrate both continuities and discontinuities with the discourses articulated in the policies of previous regimes and of the pre-1975 Communist leadership. These similarities and differences are further highlighted in the readings of these documents by education officials and in those officials other comments on ethnicity, language and education in the Lao state. Several key discourses articulated in the policy documents and in interviews with their producers and consumers are discussed below.

4.3.1 Selective diversity

As was mentioned above, the Communist leadership of Laos has pursued a policy of publicly promoting interethnic solidarity and equality. Unlike the policies of previous regimes, this policy actively includes minority peoples in official representations of the state. Since 1975, policies have emphasized the need to increase the numbers of ethnic minority Party cadres and government officers, particularly at the local level (c.f. Political Bureau of the Party Central Committee 1992), and high profile members of minority groups have been included in the new Party and government apparatus in Vientiane.

Health and education services have been expanded across the country to include the mainly ethnic minority highland areas: the total number of schools is reported to have increased dramatically immediately after the revolution and the education system to have penetrated remote areas previously ignored (c.f. Chagnon and Rumpf 1982; Bouasivilh et al. 1996), although this says nothing about the quality of education being provided in those institutions.

A visual imagery of the Lao nation was created to include not only the four components of Lao socialist society: officials, soldiers, workers and farmers, but the three ethnic classifications: lowland, upland, and highland Lao. This imagery has been extended to what were predominantly ethnic Lao contexts pre-revolution, thus the Lao New Year parade,
which traditionally included the king, his entourage, and a small ethnic Kmhmu component, in its more recent revival includes representatives of all three of the official ethnic classifications singing and dancing in a happy display of multiethnicity (minus the king, of course).

Specifically with regard to education, the newly founded Communist regime focused on drawing ethnic minorities into the national system not only by increasing the number of schools in minority areas, but by calling for bilingual education for the two largest non-Lao ethnic groups: the Hmong and the Kmhmu (c.f. Political Bureau of the Party Central Committee 1981). Sporadic bilingual education programs had been undertaken among the Hmong from before the Communist victory, but had met with varied success. The new regime's official calls to consolidate and systematize the approach seem to indicate a commitment to fostering interethnic equality in terms of educational access and thus social mobility.

The discourses articulated in the Lao PDR's laws and policy documents demonstrate a commitment to creating the image of a nation founded on interethnic solidarity. The preamble to the Lao Constitution begins with the statement that:

For thousands of years, the multi-ethnic Lao people [passaon Lao banda phao] lived and grew [sic] on this beloved land. More than six centuries ago, during the time of Chao Fa Ngum, our ancestors founded the unified [ekaphap] Lane Xang country [pathet] and built it into a prosperous and glorious land. (People's Supreme Assembly 1996: no page number; official translation)

This wording implies equality among ethnic groups, as opposed to ethnic Lao centrality in the State, by explicitly including all ethnic groups when referring to the Lao populace. It also emphasizes that interethnic equality by prioritising its position in the text: the 'multiethnic Lao people' is placed at the beginning of the document, the beginning of the
preamble, and also towards the beginning of the sentence, following only a sentence adverbial.

At the same time, this initial orientation to the Constitution is creating a shared ancient history among ethnic groups in Laos. It is this situating in time which is the thematic element of the sentence and which lends validity to the concept of ‘the multiethnic Lao people’ by positing its historicity. The shared ancient history evoked in the text is in fact contradicted by evidence of the fairly recent migration of the ethnic Lao into the area some time in the first millennium C.E. (Evans 2002: 2) and the very recent migration of the Hmong-Mien and Tibeto-Burman peoples in the nineteenth century. In this preamble, the producers of the text are creating a new vision of Lao history which is characterised by long standing solidarity and equality among ethnic groups.

Furthermore, this solidarity and equality is set within the context of the ‘country’ pathet’, rather than the ‘kingdom’ anachak of Lane Xang. Thus a historical precedent for egalitarian interethnic relations within the context of a nation state is created: one with which contemporary citizens can identify. In addition to this, the ‘unified’ ‘country’ of Lane Xang was created by ‘our ancestors’ ban pha bulut khong hau. This pronoun ‘our’ can only be linked anaphorically with the noun group ‘the multiethnic Lao people’. Thus rather than having been built by the ethnic Lao (as it in fact was), the ‘country’ of Lane Xang was created by an imagined group of ethnically diverse but unified ancestors.

Michael Bilig, drawing on Ranger and Hobsbawm, observes such processes of invention: ‘during the heyday of nation-making in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries many seemingly ancient traditions were invented’ (Bilig, 1995: 25). He notes that ‘through the invention of traditions, national identities were being created as if they were ‘natural’, even

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21 Pathet is the word used to refer officially to the Lao nation today (pathet Lao) and to other nation states, e.g. pathet ostali for Australia. It is translated as ‘country, state’ in Kerr’s Lao-English Dictionary (Bangkok, White Lotus, 1972).
eternal, features of human existence' (Bilig, 1995: 26). In the case of the Lao Constitution, a particular tradition is not being created but the identity of the Lao populace as multiethnic certainly is, and its history reaching back uncountable thousands of years establishes that identity if not as eternal, then as natural by virtue of its antiquity. Like Bilig, Grillo (1998) discusses the tendency for nation states to create and recreate their own histories. He quotes Chapman, McDonald, and Tonkin:

> The capacity of a successful self-defining entity like a nation to define and create its relevant history, both as it happens and in retrospect, has the corollary that minority, sub-national entities within it simply cannot compete on the same scale. They are, in important senses, history-less and event-less by comparison' (1989, cited in Grillo, 1998: 24).

Although Chapman, McDonald and Tonkin’s point about the creation of national histories is relevant to the Lao case, here minority peoples are not being deprived of their right to an official history, but are being endowed with a history which is not their own.

This new multiethnic past requires its ‘characteristic amnesia’, as Anderson calls it (1983: 204). That is, it requires Lao people of all ethnicities to forget their ancient and recent histories of interethnic violence (Mon-Khmer and Hmong uprisings, large-scale Hmong support for the Americans during the war), or their relatively recent arrival on Lao territory often fleeing situations of hardship in their homelands (Hmong-Mien and Tibeto-Burman peoples), and to replace these with the memory of ancient interethnic solidarity. Whether minority peoples in fact do that will be seen in the following chapters.

Consistent with this discourse of ancient interethnic solidarity is the metaphor of kinship which is found throughout the Lao PDR’s policy documents. Examples can be found in the 1981 ‘Resolution of the Party Central Committee Concerning Ethnic Affairs, in Particular the Hmong’ (hereafter referred to as the 1981 Minorities Policy) and the 1992 ‘Resolution of the Party Central Committee Concerning Ethnic Affairs in the New Era’ (hereafter the
1992 Minorities Policy), which both refer to the ‘great national family’ *khɔp khua nyai hêng sat*, and the ‘Lao brothers’\(^{22}\) of the various ethnic groups’ *phiː nɔːng laːo phao taːng taːng*. Such imagery is widely recognized as typical within discourses of the nation state.

Bilig, citing Johnson (1987) and Yuval-Davis (1993), writes that:

> [A people’s] integrity is frequently conveyed by the metaphors of kinship and gender: the nation is the ‘family’ living in the ‘motherland’ or ‘fatherland’ (1995: 71).

Phillips observes the same process in the Tongan case:

> characteristics of the nuclear family as it is experienced by present-day commoners are projected to the societywide level of both the nation of today and the imagined traditional polity of the past (2000: 236).

The same can be said of Communist Laos.

The equal status of minority peoples in the national brotherhood appears to be further emphasized by the Party’s frequent references to the minorities’ ‘good and beautiful culture(s)’ *vatthanatham an diː ngaːm*. In the Constitution, we find:

> All ethnic groups have the right to protect, preserve and promote their fine customs and culture [vatthanatham an diː ngaːm] as well as those of the nation (p.3; official translation),

in the 1992 Minorities Policy:

> our future direction is... to expand the good and beautiful heritage [muːn siːa an diː ngaːm] and the capacity of the various ethnic groups... (p.9; own translation)

\(^{22}\) The word-pair ‘phiː nɔːng’ has the meaning ‘relatives’ in common usage. However, it is derived from words for ‘older sibling’ and ‘younger sibling’ and in formal usage can have the connotation of brother- or sisterhood.
and in the Education Law:

The Education Law determines principles, regulations and measures about the education operations for building up good citizens who... cherish the remarkable national culture and custom [vatthanatham paphe:ni: an di: nga:m thi pen e:kalak khx:ng sa:] (p.1; official translation).

Yet parallel with this discourse of interethnic equality in government policies and initiatives, we find another discourse practice entirely. Despite initial moves to include high profile members of minority groups in the administration, the government of the Lao PDR remains predominantly ethnic Lao (Evans 2002: 212). Visual representations of multiethnicity are pervasive, but so is the ethnic Lao centrality underlying them: local billboards portray ethnic minority populations in their characteristic costumes, but always gathered around a central ethnic Lao figure – even in districts with no ethnic Lao communities such as Bounneua District in Phongsaly province (see figure below).

![Figure 6: Billboard in Bounneua District, reading 'Let the solidarity between the various ethnic groups be strong'. The figure in red in the centre of the picture is ethnic Lao.](image-url)
Similarly, ethnic minority representatives sing and dance on government sponsored stages, but join in a final ethnic Lao lamvong, or circle dance, to consolidate their part in the Lao national culture. With regard to ethnic spectacles in present day Laos, Pholsena (2006: 49) cites Gladney's analysis, whereby minorities are objectified as exotic in order to homogenize the undefined majority. In this analysis, public exhibitions of multiethnicity actually achieve the opposite of interethnic equality.

With reference to education, despite initial calls for bilingual programs, these were never systematically implemented and by the release of the 2000 Education Law, Lao language and Lao script were 'the official language and script for the learning and teaching in all schools and education institutions' (MoE 2000: 7).

If we look to the policy texts, we find an articulation of ethnic Lao centrality and power consistent with the above. In a Party document titled 'The Development of Human Resources in Ethnic Minority Areas', circulated together with the 1996 re-issue of the 1992 Minorities Act, we find the following:

(We must) increase maintenance and expand the good and beautiful cultural heritage [mu:n sia vatthanathum hit khong paphe:ni an di: nga:ni] which is the hallmark of the various ethnic groups. In addition to this, (we) should criticize and consider the restricted [nyɔ: thɔ], distorted [tha: iang] and incorrect [phit khe:ɔ] (things), the customs which restrict progress [kot nguang khuam kavo na:] (LFNC 1996: 16; own translation).

Here, the cultures and customs which are valued positively in the Constitution, the 1992 Minorities Policy and the Education Law are contrasted with their negative counterparts, all the undesirable aspects of minority cultures. Thus it is not 'minority cultures and customs, which are good and beautiful' with a non-defining (non-restrictive) relative clause that are being valued in the texts. Rather, it is 'the minority cultures and customs which are good and beautiful' – with a defining (restrictive) relative clause – and not the cultures and
customs which are restricted, distorted, incorrect and backward. That is, the text producers do not value all minority cultures and customs, which happen to be good and beautiful, but only the cultures and customs which they deem to be good and beautiful and not the rest. The same distinction is made in the 1992 Minorities Policy itself, which states that:

The cultural and social life of our ethnic minority brothers and sisters is still in a state of decay... Many backward traditions [bì t không lát lang] still constrict the livelihood models of our ethnic minority brothers and sisters (p.3; own translation).

These negative valuations of (selected) minority cultures and customs are only possible in the text because of an invisible process of judgment. The text gives us no explicit indication of who the judge of value is, nor does it delineate the criteria by which judgments are made.

We can, however, assume that the invisible judge is the voice of the text itself: the Party apparatus, supreme national authority, and stronghold of ethnic Lao cadres. The criteria are those invisible standards of the cultural majority to which most of this authority’s members belong, and the ‘progressive’ Communist model of livelihood which then becomes associated with lowland Lao cultural, social and economic practices in the government discourse.

The role of the Party and government (being for the most part constituted by ethnic Lao) as judge of a culture’s or custom’s value – its place along a scale of progressiveness and therefore worth – is reproduced in the spoken texts of Ministry of Education (MoE) officials. Below is an example from an interview with an official:

23 'Progress' khua:m ka:o na: and ‘civilization’ khua:m cha lan are thus frequently linked in official texts with agricultural practices such as paddy farming, and geo-social ones like lowland habitation.
Of course backward things [sing thi: la: lang] have to die out, but we, the Lao government, support cultures and customs which are progressive [vathathanam hi:t kho:ng paphe:ni thi: ka:o na].

This idea of ‘backward’ and ‘progressive’ customs would be no threat to the credibility of a discourse of interethnic equality if it were applied to all cultures in the Lao context equally. But when we consider which cultures and customs are supported by the government and which left to perish, or actively discouraged, we see that there is a strong correlation between ‘minority’ and ‘backward’, and ‘majority’ and ‘progressive’. Thus not only is the primary livelihood model of ethnic minorities, swidden agriculture, forcefully opposed in government policy and practice24, but markers of non-Lao ethnicity in other domains are likewise discouraged in favour of Lao substitutes.

Pholsena (2006: 57) mentions the appearance of Lao style housing in propaganda brochures targeting ethnic minorities and the inclusion of the ethnic Lao greeting, the va:ji, in school curricula. Similarly, Evans notes that the spirit worship practiced by many minorities is labelled superstition by Lao ethnographers, while similar religious practices which have been incorporated into Lao Buddhism are ‘considered to be hallowed tradition’ (1999a: 82). Some other examples include the depiction of a Buddhist monument (That Luang) in the national insignia; the enforcement of ethnic Lao dress as the official uniform at all levels of education as well as in the armed forces and government offices and enterprises; and the imposition of ethnic Lao dance forms in the government sponsored spectacles mentioned above. It seems, then, that the government supports and promotes not the actual cultural and

24 The policy of eradication of swidden, or ‘slash and burn’ agriculture was introduced in the 1981 Party document Resolution of the Political Bureau Concerning the Affairs of Various Minorities, Especially the Hmong Minority and was again specified as a major objective in the government’s Second Five Year Plan (ILO (2000) Policy Study on Ethnic Minority Issues in Rural Development. Geneva, International Labour Office.). It has been reiterated in policy documents since that time and implemented with vigour by local authorities on the ground, though with limited success.
linguistic diversity of the Lao state, but only the aspects of that diversity which it judges to be ‘developed’ and therefore good; that is, a ‘selective diversity’.

### 4.3.2 Lao as the language and culture of development

The judgment of cultural and linguistic practices along a scale of development also occurs in other Communist countries in the region. State-sponsored ethnographers in immediately post-war Vietnam, according to Evans,

subscribed to a basically nineteenth-century Marxist evolutionary view of social structures which allowed them to align themselves with the evolutionary views of the state which was marching towards its endpoint, communism. This allowed these ethnographers, with a sense of rectitude, to define some social, economic, or cultural practices as "backward," or as "superstitious," and therefore reasonably (from the point of view of the state) suppressed (1999a: 166).

With regard to China, Harrell (1993) identifies the historical ‘project of the Civilizing Center’, whereby

The Han civilization...saw its mission as one of civilizing the entire rest of the world in time, but more immediately as one of civilizing the peoples within its political and potentially within its cultural sway (1993: 98).

Harrell claims that this project is no longer officially sanctioned in China, having been replaced by the new project of creating a ‘multinational’ (i.e. multiethnic) state. However, he notes that the old project is still implemented in interethnic interactions, and that where policy conflicts (or policy-practice conflicts) arise, they are generally attributable to contradictions between the old policy and the new (Harrell, 1993: 98). The difference between contemporary China as opposed to Vietnam and Laos then might be a matter of the explicitness of the discourse of cultural development rather than the extent of its reproduction. The similarity among the three countries in terms of discourses on ethnicity
and development has been noted by Evans, who writes that ethnographers in China, Vietnam and Laos all saw ethnography as ‘subordinate to the developmental interests of the state and nationalism’ and ‘all shared an evolutionist paradigm’ (1999a: 162-163). This analysis of state-sanctioned ethnography with regard to Laos is corroborated by Pholsena (2002), who describes official Lao criteria for ethnic grouping as ‘criteria of backwardness’ (Pholsena, 2002: 184).

Of course the characterisation of particular ethnic groups and, by extension, their languages as further up than others in the evolutionary hierarchy is not particular to Communist regimes. In fact, this view has been common throughout European history and motivated (albeit among other factors) the monolingual language policies of European powers such as France, for example. Even where some cultures and are not claimed to be inherently more sophisticated or developed than others, they (or emulations of them) are frequently posited as essential to social development in the (post)modern world due to political and economic circumstances. Pennycook (1994, 1998) discusses this issue with reference to the status of English internationally as the language of development, while others have identified language-and-development discourses in particular national contexts (e.g. Blommaert, 1994 re Tanzania, Lin, 1996 re Hong Kong) and more generally (e.g. Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson, 1994, Ricento, 2000).

In the Lao case, as was demonstrated above, Lao language and culture are represented by the state as inherently more developed than minority cultures and languages. This ‘majority’ language and culture is also seen as the means to the further social and economic development of the country, and the primary vehicle for transmitting this language/culture-for-development is institutionalised education. Policies from the Pathet Lao period to the present illustrate the relationship between education, language and development in the post-1975 Lao state.
The 1992 Minorities Policy lists as a key goal under its ‘directions for future work [concerning] ethnic groups’:

Focus on expanding education, culture, public health and other social welfare works; build a new countryside in the mountainous regions (p.14; own translation).

Here, ‘culture’ is included as a social welfare concern, the development of which will contribute to the building of a ‘new’ (i.e. ‘more developed’) countryside. The text calls for the ‘promotion’ and ‘expansion’ of the ‘arts, literature and culture’ which are the ‘heritage’ of the various ethnic groups, in order to ‘contribute to and increase the richness of our national Lao culture’ (p.15; own translation). However, in the sentence immediately following this, the text states that

[we] must make efforts to train the people of the various ethnic groups to reduce and move towards eradicating backwards customs which have an effect on production, livelihoods and solidarity within and between ethnic groups (p.15; own translation).

There is thus another ethnic minority ‘heritage’ which is negatively valued by the state and seen as an impediment to development, although we are not told explicitly what that particular heritage includes.

This same section of the text includes education among the social welfare projects necessary for the construction of a new, more developed countryside. In particular, it emphasises the need to reduce illiteracy and increase school enrolment, both of which are relatively standard development goals in any national context. However, it is significant that education is included in the policy section here which also deals with ‘culture’: the two are thus linked in the state’s project of social development of minority peoples. It seems reasonable to conclude from this linkage that education has the same intended outcome as the cultural
development described in the text; that is, the eradication of backwardness. Harrell argues that in present-day China, the old means to changing a minority person’s status from barbaric to civilized – an education in the classics of ancient literature and philosophy in the Han language – have simply been replaced by new ones – ‘the acquisition of a modern education’ (1993: 99). Although historically education was not available as a means of ‘civilization’ in the Lao context, it is presented as one in contemporary policy documents.

Unlike most other policy and planning documents in the Lao PDR, the text discussed above also calls for the use of minority languages and their (Lao script) orthographies in education. This could be seen to contradict the notion of an official discourse linking the Lao language to social development. However, the same section of the text also stresses the need for the teaching of spoken and written Lao language alongside the use of minority languages in the classroom. Furthermore, these calls for the use of minority languages in education (calls which, significantly, were never met) can be seen not as a valuing of minority languages in themselves, but as a recognition of the value of minority languages as a means to achieving Lao language proficiency. This is the view presented by Ministry of Education officials when speaking about the oral use of minority languages in the classroom. In a discussion about the ways in which the Ministry is addressing the language needs of minority children, a high-ranking official explained that one strategy is to employ ethnic minority teachers where possible. He said:

‘We [at the Ministry of Education] just think that if they’re minority teachers and they use that technique [of speaking minority languages] it’ll help [the students] understand Lao better. It’s like I said, they use it [the minority language] for explaining or so they can compare something in the minority language to this language [Lao].

25 This is with the exception of the 6th Five Year National Socio Economic Development Plan, issued by the Prime Minister’s Office.
Another official compared the use of minority languages in the classroom to the use of Lao when learning English: a momentary concession to the end goal of target language fluency.

The argument thus far in this section has suggested that in the Lao policy context, minority peoples are further down than the ethnic Lao in the evolutionary hierarchy of cultures. Their backward practices must be eradicated through ‘training’ and education. This can be done in minority languages if necessary, but with Lao language proficiency as an end goal. This process will contribute to the overall social and economic development of minority peoples and hence of the state. This analysis assumes a highly politicised role for education as integral to the Lao state’s Socialist project, and indeed this political aspect is overtly recognized in the Lao policy texts. From the Pathet Lao period until the present, education policies have prioritised the political role of institutionalised education in the creation, maintenance, and development of the socialist state.

As noted in section 4.2.4 above, the Policy of the Lao People’s Revolutionary Party on Education, issued in 1974, states that the first principle guiding the new education system must be ‘nationalism’ (Bouasivith et al., 1996: 108). Similarly, the 2002 (2000) Education Law lists as number one under its ‘Right and function of school and educational institution’:

Firmly assimilate the [P]arty and government’s educational attitude, pay attention to the improvement of [the] political system of the school, in particular the Youth Revolutionary People’s Union and December 2 Pioneers, and apply the government’s laws and the MOE’s regulations (Ministry of Education 2002: 5; official translation).

This is consistent with the Law’s statement in Article 2 that:

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26 "ka'n hâk op hong" This is another word for the political indoctrination sessions which are still held in Lao government offices.
Education is a learning and training process about politic[s], thinking, moral[s], intelligence, arts, physical and labor [sic] instruction... (ibid: 1; official translation; emphasis added).

The same priorities are reflected in the Education Strategic Vision 2020, which states under its ‘General Goals’ the aim to:

Build Lao people to be good citizens, to have nationalistic sentiments [mi nam chai hak sarl], to have socialist ideology [mi udom ka:n sangkhom niinyom]... (Ministry of Education 2000: 16)

This document then goes on to list the goals of creating people with ‘a scientific worldliness’ ‘knowledge’ and ‘ability’, among various other traits. The text explains that the development of Lao education in the following years must focus on two aspects: firstly ‘building [students] in the areas of politics, ideology, the Socialist attitude, awareness of the law, and a sense of discipline’ and secondly, ‘training [students] to be good at specific subjects’ (ibid: 17). Education thus forms part of the government’s project of fostering political, economic and cultural (including linguistic) development towards the pinnacle of social evolution: the (ethnically Lao flavoured) Communist state.

Comments from trainers at a provincial teacher training institution support this interpretation. At a college performance of ethnic Lao style dance given by a cohort of ethnic minority teacher trainees, a highly ranked trainer expressed how proud he was to see how far the students had come: from wearing cloths on their heads (a marker of non-Lao ethnicity) to this! Another trainer commented after a workshop presentation by an ethnic minority trainee how nice it was to hear him ‘speaking like us now’; that is, with one of the lowland Lao accents. The student was in fact a Tai Daeng boy and thus lowland Lao himself, but to the trainer he was an ethnic minority trainee whose speech had been improved through exposure and assimilation to lowland Lao norms of pronunciation.
As some of the above quotations indicate, the state’s development project as implemented through the education system is not only social but moral. In fact the distinction between the two is not generally made in the Lao policy context. The role of Lao ethnography is:

making the life of the ethnic groups flourish, to create a life which is civilized, and to progress slowly towards doing away with customs which are backward (Party Central Propaganda Committee 1997, cited in Evans, 1999a: 182),

Similarly, one of the primary roles of the education system is to produce individuals who are morally developed, or ‘civilized’ on a personal level, and unsurprisingly the model for the development of this personal morality is an ethnic Lao one. The Education For All National Plan of Action lists as the second point under its summary of goals stated in national education development plans:

Well rounded teaching and learning to promote desirable behaviours and attitudes in the moral, intellectual, artistic, physical and labour dimensions (Ministry of Education, 2005: 37; official translation; emphasis added).

Indeed, the school curriculum includes explicit teaching of these behaviours, such as the Lao ‘vai’ (traditional greeting) mentioned in section 4.3.1 above, and school regulations at secondary and tertiary levels in particular enforce ethnic Lao morality on students. For example, regulations at provincial teacher training schools and colleges prohibit sexual relations between unmarried students, although those students are legally adults. These regulations cause conflict when ethnic minority students act according to their own culturally prescribed morality rather than the accepted (ethnic Lao) morality of the institution and engage in sexual relations with their partners.

Of course the role of education in the civilizing missions of especially colonial but also post-colonial and other multiethnic states is widely recognized. To exemplify, Grillo
reproduces comments made by the first Governor-General of French West Africa, Jean Baptiste Chaudié, in 1897:

The school is the surest means of action by which a civilizing nation can transmit its ideas to people who are still primitive and by which it can raise them gradually to its own standards. In a word, the school is the supreme element of progress (in Grillo, 1998: 109).

The same motivations can be identified in present-day contexts, although they generally remain implicit in policy documents and discussions, as has been seen in the Lao case.

4.3.3 The state as agent

Within this discourse of Lao as the culture and language of both social and moral development, policy texts cast the State in the role of agent: it acts on minorities to engender the ethnic Lao oriented Socialist ‘evolution’ which is its vision. The texts conversely place ethnic minorities in the role of objects and recipients of development. For example, throughout the 1981 and 1992 Minorities Policies, ‘the Party’ or ‘we’, ‘the responsible organisation(s)’ ong ka:n thi: mi: sit annaat, and ‘the various departments (sectors)’ kane:ng ka:n ta:ng ta:ng ‘fix/repair’ pua pe:ng, ‘improve’ pap pung, ‘solve’ dat ke:ke: khai, and ‘change’ pian pe:ng the ‘living conditions’ sivit ka:n pen ju:, ‘the problems and needs’ banha: le khuaam hiak hax:ng, and ‘the economic and cultural inequalities’ khuaam lut to:n kan thang da:n sethakit vatthanatham of/between ‘the Lao people of the various ethnic groups’ pasa:son la:o phao ta:ng ta:ng, to progress’ hai kao na: and ‘to be better’ hai di: khin.

Considering the economic and social upheaval which resulted from the war, an emphasis on improving living conditions is perhaps to be expected: there was indeed a great need to restore or establish basic social services, especially in ethnic minority areas, and to draw minorities previously allied to the enemy into the new state through improved communications and education. What is notable, however, is that the texts do not balance this discourse of state as agent with references to ethnic minority people as drivers of their
own development. Rather, a select group of minority people (e.g. 'group [lineage] leaders', 'clan heads', 'staff, military and officials of the various ethnic groups') is cast as implementers on the ground. They do not repair, improve, solve, or change, but rather 'expend energy' öz hêng, 'contribute' pak¢:p suan, 'work' het viak, and 'dedicate themselves to undergoing hardship' mi khuam tat sin chai pha:n pha: khuam nyung nya:k.

Meanwhile, minority people in general (e.g. 'the Lao brothers of the various ethnic groups' phi: nong lao banda: phao) are cast in the role of local practitioners of culture and recipients of improvement. They 'add to and expand their diligent and industrious heritage, and adapt their means of livelihood and backward traditions in order that their living conditions change and are gradually improved' se:n khanya:i mu:n si:a du man kha nyan phian, dat pe:ng be:p viithi: tham ma: ha: kin pha la hit kho:ng an la: lang het hai sivit ka:n pen ju: mi: ka:n han pi:an le dai hap ka:n pap pung hai kho:i kho:i di: khin. Here minority people are not the subjects and agents of change and improvement, but are merely 'adapting' (presumably under the direction of the Party and a select group of authorities). Changes and improvements are then 'received' (dai hap ka:n pap pung lit. 'did receive improvement') as a result of this (guided) adaptation.

The role of the state as agent in ethnic minority affairs is likewise illustrated in state-sponsored public representations of multiethnicity in Laos. As discussed above, diversity in the Lao context is a selective diversity: only those elements deemed worthy by the state are chosen for display in official contexts. That is, displays of minority culture are something which is encouraged and supported by the state within its own parameters of acceptable practice.

Thus ethnic minority people (or ethnic Lao people dressed up as ethnic minorities) are encouraged to share their colourful costumes, songs and dances in officially sponsored festivities such as the National Day parade or on the public stage at the That Luang festival (a Lao Buddhist festival). However, they are not invited for example to share poetry or
drama in their own languages. Furthermore, the artistic displays which are permitted generally involve a modified, sanitised and glamorised version of the original form: men’s buttocks and women’s breasts are covered, and costumes are spruced and sequinned. When the National School of Dance performs ‘minority’ dances, these often consist of abstracted representations of the traditions considered emblematic of the particular ethnic group, but bear no resemblance to that group’s actual artistic expressions. Thus ‘Hmong’ women carry umbrellas and stitch cloths to musical accompaniment rather than performing traditional Hmong songs and dances.

Such selective and modified representations of ethnic diversity have been referred to by Grillo (1998: 200) as ‘the ritualization of ethnicity’. He writes that:

Institutionally engendered or legitimated multiculturalism, managed multiculturalism, takes strong or weak forms. Sometimes it is mere tokenism... This tokenism highlights a simple range of what are believed to be appropriate visual cues of typical (and generally harmless) diversity...

Cultural diversity thus becomes a stereotyped symbolic dance for a ceremonial occasion: ritual ethnicity in every sense (ibid.).

Comments by a Ministry of Education official reinforce the analysis that the public display of multiethnicity in Laos is controlled by the state to include only those elements considered attractive and harmless. He says:

Every year we support every province to organize ethnic minority artists to come and perform. That’s not an issue. It would only be if, for example – sorry but if there were a group that traditionally take their clothes off when they’re dancing. That would be something which isn’t nice [bo: chop bo: nga:m]. Whoever was watching that would say it was bad [sua].
4.3.4 ‘The big ones swallow the small ones’: the naturalisation of cultural and linguistic domination

The comment from a Ministry of Education official cited in section 4.3.1 above that

Of course backward things [sing thi: la: lang] have to die out, but we, the Lao government, support cultures and customs which are progressive

[vatthanatham hi:t kho:ng paphen:ni: thi: ka:o na:]

illustrates not only a discourse of selective diversity where the state is acting as the judge of value, but another official discourse on ethnicity in Laos: the discourse of the naturalisation of ethnic domination. While the official’s comment recognizes the government’s active support of selected cultures and cultural practices, the ‘death’ of undesirable cultures and practices is represented as a natural phenomenon independent of government action. The same view is expressed by another official with reference to minority languages:

In reality, it’s that the big languages swallow up the small ones and they die off. [Tua ching, thi: va: pha:sa: nyai kœ:n kin pha:sa: no:i taei nai tua]

Here it’s ‘the big languages’ which are cast as subjects and agents in the sentence, and which act on ‘the small ones’, free from any human influence. What is in reality the very human and purposeful process of selective support or oppression is represented as a process of nature. Thus when minority cultures and languages suffer as the result of government policies such as forced relocation or the prohibition of official bilingual education, it is represented as an inevitable natural process and one for which the government cannot be held responsible.

Such a representation of culturally constructed discourses as the natural order is a classic example of what Foucault (1980) calls ‘regimes of truth’ in which an imposed ideology is represented as common sense. According to Foucault, this process of normalization results in oppressed groups’ acceptance of the delegitimising discourse as truth rather than as the colonizing process which it in fact is (Egbo, 2004: 246). Similarly, Bourdieu (1977a) posits
his theory of symbolic domination, whereby the imposed symbolic order (e.g. Lao dominance) is made to seem natural and thus accepted and reproduced by the dominated group.

Whether or not that is the case here – that is, whether or not teachers in ethnic minority classrooms reproduce the discourse of the naturalisation of Lao cultural and linguistic domination, thereby acquiescing to this particular ‘regime of truth’ – will be seen in the following chapters. For now, however, we are left with one certainty: the ideology of interethnic equality promoted by the Lao state sits uncomfortably next to the discourse of the naturalisation of cultural and linguistic domination, where differential support of ethnic groups and their languages is justified by natural inequalities.

4.3.5 Diversity as a problem

The discourse of linguistic and cultural domination represents ethnic (and hence linguistic) diversity within the nation’s borders as an untenable state of affairs. Within the Lao policy context, not only is diversity unsustainable in the natural order of things, destined to eventually die out, but it is an immediate problem with practical negative effects which must be solved through the subjugation of minority languages (and identities) to the national one. Comments like the following illustrate the view that diversity in Laos is excessive and thus a hindrance, in this case to the nationwide establishment of bilingual education:

Extract 1:

We have many ethnic groups. We have forty-nine ethnic groups. If we were to try to create forty-nine [written] languages, I think that'd be impossible. I don't think there are any other countries like this. Most of them probably use one particular language as the standard.
Extract 2:

Maybe [the authorities] could consider [bilingual education]. We'd have to do research to see the outcomes. But if we were to do it for every single ethnic group, I think it'd be very difficult to make it happen. There are too many.

In fact, excessive diversity is often cited as a reason for resistance to official bilingual education, even by officials who have visited or read about similarly diverse countries with bilingual education programmes in place. Within the discourse of diversity as problem, this excessive diversity must be controlled by rendering ethnic particularity secondary to the unity of the populace in their shared identity as ‘Lao’ (which is conveniently a label for both ethnicity and citizenship). Another official explains that teachers can do whatever they need to in order to help children understand the content, but this cannot be specified in the policy as there are ‘too many languages and it’s too difficult’. Rather, ‘there must be only one standard [lak ka:n]’.

Comments such as the above contradict official propaganda such as policy documents and public spectacles which celebrate Laos as a multiethnic state. Yet the idea that diversity can be ‘excessive’ and that it is more natural and more manageable for nation states to have only one official language is neither new nor unique. On the contrary, the idea manifested in one nation-one language ideologies historically promoted in Europe and was exported from there to other parts of the world through colonisation and the spread of the modern nation state, in addition to being maintained in European and other western countries. Heller (1999: 8) suggests that the association of nationalism with monolingualism in Europe may have begun with the effects of both the French Revolution and German Romanticism, while Blommaert and Verscheuren (1991: 522) draw attention to the nineteenth century idea of the nation state as ‘a linguistically and culturally homogenous population, or “nation” living within the confines of an autonomous and sovereign political unit or “state”. These same authors identify the present day discourse of what they call ‘homogeneism’: that is, ‘a view of
society in which differences are seen as dangerous and centrifugal and in which the “best”
society is suggested to be one without intergroup differences’ (Blommaert and Verscheuren,

Others discuss a similar discourse not in relation to the formation of nation states, but to the
development of public policy. Ricento writes that ‘a widely held view among Western[ized]
sociolinguists in [the 1960s and 1970s] was that linguistic diversity presented an obstacle to
national development, while linguistic homogeneity was associated with modernization and
Westernization’ (2000: 198), while Ruiz (1984) describes the negative valuation of linguistic
difference in contemporary national policymaking as ‘language as problem’, compared to
‘language as right’ or ‘language as resource’.

Such attention in the literature to the discourse of diversity as a problem indicates that it is a
prevalent one internationally. The Lao case then is not a rare one. What is seemingly
complex, however, is the tension in Lao policy making between this ‘homogenism’, on the
one hand and the celebrations of multiethnicity openly articulated by the state. It is to this
apparent contradiction that the next section turns.

4.3.6 Minority languages as secondary and instrumental

As Ministry officials construe the Lao language as central to the nation and to education,
and the presence of other (minority) languages in society in general and the classroom in
particular as problematic, they tend to minimise the role and significance of minority
languages in current teaching practice. When asked about the appropriateness of using
students’ mother tongues in teaching, officials commonly referred to the practice as useful in
‘facilitating teaching’ or ‘aiding Lao language understanding’. No officials suggested that
the mother tongue is used or should be used as the primary medium of content teaching and
learning. One typical comment was that the mother tongue was used ‘just for some words,
but not for studying/learning’. Officials also represented the period of time during which the
mother tongue was necessary as minimal. Comments included:
After first grade, it's fine [saduak saba:].

When they get to second and third grade, they read Lao.

and

Suppose you go into grade one in first semester, they [the students] still don’t communicate, they don’t speak. It takes one semester’s time. I’ve asked lots of teachers, I’ve been to lots of schools. In second semester they start to be able to write. They’re not really good at it, but they can read and recite some words... In second year, they know even more words.

Furthermore, officials generally represent the use of the mother tongue as occurring at the level of the word and being primarily for the purposes of one-to-one translation of lexical items. Comments expressing this view include the following:

In practice it [use of the mother tongue] is just for explanation, it’s just some words. And generally if they understand then that’s it. It’s just for some lessons and some content. For example, if they don’t know, for example if they say a word that’s really about nature, right? For example how they weave nets, maybe they won’t understand, right? So that has to be explained in their language, for example. It’s just some words.

Another official says:

They just translate. Suppose the teacher says ‘elephant’ and the children don’t know, the first grade students. If you say ‘elephant’, ‘what’s an elephant?’ ‘have you ever seen an elephant?’, the children don’t know what an ‘elephant’ is, right? The teacher just translates into their own language, right? The
teacher says 'an elephant is this', she/he translates it. Then the kids say 'oh!'.

The kids understand.

Such comments do not account for the use of the mother tongue as anything more than secondary and occasional.

These recognized uses of the mother tongue in teaching are not only minimal in scope and purpose, they also involve only the spoken word. This renders them unofficial, or even invisible, in the graphocentric Lao context. The Lao bureaucratic system or perhaps even Lao culture more generally, shows a strong bias toward the written word. Sometimes even the word 'language' *pha:sa:* is used to mean 'written language', as in the comments below:

[They use the mother tongue] for speaking, it's speaking, because they don't have a language [*bo: mi: pha:sa:*]

and

Some ethnic groups don't have one. They've never had a language of their own [*bo: khar: mi: pha:sa: khong ton eng*]

while the same word (*pha:sa*) is never used to mean only the spoken language. Alongside such usages, as anyone who has lived under the highly formalised and centralised Lao system knows, any task of an even vaguely official nature must be pre-empted by an official form or letter; the embodiment perhaps of our 'signed, sealed and delivered'.

Similar bias toward the written word has been identified in the Thai context, where the government discourages the development of orthographies for minority languages or the publication of materials in those languages which already have orthographies, but turns a blind eye to the spoken use of languages other than Thai (Anderson, 1983: 45).

Such graphocentrism has been identified in Western contexts too: Harris describes what he calls the 'scriptism' of contemporary linguistics, while Tyler notes the Western 'visualist'
emphasis on the primacy of text (Woolard, 1994: 65). Within such a discourse of graphocentricity, minority languages in Lao education remain illegitimate in the eyes of the state as long as all written classroom work must be done using Lao.

4.4 Conclusion

The policy documents and discussions explored above simultaneously articulate two apparently contradictory discourses. The first is a discourse of interethnic solidarity and equality, in which Laos is a multiethnic state, founded by and for the various ethnic groups presently within its territory, each with its valuable cultural heritage to offer. The second is a discourse of ethnic Lao centrality, in which elements of minority cultures are judged as backwards or progressive according to ethnic Lao standards, and Lao culture and language are posited as inherently more developed, in addition to being the path to modern day social and economic development. The state takes the role of imposing this development on minority peoples, yet at the same time casts Lao dominance not only as a desirable solution to the chaos of ethnic diversity, but as a natural and inevitable outcome. The use of minority languages in education is recognized, but rendered minimal, unofficial, and secondary to Lao.

It was noted above that until the Communist revolution, Lao ritual relations with ethnic minorities enacted ethnic Lao dominance over the prior (Kmhm) occupants of the territory, minorities were disadvantaged in terms of trade, taxation, and social services, and they were largely excluded from public discourse. Such conditions are consistent with the discourses implicit in present-day policy discussion. It thus seems reasonable to suggest that the discourse of ethnic Lao centrality has persisted from the pre-revolutionary period.

This is not to propose a strongly perennialist reading in which the radical changes implemented by the revolutionary government are ignored. On the contrary, the analysis above has highlighted the great contrasts between pre and post-1975 government orientations to ethnic minorities, both in terms of the content and tenor of policy documents.
and the practical measures implemented on the ground. Certainly official state orientations to ethnic minorities in the Lao PDR have had an enormous impact on the daily lives of minority people and others, producing new discourses through a radically altered system of governance, revised educational curricula, the media, and public spectacle to name but a few avenues. These new discourses are reproduced to some extent in the speech and actions of Lao people outside government offices, as will be seen in the following chapters. To ignore these discursive changes would be to overlook Lao people’s lived experiences of the upheavals of war, revolution, and life under the Communist government.

However, the fact that official and popular discourses on ethnic minorities were greatly altered after 1975 does not rule out a concurrent thread of continuity with the past. As was noted in section 4.3.1, even during the most radical period of government instigated change immediately after the revolution, a bias toward ethnic Lao cultural forms was present: for example, state propaganda promoted ethnic Lao style houses and implements (Pholsena, 2006: 57) and preached morality based on traditional ethnic Lao values (Evans, 1995: 4).

In recent years, the ethnic Lao bias in official representations of the Lao state has become even more obvious. This may be due to the greater stability and entrenched legitimacy of the state. The approval and support of the minorities is no longer a matter of life and death for the government of the Lao PDR: those renegade elements which persist are few in number, the majority of the population having been successfully drawn into the national economy and society, albeit to varying degrees. Instead, attention appears to have been turned to the creation of a Lao nationalism which creates a place for ‘Lao culture’ on the regional and world stage.

Evans (1999a: 181-182) notes the tension between multietnicity and ethnic Lao bias in state discourses as a tension between what Smith (1991, 1994) calls ‘civic’ and ‘ethnic’
nationalism. The former emphasises shared citizenship of the state regardless of ethnicity, while the latter uses a common ethnicity (often creatively imagined) as the foundation for a national consciousness. Evans writes that:

what we see in the case of nationalism in Laos, Vietnam and China is a peculiar combination of both civic and ethnic nationalism. Due both to tactical constraints, and the demands of Communist orthodoxy, [the Communists] found themselves having to both elaborate and act on a version of civic nationalism (expressed as a 'multinational' state), when in reality the fundamental motivation of nationalism in these countries was a form of ethnic nationalism, a fact which became increasingly apparent after their respective victories (Evans, 1999a: 181-182).

Perhaps the tensions which have been identified above in the policy discourses can be understood as the simultaneous articulation of the civic nationalism openly promoted by the Communist government (the discourse of interethnic solidarity and equality) and the ethnic nationalism which was current before the revolution and has persisted and been further revived to some degree since then (the discourse of ethnic Lao centrality).

In any case, it is not the purpose of this research to determine the reasons for the apparent contradiction between ethnic equality and Lao centrality in the policy discourse. Whether it is a matter of persisting historical ideologies of ethnic Lao superiority and centrality despite a state rhetoric of interethnic equality is of interest but ultimately without consequences for the current research. The issue for us is whether both these discourses are reproduced, adapted, or rejected by teachers and students in the ethnic minority classrooms of Laos, and how. The following chapters aim to answer these questions.

27 Grillo (GRILLO, R. D. (1998) Pluralism and the Politics of Difference, Oxford, Clarendon Press.) discusses the same distinction using the terms 'gesellschaft' (civic nationalism in which any like-minded person can participate) and 'gemeinschaft' (ethnic nationalism, or a 'community of blood' into which ethnic others are unassimilable).
5 Language and ethnicity at the local level: An introduction to Nalae

5.1 Introduction

For most strangers to the place – Lao and foreign alike – Nalae is a backwater and a dead end: a sparsely populated wilderness where the road ends and the only other way out is in a rickety longboat open to the elements or on foot through the jungle. In 2005, the year this research was carried out, Nalae district had one dirt road linking it to the provincial capital, impassable for three months of the year, and no telephone lines or mobile phone access. The district centre had no running water except some occasionally functioning gravity systems to the small hospital and the main government offices; no fresh food market except for a few stalls from four to six o’clock in the morning; and only three hours of electricity a night provided by a small dam at the northern end of the town – when it was working. Many of the villages in the district had no road access, none had electricity except for the occasional house with a small diesel-powered generator, and none had running water. A common comment on Nalae from Lao residents of the provincial capital was that there was ‘nothing there’ (bo: mi: nyang lit. ‘[it] doesn’t have anything’), while rare foreign visitors to Nalae were often enchanted with what they saw as a quaint settlement ‘lost in time’ ‘in the middle of nowhere’.

Yet while Nalae has few of the comforts of life which many of us are used to in the 21st century, and while discourses of backwardness, remoteness and ahistoricity are popular among non-residents, it is in fact a place of great cultural and linguistic diversity and interaction, considerable historical significance, and – especially over the past three decades – rapid social change. These characteristics and others are described in this chapter, which begins with a geographical description of Nalae, then gives an overview of its ethnic composition and the historical and contemporary interactions between ethnic groups, before describing language use in the community. The chapter finishes with a discussion of
theoretical approaches to the analysis and interpretation of such language practices, before we move on to this analysis in the following chapters.

5.2 The geography of Nalae

Nalae district is situated in the north-western corner of Laos, adjacent to the area known as the 'Golden Triangle', where Laos meets Thailand and Burma (Myanmar). The district sits about half-way down the Nam Tha river between the town of Luang Nam Tha and the border town of Houei Sai (also spelled Huay Xai).

Figure 7: Map of Laos showing Nalae
Nalae district centre is 73 kilometers from Luang Nam Tha town, the provincial capital, but travel there takes more than three hours by car during the dry season (or two and a half for a skilled motorbike rider) and about four hours by boat in the rainy season. The ‘road’ is a dirt track which follows the banks of the Nam Tha river and passes through the Nam Ha National Biodiversity Conservation Area for much of the way. The landscape in this part of Laos is rugged and mountainous: the Nam Ha protected area consists of dense evergreen forests and montane woodlands covering mountains which reach up to 2094 metres in altitude (www.theboatlanding.com). There is little flat land here, the mountains rising up often almost immediately from the riverbanks. On the mountains surrounding the protected area, farmers clear their yearly rice fields. The result is a patchwork landscape of new fields, fallow fields, and forest in various stages of regrowth, from low scrub to dense jungle. This patchwork is dotted with bamboo huts for farmers to rest in during the sweltering midday heat or to stay in during the harvest season.

Figure 8: Mountain rice fields in Nalae after the harvest
Figure 9: Bridge between Nalae District Centre and Om village in the dry season

Figure 10: Dry goods market in Nalae District Centre
Today, there are 83 villages in Nalae district, which covers an area of 2,045 square kilometers (Evrard, 2006: 101). Some of the villages on the northern side of Nalae district centre lie between the road, which was completed in 1983, and the river which it follows. Others are scattered in the mountains rising up on either side of the river. Some of the northern mountain villages have secondary road access from the main road, although these ‘roads’ are little more than buffalo tracks and are frequently impassable even on an off-road motorbike. Other northern mountain villages have no road access at all and can only be reached on foot, although the District and the German development agency GTZ (Deutsche Gesellschaft fur Zusammearbeit) are currently undertaking road construction projects. Frequent flooding of streams in the northern part of the district exacerbates transport problems there and sometimes prohibits access to the northern villages for weeks at a time even on foot.

Some of the southern villages are similarly located along the banks of the Nam Tha river, although there is no road there to cling to as the road ends a few kilometres south of the district centre. Other southern villages are located in the mountains, which are high and densely forested in this part of the district. Many of the southern mountain villages, like their northern counterparts, have no secondary road access and some can be reached only after two to three days’ trekking from the river.

5.3 Ethnicity and interaction in Nalae

5.3.1 Ethnic groups

5.3.1.1 Ethnic composition of the district
Determining the exact ethnic composition of Nalae district is difficult due to a lack of data. However, according to the available statistics, 75% of villages in Nalae are inhabited exclusively by Mon-Khmer speaking people, which includes the Kmhmu and the Lamet (Evrard, 2006: 87). In addition to these monoethnic villages, there are several mixed Mon-Khmer and Tai Lue villages, meaning that the actual percentage of Mon-Khmer speaking people in Nalae district is higher than 75%. Within this figure, the Kmhmu constitute the
great majority, the Lamet accounting for fewer than 15 monoethnic villages at the southern extremity of the district, as compared to more than 45 exclusively Kmhmu villages throughout Nalae.\textsuperscript{28} The remainder of the villages in Nalae district is monoethnic Tai-Lue, with a small number of Samtao people, a group related to the Lamet (Chamberlain, 2002: 97), living in Kmhmu and mixed villages (Evrard, 2006: 99) and a small number of ethnic Lao living in a mixed Lao-Kmhmu village at the northern end of the district. There are also some individuals of other ethnic groups and nationalities scattered throughout Nalae, most notably Black Tai from Luang Nam Tha and Chinese from Yunnan province.

5.3.1.2 The Kmhmu

Although the area is now ethnically diverse, it was originally inhabited only by Mon-Khmer peoples, of which the Kmhmu are one (Proshan, 2001: 1007). The Mon-Khmer group forms part of the Austroasiatic language family, which is the most widespread language family in mainland southeast Asia and stretches from northeastern India to Malaysia and from China to the Nicobar Islands (Bellwood, 2005: 102). Mon-Khmer languages themselves can be found in places as far apart as Assam and Vietnam (ibid.) and include the national languages Khmer and Vietnamese, as well as about 150 other languages (sealang.net/mk/).

Kmhmu is one of these other languages, and is spoken in southern China, north central Vietnam, northeastern Thailand, and across northern Laos, as well as by Kmhmu diasporic communities elsewhere. There are estimated to be well over 500 000 speakers of Kmhmu worldwide (Suwilai, 2006: 1), with the number in Laos alone reaching at least 500 000. This figure is close to that given in the 1997 national census; however, the 2005 census claims that the Kmhmu population of Laos is over 600 000 (http://www.nsc.gov.la/PopulationCensus2005.htm). Whatever the exact figure, the Kmhmu form the largest ethnic group in Laos after the Tai (which is the ethnic family that includes

\textsuperscript{28}This data was obtained from the Nalae District Education Bureau’s statistics for 2004.
the Lao) (Evrard, 2006: 36) and constitute a majority in many of the northern upland districts of the country.

![Figure 11: A Kmhmu Lue woman in one of the case study villages](image)

The Kmhmu group itself can be broken down into two groups and several subgroups. For linguists, the main distinction is between northern, eastern and western Kmhmu (Svantesson and House, 1996: 85), found mostly in China; Vietnam and eastern Laos; and western Laos and Thailand respectively. Below this level, several distinct dialects have been identified, although the exact number of dialects has not been definitively established.\(^\text{29}\)

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\(^{29}\) Elisabeth Preisig, co-author of the Kmhmu – Lao – French – English dictionary published in 1994 by the (Lao) Institute of Research on Culture, has identified five Kmhmu dialects in Laos alone (personal communication), while Suwilai (2006) has carried out analysis on seven dialects across Laos, Thailand and China. The Summer Institute of Linguistics, widely considered an authoritative source on small languages, lists eight Kmhmu dialects in its database of world languages (www.ethnologue.com), including Khuen (Khwaen) as a separate language, in contrast to Kmhmu people themselves and other linguists (like Preisig), who include Khwaen as a Kmhmu dialect.
Among those scholars taking an anthropological approach, the issue of Kmhmu subgroups has been more problematic. Lindell et al (Lindell et al., 1979b) suggested that Kmhmu subgroups in Laos were the remnants of an ancient Kmhmu political order with a king and royal lineages, although these researchers only referred to the western Kmhmu groups in their reconstruction of this order and even the identities of these western groups have at no point been agreed on by Kmhmu people themselves (Evrard, 2006: 93). More recently, Proschan (1997) has highlighted the complexity of subgroup identity by outlining the many means by which Kmhmu people distinguish groups – geographical location, costume, and linguistic features, for example – and suggesting that identities may be multiple and overlapping. Évrard (2006: 93) accepts the existence of multiple markers of subgroup identity, but argues that in fact these different markers correspond to some commonly acknowledged and discrete groups, at least in northwestern Laos. He lists four Kmhmu subgroups for Nalae and adjoining districts: Youan (Yuan), Lü (Lue), Rok and Khouen (Khwaen).

At this stage, it is not possible to provide an exact and comprehensive list of Kmhmu subgroups in Laos and their geographical distribution. However, Évrard’s western Kmhmu subgroups are included in the following table, together with the two commonly identified eastern subgroups30 in order to provide a rough picture of Kmhmu groups in Laos. Note that the names listed in this table are for Kmhmu groups, thus the Yuan and Lue listed here are Kmhmu Yuan and Kmhmu Lue, not their Tai name-givers.

30 Suksavang Simana of the (Lao) Institute for Research on Culture distinguishes the Kmhmu in the eastern provinces of Laos (Kmhmu Cheuang) from those in the north along the Ou river (Kmhmu Ou) (personal communication), while Proschan (1997) also refers to both groups. My discussions with Kmhmu people from these areas confirm this distinction.
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<th>Western Kmhmu</th>
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\(^{31}\) This ethnonym refers to the Kmhmu groups living along the Mekong river (Om Krong) and is used by Chamberlain (2002) among others, although it does not appear in all classifications of Kmhmu groups.
5.3.1.3 The Tai Lue

The areas in present day Laos which were originally inhabited only by Mon-Khmer peoples including the Kmhmu were invaded by Tai settlers migrating from southern China some time late in the first millennium C.E. (Evans, 2002: 2). However, the arrival of Tai settlers in the area now known as Nalae occurred much later. Although there are no exact dates recorded, Évrard has placed the first arrival of a Tai group overland some time in the nineteenth century (Évrard, 2006: 24), while Izikowitz (Izikowitz, 1979 [1951]: 25) identifies Chinese (Ho) attacks in northern Laos in 1890 and hostilities by the Wa in the Shan state at the same time as the causes of a Tai exodus into the area of the Nam Tha river. Before this time, the northern stretch of the Nam Tha river had remained largely unsettled, with only the southern reaches sparsely colonised by Lao boatmen (ibid: 26).

The Tai settlers who established themselves along the banks of the Nam Tha in Nalae during the nineteenth century were Tai Lue. The Tai Lue belong to the larger Tai ethnic group, who are found across southeast Asia and include the Lao in Laos and northeastern Thailand, the Thai, the Shan in Burma, and numerous smaller groups in Laos, north-central Vietnam, southern China, and eastern India. Members of the Tai family, numbering approximately 70 000 000 in total (Évrard, 2006) are also found around the world in diasporic communities.

The Tai are represented in Laos by the ethnic Lao and other smaller groups such as the Black Tai, Red Tai, White Tai, Tai Neua, Tai Moëi, Yuan, Phuan and of course the Tai Lue. Although the groups listed here are widely referred to, the distinction of Tai groups can be problematic. There can be etic and emic names for groups (c.f. Chamberlain, 2002), sometimes confusing classifications. Furthermore, the prefix ‘tai’ or ‘thai’ (depending on who is speaking or writing32) has the meaning ‘originating from’, for example thai

32 Speakers of the Lao dialect of the lowland western part of the country use the aspirated ‘thai’ both for ethnonyms such as thai dam and to refer to a place of origin, as in thai Viangchan, while speakers of the upland Tai dialects of north western, northern and eastern

130
viangchan for Vientiane people. Thus people can refer to themselves or their group as ‘tai/thai’ and their place of origin, creating a plethora of potential ethnonyms. For example, a person could refer to herself either as Tai Dam or as Tai Nam Tha. In this case, she would be taken to mean that she was ethnic Tai Dam or that she came from Nam Tha, but in areas where names for especially smaller ethnic groups have been less well established, confusion can arise (for one approach see Cheesman, 2004: 45). Whatever the exact number and names of Tai groups in Laos, however, together they are labelled ‘lowland Lao’ (lao: lum) by the government due to the fact that they traditionally settle in valleys or river basins. They constitute just over half of the national population of Laos (Evans, 1999b: 125).

The Tai Lue are classified as a group related to but distinct from the ethnic Lao, having their own language or dialect, a characteristic costume, and historically separate political spheres of influence. However, Lue people in Nalae today recognize a shared identity with the ethnic Lao, often referring to themselves as ‘us Lao’ (lao: hao), particularly when contrasting themselves with the Austroasiatic inhabitants of the area. This could indicate a historically-rooted recognition of shared ethnic and linguistic heritage with the Lao. However, it may also indicate a modern-day consciousness of the government’s ethnic classification system, which places all Tai-Kadai groups together under the name ‘lowland Lao’ (lao: lum) in contrast to upland and highland groups.

5.3.1.4 Other groups
The other main ethnic group found in Nalae district is the Lamet, mentioned above as a member of the Mon-Khmer group of the Austroasiatic family. Unlike the Kmhmu, the Lamet are members of the Palaungic rather than the Khmuic branch of the Mon-Khmer group (Chamberlain, 2002: 97). As noted already, there are at least 15 exclusively Lamet villages in Nalae district, with many Lamet living in ethnically mixed villages also. There is Laos use the unaspirated ‘tai’ for the same. In fact, some linguists have used this feature of consonant aspiration to distinguish the two dialect groups, calling them ‘p’ and ‘ph’ respectively. See CHAMBERLAIN, J. (1972) The origin of Southwestern Thai. Bulletin des Amis du Royaume Laos, 233-244.
also one other Palaungic group represented in Nalae: the Samtao. According to Évrard, there are no longer any exclusively Samtao villages in the area and many Samtao people self-identify as Kmhmu (Évrard, 2006: 99). As no monoethnic or mixed Lamet or Samtao villages were included in this study, no further details will be given on these groups.

5.3.2 Distribution of villages

Traditionally, the Kmhmu and Lamet villages in Nalae have been situated on the mountain slopes or peaks, sometimes three to four days walk from the river, while the Tai Lue villages have been situated along the river banks. Kmhmu and Lamet villagers practiced rotating swidden agriculture (commonly referred to as ‘slash and burn’), combining mountain rice, corn, gourds, cotton, tobacco and fruit trees in their fields. They also raised fowl and pigs in their villages, and relied on hunting, fishing and gathering to supplement their diets. The Tai Lue likewise practiced swidden agriculture, raised livestock, and hunted, although unlike the other groups, they also practiced limited paddy cultivation, planted riverside gardens, and relied on the abundant fish provided by the Nam Tha river. This description, however, simplifies the often complex social and economic interdependency between groups and the mobility of individuals between groups, more on which will be said in section 5.3.3 below.

The simplified account above also describes settlement patterns and livelihood practices which have undergone dramatic upheaval since the 1970s. During and after the Indochina war, Nalae was a site of intense fighting and prolonged insurgency. Villages on the west bank of the Nam Tha were mostly aligned with the Royalists, while villages on the east bank were mainly Communist. After the Communist victory in 1975, many of the ‘enemy’ (i.e. Royalist) upland villages on the west bank of the Nam Tha were relocated by the new government to the riverside of the east bank alongside the road between Luang Nam Tha.

33 For a description of livelihood practices in the mid 20th century in a Kmhmu Yuan village, see Tayanin 1994.
and Nalae. This allowed for greater surveillance of activities in these villages, thus reducing the risk of insurgency. It also changed those villagers’ livelihood practices to some degree and took many Kmhmnu Yuan and Khwaen away from their homelands to an area which was otherwise Tai Lue.

These relocations were justified on the grounds of national security. They were also explained as a means of replacing the upland livelihood systems which had been destroyed during the war with what were seen as more economically viable alternatives (c.f. Political Bureau of the Central Party Organization, 1981). Yet today the government of Laos continues to pursue an aggressive policy of upland village relocation to lower lying areas when there is no threat of insurgency and no economic benefit (c.f. ADB, 2001, Goudineau, 1997). The official justification for such ‘voluntary’ relocations (resistance to which can in fact be met with police action and/or the cutting off of public services34) is the preservation of forest resources through the reduction of slash and burn agriculture. A second justification commonly given is the lower cost of bringing highland peoples to lowland services as opposed to expanding services into the highlands (Goudineau, 1997: 14). It has been argued, however, that the form of swidden agriculture practiced most widely in Laos (i.e. rotating, not pioneering) can be environmentally sustainable (ADB, 2001: 88), at least as long as population density is low, as it is in Nalae (Evrard, 2006: 104) and that the main motivating force behind the relocation policy, or at least behind those individuals who implement it, is in fact the integration and assimilation of ethnic minorities into an ethnic Lao mainstream (ADB, 2000: 11).

34 In 2003, several Akha men were detained in police custody in Luang Nam Tha after refusing to leave their original village site. The involuntary nature of some village relocations has been noted elsewhere (Chamberlain 2000: 10). Less dramatic is the refusal to include villages marked for relocation in donor development projects. This is commonplace, even when those projects would provide sustainable livelihoods and access to basic services, which are the very reasons the government gives for relocation.
Whatever the real government motivations, the population of Nalae has undergone considerable upheaval as the result of relocation. The number of people relocated between 1975 and 1995 has been estimated at 6800 (Evrard, 1997: 25 - 26), with the number of villages relocated during this period put at 30 (Evrard, 2006: 324). In 2000, the district authorities announced that a further 30 villages would be relocated by 2005 (ibid: 327) although not all of those villages have been relocated to date. Of the villages which have relocated over the past thirty three years, many have moved to the river- or roadside, while others have amalgamated at new upland sites. Still other villages have relocated in part or en masse to the nearby districts of Viengphukha, Nam Tha and Meuang Sing. The provincial and district authorities are still engaged in a process of village relocation and amalgamation in Nalae and population movements within and outside the district are frequent.

For some, this has led to improved living standards due to access to health and education services as well as access to markets for their produce. At the same time, it has meant: economic losses due to the labour and material costs of relocation; disputes over land; interethnic conflict; decreased productivity due to unfamiliarity with lowland farming techniques or the poor quality of allocated land; poor nutrition due to the inaccessibility of traditional forest food sources; exposure to lowland health risks such as disease-bearing insects and unclean drinking water; exploitation by outsiders; an introduction to illicit substances; and the possibility of engaging in sex work and being exposed to sexually transmitted infections including HIV as a consequence. Each of the villages included in this study has experienced some or all of these problems to some extent.
Figure 12: A relocated Kmhmu village along the road outside Nalae District Centre.

Figure 13: Inside a Kmhmu village
5.3.3 Historical interactions between ethnic groups

5.3.3.1 Within Nalae

Interdependency

From the time of the kingdom of Lanna\textsuperscript{35}, Kmhmu villages on the west bank of the Nam Tha were vassals of the Tai Yuan principalities in the area, themselves vassals of Lanna (Evrard, 2006: 95), and became known as ‘Kmhmu Yuan’. Similarly, the Kmhmu groups on the east bank were vassals of the Tai Lue principalities of Sipsongpanna, and were given the monikers ‘Kmhmu Lue’ for those affiliated to Meuang Sing and ‘Kmhmu Khwaen’ (denoting an administrative unit in the Tai Lue language) for those affiliated to Meuang La (ibid.). The vassal relationship for the most part involved taxation, corvee labour and military service for the Kmhmu, processes which have been described first-hand by Tayanin as severe and corrupted (Tayanin, 1994: 42). It also allowed some local Mon-Khmer people to be parted with their wealth voluntarily by buying titles from their Tai Lue overlords: a practice which may have gained them some prestige locally but had little if any bearing on their actual political power (Izikowitz, 1979 [1951]).

Interaction between the Kmhmu and Tai Lue also occurred at the inter-village level, with Kmhmu residents of mountain villages trading their goods and labour with the Tai villagers settled along the riverbanks and with travelling Lao traders (a practice which continues today), and Tai villagers visiting Kmhmu villages in order to procure rice, tobacco and forest products (less common but also still in practice)\textsuperscript{36}. More heavily dependant economic relationships have also been noted, whereby the Tai Lue leased land to the Kmhmu in return for a portion of the rice harvested thereon (Evrard, 2006: 254).

The relationship between Kmhmu and Tai was not only economic but religious. Ritual acknowledgement of Mon-Khmer spirits of the land has been noted elsewhere in Laos

\textsuperscript{35} Founded in 1259 and centered on the northern Thai city of Chiang Rai.

\textsuperscript{36} For example, Izikowitz (1979) describes Lao traders’ travels into the area to procure rice, a practice which was also observed during this research.
(Evans, 1999b), while participation by Mon-Khmer people in Lao court ritual was integral to the Buddhist New Year celebrations in the ancient Lao capital, Luang Prabang (c.f. Trankell, 1999). However, ritual interactions also occurred at the village level: in Nalae, Kmhmu and Tai villagers engaged in the exchange of gifts and shared the blood of a sacrificial animal (usually prepared as the festive dish ‘laap’) in order to establish what Évrard calls pseudo-parenté, or ‘psuedo-kinship’ (Evrard, 2006: 260). According to him, such interactions were part of the enactment ‘of peaceful coexistence and of economic dependence of the river people on the mountain-dwellers’ (Evrard, 2006: 255, my translation).

**Conflict**

Interethnic relations in Nalae thus involved a degree of both economic and social interdependence and integration across groups. This is not to suggest, however, that relations have always been friendly. In fact economic interaction and ritual integration of the Kmhmu into Tai society in Nalae, as in Luang Prabang, have often been accompanied by outright exploitation at the level of everyday affairs, and by a corresponding degree of prejudice and animosity on each side.

In the accounts of early French explorers, we find comments such as the following:

> Many times during my travels across Laos I already had the opportunity to familiarize myself with some of these savage populations, the last remnants of the ancient peoples destined to disappear gradually under the strain of the invaders. They inspired only pity in me. The prolonged contact of the [Tai]

37 Kmhmu people from a village on the outskirts of Luang Prabang would come to the city to take part in a ritual procession and to make symbolic offerings to the king, which he would accept before banishing the Kmhmu from the palace. The Kmhmu role in the rituals changed in the 1960s with the death of King Sisavangvong and was dramatically remodelled after the revolution in 1975 (Trankell 1999: 206). Now Kmhmu people only take part in a reworked New Year procession, a socialist adaptation of the festivities which allows for the absence of the king and the inclusion of other ethnic groups too.
conquerors, the state of oppression that weighed on them for centuries had
depressed them to the point of taking away the most remarkable
characteristics of their individuality (Cupet 2000 [1900]: 254).

and in a Khmu account from the mid-twentieth century:

[In that period the head of a district and the head of a subdistrict, any high
officials still were all lowland Lao. The Kammu [Khmu] and Rmeet
[Lamet] could not even be soldiers or policemen (Tayanin 1994: 39).

During that period the Kammu and Rmeet people had to work for tasaeng and
taphia [local administrators], but they never paid us... We went and worked in
their fields from the beginning to the end of the year, from the clearing of the
fields to the harvest. We brought the rice home to store in their barns. We
also fetched water, cooked rice and food, and it was we who pounded the rice
for the tasaeng and taphia... We never got anything at all in return. People
had to be respectful towards [our tassaeng], because if we did not respect him
we would be arrested. In fact everybody feared him (Tayanin 1994: 40).

Some people had to borrow from other families; some had to sell their fields
to get money for paying their taxes... and a family which has no fields has
nothing to live on (Tayanin 1994: 43).

Stuart-Fox sums it up:

Inter-communal relations [between Lao and Khmu] rested on commerce,
types of taxation/exploitation and dominant-subordinate status, reinforced on
occasion by coercive repression (Stuart-Fox, 2003: 74).

Today, Khmu people from Nalae recount the exploitative conditions under which their
parents and grandparents were employed by the Tai Lue, often receiving meagre payments
in kind (such as old clothes) for their labour and being verbally derided to boot. One Kmhmu woman described the present-day avarice of Tai Lue traders and boatmen from the southern end of the district, warning me to be careful in my dealings with them. She also noted with disdain the ends to which other Tai in the district would go for profit, regardless of the impact on families and the community. 38

Such accounts of exploitation are consistent with the relations portrayed in Kmhmu mythology. In one myth, for example, the Kmhmu older brother and the Lao younger brother stake their claims to the territory. The Lao brother hangs a marker high up on a bamboo stalk after the Kmhmu brother has already placed his marker lower on the same stalk. The Lao brother’s marker rises higher as the stalk grows, while the Kmhmu brother’s marker stays in the same place. The Lao brother then insists that he was there first due to the height of his mark, and lays claim to the territory (Doré 1980: 53 cited in Proschan 2001: 1024). In fact, such tales of trickery are common in the Kmhmu oral literature, with the Kmhmu trading a wooden boat for a leather one, an elephant for a porcupine, sugar cane stalks for roots, and being outwitted by the Lao in a range of other creative ways (ibid.). 39

Some have argued that such mythical depictions of injustice demonstrate a Kmhmu ‘inferiority complex’, as it is always the naïve Kmhmu who are at least partly responsible for their own misfortune (Doré, cited in Proschan 2001: 1025). Others have argued that the myths provide only a good humoured explanation of social inequalities (Proschan, 2001: 1025). Whether and to what degree Kmhmu people participate in a discourse of social inferiority will be explored later in this chapter and in the chapters which follow. For now, however, it should be noted that Kmhmu people have not always accepted their social disadvantage willingly or with good humour.

38 For example, one local Tai woman tried to establish a brothel in the district centre, a business move which was strongly opposed by many others in the community and as a result never eventuated.
39 For an interesting discussion of myth and Lao-Kmhmu relations from a Lao perspective, see Pholsena 2006: 24.
The Kmhmu culture hero of the cwang is renowned for his strength and prowess in battle, and Kmhmu folk histories relating the exploits of cwang abound (c.f. Proschan, 1998).

Relatively recent instances of armed rebellion by the Kmhmu against the Tai (including the Lao) appear to confirm a degree of reality in the mythological figure of the cwang: one armed uprising in 1875 was led by a Kmhmu man named Nhi (Evans, 2002: 34), while Cupet (2000 [1900]: 116) refers to a ‘kha’ (that is Kmhmu) ‘revolt against the authority of the Laotian mandarins’ on the old border between Luang Prabang and Huaphan, and to another incident in 1884-1885 involving the sacking of several villages by Kmhmu rebels in the area of present day Xieng Khuang (ibid: 158). Unfortunately no traveller’s records exist for the Nalae area, but oral and written accounts of resistance in other parts of Laos suggest that the occurrence of such things in Nalae is not beyond possibility. Tayanin gives a first-hand account of a less confrontational form of rebellion in Nalae: the forgery of population data and assets inventories in order to avoid registration fees, corvee labour, military service, and taxation (Tayanin 1994: 42).

Kmhmu people in Nalae still describe instances of resistance against exploitative behaviour by the Tai, although on a smaller scale. A Kmhmu woman working as a government official, for example, proudly tells how her grandfather, upon being poorly paid for his agricultural labour then called a pejorative name by the Tai landowner, threatened the man with his hunting gun and subsequently received an apology.

5.3.3.2 Nalae and beyond
In addition to the ethnic diversity within the population itself, Nalae has seen a diverse range of people and goods come and go from across the region throughout its history. From before the French colonial period, Nalae has been a crossroads for trade to and from what are now southern China and Thailand. In the past, Chinese caravans crossed the area on their way between Viengphoukha and Meuang La, a Tai principality in present-day southern China (Evrard, 2006: 24, Izikowitz, 1979 [1951]). Caravans also traversed the area on their way from Meuang Sing, a Tai principality in present-day Laos, to Luang Prabang, the
capital of the Lao kingdom of Lane Xang, and Siam (Evrard, 2006: 97). Meanwhile, Lao traders travelled up the Nam Tha river from the south as far as the terrain would permit, some settling in strategic spots, trading their wares for forest products collected by the Kmhmu and the Lamet (Izikowitz, 1979 [1951]: 27).

During the war, soldiers both came and went from Nalae, sometimes returning with wives from other parts of the country and from other ethnic groups. After the Communist victory, many Royalists were sent to ‘seminars’ (i.e. labour camps) in provinces as far away as Attapeu, in the south-eastern corner of Laos, some eventually returning home with their southern wives and children. From the time of the Communist victory, outsiders have also come to Nalae as government officials, sometimes stationed only temporarily in the district and other times marrying and settling there.

5.3.4 Interethnic relations in Nalae today

Today one of the main sources of interaction between outsiders and locals of Nalae is trade. Lao traders attend the lively monthly market on the road to Nalae and its southern equivalent on the river, and some enterprising individuals travel to the mountain villages trading clothing and manufactured goods for rice. Meanwhile, Thai entrepreneurs travel up the river from the border in order to purchase the highly prized textiles of the Tai Lue, while Lamet villagers travel down the river to work as day-labourers in Thailand. Recently, there has been an influx of Chinese traders into Nalae, who have established themselves around the market square. Other Chinese nationals reside intermittently in Nalae in order to establish and manage rubber, soy and taro plantations in the area. In the past couple of years, even a Vietnamese peddler has based himself intermittently in the district. In a more clandestine fashion, Lao middlemen carry amphetamines from Thailand through Nalae and on to Udomxai, from where they are transported throughout Laos or to Vietnam.

Since the establishment of the district centre in 1975, outsiders have also come to work and sometimes settle in Nalae as government officials and staff of donor-funded development
projects (of which there were three in 2005). Despite the presence of non-locals in
government and project offices in Nalae, however, the majority of government staff in the
district at this time was local and the majority of local staff was Kmhmu. This included
those in positions of authority: in 2005, the Governor of Nalae and the Heads of the District
Administration Bureau, the District Education Bureau, the Public Health Bureau, the
Finance Bureau, the Agriculture Bureau, the Justice Bureau and the police were all Kmhmu.
In fact, at this time Kmhmu political influence extended beyond the district: the Vice
Governor of the province of Luang Nam Tha was also a local Kmhmu man.

This is not to suggest that there was or is a Kmhmu monopoly on positions of authority in
Nalae. The Governor elected at the end of 2005 was a Tai-Lue man, as were several of the
Deputy Heads of Bureaux at that time and many of the Bureaux staff. In fact, Tai Lue were
over-represented among District Education Bureau staff when compared to the wider
population figures: they constituted eight out of a total of twenty staff members in the office
(40%), while accounting for around 25% of the overall population.

The interaction between Kmhmu and Tai Lue people which occurs within these official
spaces and in the wider community is generally convivial. These are people many of whom
have gone to school together (particularly government officials, who all have at least a
secondary school education), live near each other, work together, trade with each other,
socialise together, and more and more commonly, intermarry. In 2005 there were five mixed
marriages in the district centre and countless close interethnic relationships. One Tai Lue
official at the Education Bureau described how she used to visit her Kmhmu friends’ houses
when they were at secondary school together, and how they were still friends today – a
comment which was supported by observation of her social interactions. She also identified

40 The district still only has one high school, located in the district centre. Many people from
the further villages came to the district centre even for primary school.
a Kmhmu official in the same office as her closest friend there, which was likewise
supported by observation of their interaction.

The same Tai Lue official attended a wedding in a nearby Kmhmu village, describing it as
the wedding of a 'relative' (phi: nɔ̂:ng). This term can be extended in Lao to people who are
not blood relatives but who have been accorded (at least some of) the same rights and
responsibilities as biological kin. The same term was used by a Tai Lue woman from the
southern end of Nalae district to describe the Kmhmu and Tai Lue people who lived in
neighbouring villages there, and by Tai Lue bureaucrat when describing the trade
interactions he witnessed as a child in his village. He recounts how he watched Kmhmu
people interact with his parents:

If they [the Kmhmu villagers] had chilies, banana flowers or whatever, they’d
come as relatives [ma: nai thːnα phi: nɔ̂:ng]. They’d come to visit, they’d
come to get (?) and salt, to give things to each other.

While the use of the term phi: nɔ̂:ng does not necessarily indicate social equality between
groups, it does indicate a social proximity which allowed and continues to allow the
formation of close interpersonal bonds.

Unfortunately, however, this pleasant picture is not indicative of the full complexity of
interethnic relations in Nalae. Firstly, while Kmhmu and Tai Lue people living in the district
centre and nearby villages may enjoy close intergroup relations and deep interpersonal
bonds due to the frequency of their contact, for those Kmhmu living in the further mountain
villages interaction may be limited mostly to trade and service encounters once every ten
days (the Kmhmu working week), or less frequently for those living further away. Women,
young children and the elderly may leave their villages very rarely indeed and may shy
away from interaction with non-Kmhmu people, perhaps partly for language reasons and
partly because of self-consciousness about their palpable disadvantage in socio-economic
terms. Although figures for Nalae district are unavailable, Mon-Khmer people score lower
on every development indicator than their Tai compatriots – a fact which is clear even from simple observation in Nalae.

Towards Kmhmnu people in general and the poorer mountain dwelling Kmhmnu in particular, the Tai Lue often manifest an attitude of superiority. Especially with Kmhmnu people from the mountains, it is not uncommon for Tai people to refuse to use politeness markers in speech and to comment on their backwardness. The same attitude has been noted by others. Lindell writes:

In the larger community... where they find themselves in the minority, the Kammu form the second lowest level in society. Only the Rmeet (Lamet) in Laos and the Akha in Thailand are even less respected... This social inferiority is not just theoretical. It is a palpable fact and manifests itself in all contacts with the majority peoples. The Thai and to an even greater extent the Lao behave in a supercilious way towards any Kammu. To the majority it is axiomatic that the Kammu are, indeed, inferior (Lindell et al., 1980b: 10).

Although Kmhmnu people living in the district centre may have closer social ties with Tai Lue than those living in outlying villages and may receive somewhat different treatment, this does not mean that district centre residents make no distinctions between the two groups. Kmhmnu and Tai Lue people there do attend each other’s social gatherings such as house-warmings and weddings. However, because the Lue are Buddhists and the Kmhmnu in Nalae are animists, some ceremonies are prepared and attended only by in-group members. This means that the opportunity to fulfil the most important social duties – those carried out around religious ceremonies – is limited to members of the in-group. Religious persuasion is significant for people in Nalae, however, not only in terms of its implications for social interaction, but as a point of difference in itself. When three district residents were asked separately what the difference between Tai Lue and Kmhmnu people was, each one mentioned religion first.
Religion is not the only point of social distinction, however. Other cultural practices may be held up as markers of difference too, often with negative valuations attached. For the Tai Lue, negative attitudes toward Kmhmu people are often attached to traditional practices which are seen to be emblematic of backwardness, such as the wearing of traditional dress, the raising of free-roaming livestock, and the practice of ritual animal sacrifice to heal illness. Many Tai Lue also hold negative attitudes to what they perceive as typical Kmhmu character traits. As one Tai Lue high school student said:

They're different. Upland Lao [Kmhmu] don't (show respect), you know?... They don't show respect. They do whatever they want to do.

Kmhmu reactions to such attitudes are complex. At one level there is certainly the idea among many Kmhmu that Tai people, be they Tai Lue or Lao, are more developed and wealthier, even generally superior. As one Kmhmu teacher said:

We have to use natural things. We're ethnic minorities, [our things are] inadequate [bo: khop bo: thuau].

Another Kmhmu teacher remarked that a foreigner working with Kmhmu people was equivalent to himself working with animals, so great was the difference.

Perhaps as a result of this perceived inequality in social status, Kmhmu people tend to consider Tai people and their attire more attractive. A Kmhmu vendor said, as she watched two Kmhmu girls walk down the street:

They're beautiful, just like Lao girls.

41 This comment is similar to the comment of a story-teller recorded by Lindell, Swahn and Tayanin in 1976 and cited by Proschan (2001): 'We do not have any material and we do not have any clothes. We have to go and get it from them [the Lao] because they know how to make it. We are the elder brothers, only just the elder brothers, and we are unable to make anything at all. Our younger brothers make everything for us, make everything for us.'
A young man told of his embarrassment at carrying a Kmhmu shoulder bag to school when he was a boy instead of the Lao equivalent, and a Kmhmu school boy said of his mother’s weaving:

Upland Lao [Kmhmu] skirts are ugly.\(^{42}\)

These comments might indicate that to a degree, Kmhmu people have internalized Tai attitudes to themselves: a case of Bourdieu’s symbolic domination (Bourdieu, 1991). Lindell describes such a process:

As a group, [the Kmhmu] have accepted the view of the majority, and they act as if they were indeed inferior (Lindell et al., 1980b: 11).

As one Kmhmu woman herself explained:

Kmhmu people are like that. They accept other people’s ideas [nyom khuan khan i:n]. I don’t know why. Maybe it’s because we don’t know how to do things ourselves [to: e:ng bo: sa:ng bef].

This speaker here manages both to identify and to exemplify such domination. Yet the question of whether Kmhmu people have undergone a total symbolic domination will be answered in the following chapters, where it will become apparent that such issues are more complex than one might assume.

### 5.4 Language in Nalae

#### 5.4.1 Languages and dialects of Nalae

##### 5.4.1.1 Lue/Lao

The main languages spoken in Nalae are Kmhmu, Lue/Lao and Lamet. Lue and Lao have been combined here not because they are closely related languages belonging to the 

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\(^{42}\) The traditional skirts worn by Tai and Mon-Khmer groups in Laos, called sin in Lao, are commonly worn and function as markers of ethnic identity as well as social status. For a discussion of this, see Cheeseman (2004).
southwestern branch of the Tai Kadai family (Chamberlain, 2002: 96), but because the line between the two can be difficult to draw in Nalae. No academic work has been done on the Lue spoken in Nalae today or, more specifically, on contact effects between Lao and Lue in Nalae. However, observation of district residents indicated that they speak everything from Lue with very little Lao influence (especially in the southern villages), to mixed Lue and Lao (in the nearer villages and among older speakers in the district centre), to Lao with some Lue lexical and phonological influence (especially among young, educated speakers in the district centre). Even for those who speak a dialect at the Lue end of the spectrum, Lao is easily intelligible due to both the genetic closeness of the languages and to Tai Lue people's exposure to Lao through the media and through contact with Lao speakers.43

Typologically, Lao and Lue can be characterised by their SVO word order; a lack of inflection, including no marking for number, person, tense or aspect; the existence of tones; extensive borrowing from Pali, particularly for religious and political vocabulary, although this is more the case in Lao than in Lue as national corpus planners have utilised Pali roots for new lexis; and the common use of rhyming word pairs for rhetorical effect. To give a point of comparison: these are features common to the Thai language too, and a great deal of lexis is shared among the languages in addition to this. In fact, Thai is mostly intelligible to Lao and Lue speakers in large part due to this genetic similarity, but also due to the exposure of Lao nationals to the Thai language through the media and popular culture.

The two Tai Lue teachers discussed in chapters six and seven respectively used the local variety of Lao in the classroom. They read the standard Lao texts in their local accents and used some local Lue-origin lexis, but could be easily understood by a speaker of Lao from elsewhere in the country.

43 Residents of Nalae are exposed to Lao through radio but not through television, as the only stations which can be picked up there are from Thailand. Because of this, frequent travel for some between the two countries, and the genetic closeness of the languages, Tai Lue locals of Nalae generally have a high level of receptive competence in Thai.
5.4.1.2 **Kmhmu**

The Kmhmu spoken in Nalae belongs to the western Kmhmu dialect group (also called the northern dialect type (c.f. Svantesson and House, 1996). While the eastern dialects have a voiced and unvoiced consonant distinction, the western dialects have only unvoiced consonants and have replaced the voicing distinction with high and low tones or registers (Suwilai, 2006, 2004).

There are four western dialects spoken in Nalae: Kmhmu Lue, Kmhmu Khwaen, Kmhmu Yuan and Kmhmu Rok. Each dialect has a distinct territory – Kmhmu Lue in the northeast of the district, Yuan and Khwaen in the northwest, and Rok in the south – although village relocation has had some impact on this distribution. All dialects are also spoken in the district centre and some of its satellite villages, and mixed-dialect families are not uncommon among the younger generation of district centre residents.

The differences between the dialects are mostly phonological: Kmhmu Lue has been analysed as having register and Kmhmu Rok as tone (Suwilai, 2006: 8). Kmhmu Rok, unlike the other dialects, also has aspirated stops. Other minor differences are lexical: Kmhmu Rok displays a tendency to omit presyllables (ibid 11; 15) and each of the dialects has some distinctive vocabulary. Despite the differences between eastern and western Kmhmu and among the western dialects, however, scholars have claimed that speakers of different dialects can understand each other easily (Svantesson and House, 1996: 85, Simana and Preisig, 1997a: 8) and indeed observation indicates that Kmhmu Lue, Khwaen, Yuan and Rok speakers have no difficulty communicating with each other and only minor difficulties communicating with Eastern Kmhmu speakers.

Like Lao and Lue, Kmhmu has an SVO word order and a lack of inflection for person, number, tense, or aspect. Interestingly, it also displays a rhetorical preference for rhyming word pairs. Western Kmhmu (the dialects found in Nalae) also have tone (or register), another feature they share with Lao, although of course the number of tones, the pitches and
the contours are different. Unlike Lao, Kmhmu has a causative prefix, although this is no longer productive.

On the phonological level, Kmhmu includes all the phonemes found in Lao as well as several others, although the additional phonemes are greater in Eastern than in Western (Nalae) Kmhmu. Both varieties of Kmhmu also include syllable-final phonemes which are only possible in syllable-initial position in Lao. In addition to this, consonant clusters are frequent in Kmhmu, but impossible in Lao with its consonant-vowel(-consonant) syllable structure. All this renders Lao pronunciation easier for native Kmhmu speakers than the converse, although Kmhmu speakers do tend to have difficulty with Lao tones.

5.4.2 Language contact in Nalae
Like Lue, Kmhmu is also mixed with Lao to varying degrees by speakers in Nalae. This may seem surprising due to the unrelatedness of the languages, Lao being from the Tai-Kadai family and Kmhmu from the Austroasiatic. However, it is a common effect of prolonged contact between speakers of different languages (c.f. Thomason, 2001). Although a considerable amount of work has been done on Kmhmu syntax and phonology, some of which was based on dialects spoken in Nalae (see citations in section 5.3.1.2 above), very little attention has been paid to the effects on Kmhmu of contact with Lao (see below), and none to those effects in the Nalae dialects. Likewise, no attention has been given to the contact effects of Kmhmu on Lao in this geographical area. Although this is not the aim of the present study either, a short overview of language contact in Nalae is given below, as it has implications for the analysis presented in the following chapters.

The work which has been done on Lao influences on Kmhmu (c.f. Enfield, 2003b) focused on processes of calquing in particular, which is the mapping of native lexis onto borrowed syntactic and/or idiomatic structures. Although the dialect from which the data were drawn in Enfield’s study was an eastern dialect, Kmhmu Cheuang, the same process was identified by the present research in the Nalae dialects of Kmhmu. The Kmhmu construction below is
an example of calquing recorded for both a native Kmhmu Lue speaker and a native (Tai) Lue speaker:

\[ \text{Pe ah me'} \]
\[ \text{no have who} \]
\[ \text{‘There isn’t anyone.’} \]

This parallels the Lao

\[ \text{Bo: mi: phai} \]
\[ \text{no have who} \]
\[ \text{‘There isn’t anyone.’} \]

and was used instead of the Kmhmu construction:

\[ \text{Pe ah am mooy gôn.} \]
\[ \text{No have even one person} \]
\[ \text{‘There isn’t anyone.’} \]

Another contact effect on Kmhmu has been the borrowing of lexical items from Lao. This has happened over an extended time and includes phonologically and morphologically assimilated items which now have no Kmhmu-origin equivalent in usage (in Nalae), for example gôn from the Lao khan (person), and trgit from the Lao khit (think), as well as non-assimilated items in common but not exclusive usage, such as numbers over three. It also includes items which may be borrowed only by small groups of speakers or even by individual speakers but which have not (yet) been taken on more widely. Idiosyncratic lexical borrowing appears common among young Kmhmu speakers in the district centre who have daily contact with Lao speakers and among young, non-native speakers of Kmhmu.

All of this points to the fact that the Kmhmu in Nalae is diverse and fluid. Not only is there a variety of dialects spoken in the district, including within the district centre, but there is a
variety of degrees of mixing with Lao. Speakers in the villages tend on the whole to be more conservative and those in the district centre more innovative, which is certainly the result of varying degrees of contact with Lao. However, great differences in usage can be found even among district residents and occasional differences can be found among village residents, depending perhaps on personal background and preference.

Not only has Lao had a continuing effect on Kmhmu syntax and lexis in Nalae, the converse is also true. Both Tai Lue and Kmhmu residents of the district centre and of the outlying villages were heard to use Kmhmu lexis in their Lao/Lue discourse. Items included the Kmhmu yo' instead of the Lao mu: (friend), Kmhmu je' instead of Lao pian or uai (dirty), Kmhmu u' (from h'ou', which is phonologically impossible in Lao) instead of Lao men, Kmhmu tw instead of Lao kei (permanently), and Kmhmu ci ri instead of Lao ngiap (quiet/tranquil).

Calquing of Lao lexis onto Kmhmu structures was also observed during this research, such as in the omission of the Lao sentence final interrogative particle bo: or wa: (interrogative particles are optional in Nalae Kmhmu), and the omission of required objects in Lao verb phrases, for example a:p (bathe) instead of a:p nam (literally bathe water), paralleling the Kmhmu muum (bathe). Once again, however, these items were not standardized across all speakers but were in varied usage.

The high degree of borrowing between languages in Nalae and the profusion of idiolects sometimes renders the clear separation of languages in the data a difficult task. At times it is unclear whether a word, a phrase, or even a whole sentence is in one language or the other. Some well established borrowings from Lao into Kmhmu can fairly easily be considered Kmhmu, especially where phonetic assimilation has occurred. However, other occurrences of (originally) Lao items in Kmhmu may be well established borrowings for a particular speaker but not for others, which raises questions as to how they should be analysed. Furthermore, some phrases or sentences may consist of a string of Lao-origin items
surrounded by Kmhmu discourse, which raises the question of whether it is a Kmhmu utterance which just happens to contain all borrowed items, or a Lao utterance inserted into the otherwise Kmhmu discourse. In Lao and Kmhmu, there is no word inflection which could clarify the matter and pronunciation is generally uniform whether a speaker is using a borrowed item in the receiving language or actually speaking the source language.

The approach taken here to these issues is to divide the language sample into three categories: Kmhmu (rendered in bold), Lao (rendered in plain text), and indeterminate (underlined). This approach is explained in detail at the beginning of chapter six and is revisited at the beginning of each of the other two classroom case studies.

5.4.3 Language proficiency across groups

It is commonly assumed among lay people and language professionals alike in Laos that Lao is the lingua franca between ethnic groups. Even the director of the Lao Institute for Linguistic Research has been quoted making this assertion (c.f. Power, 2002: 31). However in reality, minority languages in Laos, which are in fact majority languages in many parts of the country, often serve as lingue franche. Personal observation has found Phunoy and Ho to be used as lingue franche in the northernmost province of Phongsali and Katu in the eastern part of Salavan province. Akha languages were similarly observed to function as lingue franche among mixed ethnic minority teacher trainees at a provincial teacher training college. Lingua franca status has also been reported for Brao on the Bolovens Plateau (Pascale Jacq, personal communication).

In light of this information, and given the fact that the Kmhmu are a huge majority in Nalae, it is unsurprising that all Tai Lue district residents including those from the district centre and the outlying villages were observed to have at least some proficiency in Kmhmu and that the language often served as the medium of communication across groups. Even most non-locals who had moved to the district as government or project staff - including some recent arrivals - had learned some Kmhmu and used it socially and in their work.
Kmhmu language proficiency among Tai Lue people ranged from fluency in all but the most complex and infrequent domains of use, such as religious ceremonies, to basic conversational competence in everyday interactions, such as in the marketplace. Fluency in Kmhmu was observed among young and old Tai Lue people, district centre and village residents alike. Elders in the village immediately across the river from the district centre explained that their fathers and grandfathers were fluent in Kmhmu and spoke it when trading with the Kmhmu villagers from the mountains. Thus it seems that Kmhmu language proficiency and use in intergroup encounters is not the result of recent changes such as increased proximity and interaction between groups.

As far as Lao language proficiency among the Tai-Lue is concerned, as was noted earlier, the two languages are close enough genetically to allow for considerable mutual intelligibility, even among speakers with no prior exposure to the other language. However, in reality most Lue speakers in Nalae use a mixture of Lao and Lue depending on the perceived linguistic competence of their listeners, and in fact I have never come across a young or middle aged Tai-Lue person who could not hold a conversation in Lao (albeit the local variety).

With regard to native Kmhmu speakers: some men of working age in Kmhmu villages are fluent in conversational Lao due to time spent working outside the village. Most men of working age, however, have only a basic knowledge of Lao: enough for simple everyday conversations but little else. Some women in the villages have basic competence in Lao for trading at the market and a few younger women in the villages near the district centre have been educated outside the village and have fluency in Lao. However, many women especially in the further villages and in those recently relocated near the district centre are not able to understand or speak Lao. Likewise, very young children and some elderly people (but not those men who were soldiers during the war) display no proficiency in Lao.
Literacy is extremely rare in the villages. Figures for Nalae are unavailable, but the national Lao literacy rate for the Mon-Khmer group is 36.9% and for the Kmhmu is 60.8% (ADB, 2002: 24), figures which include educated people living in towns and both men and women. The Lao literacy rate for the villages in Nalae would be significantly lower. There it is often only the village teacher, the village Headman (an administrative position), and the representative of the Lao Front for National Construction (usually an ex-soldier) who have any literacy in Lao. The literacy rate for Kmhmu women in the villages of Nalae would be dramatically lower than the national rate for Kmhmu women, which is already low at 22.7% (ADB, 2002: 24): most Kmhmu women there have no Lao literacy at all.

The discussion so far has referred to literacy in Lao. In fact, the distinction is an unnecessary one as no-one in the district has literacy in Kmhmu. Kmhmu orthographies, both in Lao and Latin script, have been developed by linguists; however, although there have been some projects aiming to promote and teach Kmhmu literacy using the Lao script orthography\textsuperscript{4}, these have not been successful beyond small sample groups. Some Kmhmu people in Nalae had seen Kmhmu language primers but none had learned to read the written language or had used it in any way.

Native Kmhmu speakers who live in the district centre are generally fluent in both Lao and Kmhmu, except for some elderly people who have moved there recently. As government staff make up a considerable proportion of the population in the district centre and education there is universal for the younger generation, literacy rates in the centre are significantly higher than in the villages.

\textsuperscript{4} Suksavang Simana (himself a Kmhmu man) of the Cultural Research Institute under the Lao Ministry of Information and Culture, together with Elisabeth Preisig, an expert in Kmhmu language, have carried out informal trials for a series of Kmhmu primers which they have developed. Some Kmhmu residents of Nalae district were involved in the trials.
5.4.4 Language domains or switching?

Kmhmu is used in a variety of contexts and for various purposes both in the villages and in
the district centre. Below is a summary:

5.4.4.1 Kmhmu use in Nalae

In the villages:

At most times except for: communication with non-Kmhmu people who are not
able to or choose not to speak Kmhmu; reading aloud of official documents at
meetings; and some classroom interaction.

In the district centre:

- At most times between native Kmhmu speakers, including discussion in the
  workplace, at official meetings in government offices, during religious
ceremonies, socially and in everyday encounters e.g. at the market, with drivers
  of songtheo (utility trucks converted into passenger vehicles) or with other
  acquaintances;
- Frequently for informal interaction between Kmhmu and Tai Lue staff in
government offices;
- Frequently during social interactions between Kmhmu and Tai Leu, but not
  always where Kmhmu are the majority (some outspoken Kmhmu individuals
  initiate switches into Kmhmu even when they are in the minority). This was
  witnessed among all age groups;
- Frequently in everyday interactions between Kmhmu and Tai Lue at the market,
on public transport, and in the street.

It becomes obvious from the above overview that languages in Nalae are not clearly
separated based on context. Even in the outlying villages, where many people do not have
proficiency in Lao, the use of Kmhmu in any given context may not be exclusive – such presumably conservative contexts as religious ceremonies can even be performed partly in Lao.45 Kmhmu may be used in particular settings frequently but not always, and likewise for Lao/Lue. Although no in-depth investigation into this was done as part of the current research, Fishman’s concept of diglossia (e.g. Fishman, 1971), whereby speakers are constrained to speak a particular language by the context they are in or by the action going on at the time (the ‘domain’), does not appear to apply, or at least not consistently, in Nalae.

In fact, language choice in Nalae is a much more complicated matter. The present research is not a study of language use in the community, as interesting as such a study would be, thus it does not definitively identify influences on or reasons for such language choice. However, it does seem clear that the choices which Nalae residents make about which language to speak and when depend on a whole range of factors. Others studying similar contexts have suggested factors including the interpersonal (such as speaker/listener competence and preference), the discursive (such as the topic being discussed), and the textual (such as previous choices within the same text) (Auer, 1988), as well as the importance of language in indexing social relationships (e.g. Myers-Scotton, 1988).

Not only do these theories provide a useful model for the analysis of language choices in a community such as Nalae, they are to varying degrees relevant to the analysis of language choices in classroom settings specifically. It is for this reason that they and other theories are explored in the following section, before the subsequent chapters introduce the language practices of teachers and students in Nalae.

45 This was observed twice, once when an esteemed Tai Lue shaman was invited to perform a healing ceremony for a sick woman in a village about 35 km along the road from the district centre, and again for a family in a village two and a half hours walk from the centre. Both shamans were fluent in Kmhmu but included Lao blessings in their chanting.
5.5 Language choices in community and classroom: An overview of the literature

5.5.1 Language in community and classroom: the literature on Laos

While there is an abundance of research into language use in multilingual communities and classrooms (and a corresponding abundance of theories and models for analysis), there is a dearth of such research into the Lao context, and a complete absence of research into bilingual Lao-Khmhu settings. Chagnon and Rumpf's (1982) study of the post-1975 Lao education system makes only passing mention of the issue of language, noting the effectiveness of Lao language instruction as compared to the French language instruction policy of previous regimes⁴⁶ (Chagnon and Rumpf, 1982: 171). Enfield's (1999) otherwise comprehensive discussion of Lao as a national language likewise makes minimal reference to the issue of language in education, and Evans' (1998b) examination of the Lao post-war education system makes no comment on media of instruction. Bouasivith et al's (1996) overview of the history of Lao education is yet another study which does not address the issue of language in education: it makes only one brief reference to the printing of minority language primers in Communist controlled areas during the war (Bouasivith et al., 1996: 100). Sithirajvongsa and Goh (2004a) give a brief overview of the history of education policies in Laos, but with reference to language note only the shift from French to Lao as the medium of instruction, and the move away from languages of the old Communist bloc to English as the foreign language of choice.

The only research to have focused on languages in education in the Lao PDR is a report written by Power (2002) for Save the Children (UK). This report provides an introduction to some of the language challenges facing teachers and students in ethnic minority contexts in Laos. It also notes some of the attitudes to language among teachers, students and education

⁴⁶ Although in fact Lao had already been introduced as the medium of instruction in 1962, well before the Communist revolution (Enfield 1999: 268).
officials in these contexts. However, as was noted in chapter two, the report has several significant weaknesses which limit its usefulness.

5.5.2 Language choice in bilingual communities: the early literature

As mentioned, the lack of literature on Laos is not reflective of the situation for other multilingual contexts. In fact, over the past four decades, language practices in multilingual settings have been studied from the perspectives of descriptive linguistics, the sociology of language, the sociopsychology of language, sociolinguistics and anthropology (c.f. Heller, 1988b: 3, Pavlenko and Blackledge, 2004). Some of the early work on the topic was concerned with the identification of rules and systems governing the use of two languages together, whether these be psycholinguistic and grammatical processes (e.g. Weinreich, 1953) or socially prescribed norms within a given community (e.g. Fishman, 1967 drawing on the work of Schmidt-Rohr [1932]).

One of the early articulations of such concerns was Fishman’s ‘language domain’ model, which expanded on Ferguson’s (1959) earlier theory of diglossia. The model aimed to explain language choices in relation to ‘relatively stable patterns of choice that exist in [the speakers’] multilingual speech community as a whole’ (Fishman, 1972: 440). Fishman explained that:

Domains enable us to understand that language choice and topic [are] related to widespread sociocultural norms and expectations (Fishman, 1972: 441).

That is, for any institutional context, meaning a particular configuration of topic, speaker relationship and locale, there is a preferred language choice. According to Fishman, incongruent situations do occur, but these are then ‘rendered understandable and acceptable’ just as grammatical errors in speech are reinterpreted. That is:
interlocutors reinterpret incongruencies [in code choice] in order to salvage some semblance of the congruency in terms of which they understand and function within their social order. (Fishman, 1972: 445)

Although rather simplistic and deterministic in comparison to later models of code choice (see below), the domain model was an early attempt to conceptualise language choice in relation to social identities. This inspired the now classic work of Blom and Gumperz (e.g., 1972), and Gumperz (1981, 1982b, 1982a), who proposed the notions of ‘situational codeswitching’ and ‘metaphorical codeswitching’. Situational switching closely parallels the domain concept: a particular language is associated with a certain class of activities so that ‘it comes to signify or connote them’ (Gumperz 1982: 98). Switches into a language to correspond with the class of activities being undertaken (or the situation) constitute the most common form of switching. Metaphorical switching, on the other hand, is a ‘partial violation of co-occurrence expectations’ (ibid.) in that it involves switches into a language which is not associated with the situation. In such switches, the unexpected language is used as a metaphor for the contexts, activities, topics, and/or relationships usually associated with that language. The switch brings with it a new set of social meanings.

The situational/metaphorical distinction informed the work of other theorists of code switching, most notably perhaps Myers-Scotton (e.g., 1988), whose theory of ‘marked and unmarked’ switching is discussed below. Blom and Gumperz’ model has been criticized however, for suggesting that situational switching is ‘without social meaning because it is a necessary consequence of certain situational parameters’ (Auer, 1988: 4) and that metaphorical switching ‘is dependent on an (almost) one-to-one relationship between language choice and situational parameters which can be purposefully violated’ (ibid.). Other studies of switching have shown that the language of any interaction is often not pre-determined but must be established through negotiation (Heller, 1988a, Heller, 1995b, Heller, 1995a).
5.5.3 Code switching: key contributions

While the literature on language choices in multilingual settings discussed above focused on the discursive properties of those choices, much of the research in this area has focused on the formal properties of bilingual speech behavior, and most particularly of code-switching. Over the past fifteen years, for example, Myers-Scotton (e.g., 1993, 2002) has developed the Matrix Frame Language model: that is, the theory that code-switched utterances have a matrix language (most simply put, a language which provides the syntactic framework of the utterance) and an embedded language (from which morphemes may be taken but generally conform to the syntactic constraints of the matrix). While this theory is an interesting attempt to explain switches from a formal perspective, it can be criticized on several counts.

The first of these is the validity of the formal analyses themselves: how valid is the concept that there always is a matrix language and how useful is this concept once we acknowledge that the matrix language can even converge with the embedded language (c.f. Myers-Scotton, 2002)? Furthermore, code switching analyses which aim to posit formal universals such as matrix and embedded languages require clear separation of the languages which are being used in order to identify switches and to demarcate exact switch points. However, such separation and demarcation are often difficult, if not impossible. In cases where both languages are closely related and share some lexis and phonology, and/or where neither language has inflection which could indicate whether non-native items are in fact switches or borrowed (and assimilated) items, it can be difficult to determine whether switches are actually occurring and if so at which point. The same problem occurs where languages are spoken by some populations with phonological and syntactic interference/borrowing from another language at all times (c.f. Woolard, 1988).

Myers-Scotton discusses borrowing in her more recent formal analyses (c.f. Myers-Scotton, 2002: 239) and even before this, recognized the problem of distinguishing borrowing from switching in her writings on the interpersonal aspects of code switching (e.g. Myers-Scotton 1988). She argued in this work on interpersonal dimensions of code switching that the
problem of distinguishing switching from borrowing should not be addressed on a structural basis but in terms of the social significance of the switched/borrowed item. Her claim was that items 'which carry social significance (as a negotiation) constitute code switching while those which do not are borrowings' (Myers-Scotton, 1988: 160). Yet this solution only replaces the question of what is a borrowed or a switched item with the potentially more difficult question of what is socially significant.

Myers-Scotton’s matrix language theory is also problematic for the present study for another reason. Whether or not it increases our understanding of the cognitive aspects of bilingualism and code switching, or assists us in identifying the dominant language in a given sample of switched speech, it does not contribute to our understanding of the reasons for and effects of code switching. It does not situate code switching within a historical, political and economic context, or consider switching in relation to the identities and social relationships of speakers. This renders it marginal to the issues discussed in this thesis.

This criticism, however, does not apply to the entirety of Myers-Scotton’s work, as she also addresses the significance of code switching as an index of interpersonal relations. According to her model:

all linguistic code choices are indexical of a set of rights and obligations holding between participants in the conversational exchange. That is, any code choice points to a particular interpersonal balance...' (Myers-Scotton, 1988: 152).

Myers-Scotton further posits a ‘markedness’ model. She argues that in any given context, a particular code will constitute the ‘unmarked’ choice. As she puts it:
[social] norms determine the relative markedness of a linguistic code for a particular exchange, given the association of the code with a specific rights and obligations set (Myers-Scotton, 1988: 155).

It is up to speakers then whether they will comply with social norms and use the unmarked code, or whether they will challenge those norms by using a 'marked' code, thereby renegotiating the terms of the relationship between speakers.

Myers-Scotton's model of markedness, which is based on the conceptualisation of code switching as an interpersonal device, can be useful for describing code choice in multilingual contexts, as it provides a vocabulary with which to address the patterns and deviations which occur in any such context. The model provides us not only with an inventory of switching patterns (sequential unmarked choices, overall switching as the unmarked choice, code switching as a marked choice, permissible marked choices, exploratory choices), but with a reason – the negotiation of social relationships – in terms of which we can investigate any instance of code switching.

However, Myers-Scotton's emphasis on the interpersonal aspect of code switching is also a weakness of her work. Interpersonal relationships can only be understood within a social context: who speakers are, and their social closeness, distance, power or subordination are all established within the framework of a particular society and culture. Yet Myers-Scotton's discussion of code choices includes no in-depth analysis of the social contexts in which they occur. She does not discuss, except in passing, the socio-economic conditions, political models and climates, or inter-ethnic rivalries and affiliations which underlie the code choices she describes. To analyse code choices as a negotiation of individual positions – which necessarily occur in relation to social conditions - without a thorough investigation of what those conditions are is at the least a wasted opportunity and at the most a threat to the
validity of the analysis. Of course, the markedness model does not preclude such investigations where researchers recognize their importance.

One researcher who has provided a fuller model for the analysis of code switching is Peter Auer (e.g., 1984, 1988, 1998), although he refers to the wider phenomenon as 'language alternation' rather than code switching. In Auer's model, language alternation is classified according to two sets of distinctions: code switching / transfer and participant-related / discourse-related alternation. For Auer, transfer refers to the insertion of a different-language element into same-language speech. After the insertion of the transferred element, the original language of communication is resumed. Code switching, on the other hand, refers to the change to a new language of communication which is maintained until another transfer or switch occurs (Auer, 1984). This distinction allows us to separate instances of borrowing or quoting, for example, from more stable and prolonged changes in the language of communication and in doing so to explore the usually different motivations for the two types of alternation.

Auer's second distinction, that of discourse- versus participant-related alternation, regards whether the language change is related to changes in the nature of the communicative context or in the personal characteristics of the participants. Differences in speaker competence and preference can motivate participant-related alternation, whereas contextual changes in participant constellation (speaker grouping), topic, and purpose of talk can lead to discourse-related alternation (Auer, 1988). In making this distinction, Auer separates language alternation which is the result of the language proficiency of the speakers and language alternation which is the result of broader concerns, such as textual organization or social norms of language choice.
Auer’s model is particularly useful for the analysis of language alternation in L2 classroom contexts, where some cases of alternation may be the result of considerably different levels of proficiency in the two languages, while other cases may be related to social factors. His identification of textual functions of alternation (e.g. cohesion) is also useful in L2 classroom contexts, where teachers and students frequently discuss L2 texts in the L1. A further strength of Auer’s work is that it recognizes the complexity of language alternation: the final chapter of Auer (1984) is dedicated to examples of language alternation which fit between or across the categories in his taxonomy. In fact, Auer describes his model as procedural rather than classificatory and states that although it should be applicable to language alternation in contexts other than the one he researched, it is not intended to be universal (Auer, 1984: 95).

The weakness of Auer’s work in relation to the present research (although not necessarily a weakness of his model) is that despite his own calls for an integration of grammatical, macro-sociological and conversation analytic approaches to code switching (Auer, 1988: 209), and aside from some comments on the linguistic prospects of migrant speech communities (c.f. Auer, 1984), his work remains firmly at the conversation analytic level. In-depth and integrated analysis of the historical, cultural and socio-economic conditions within which his speakers operate is subordinated to the analysis of spoken interactions.

This is a weakness avoided by Gal, who states that in order to understand the differences between code switching practices and between the communities which use them, we need:

a comparative analysis that interprets codeswitching practices not only as conversational tools that maintain or change ethnic group boundaries and personal relationships but also as symbolic creations concerned with the
construction of 'self' and 'other' within a broader political economic and historical context (Gal, 1988: 247, emphasis added).

Gal's work analyses not only socio-political and economic conditions at the local level, but the national and international relations of power within which local communities, groups and individuals operate. Integral to her analyses are the historical events and processes which have contributed to present day social relations. Gal's work on linguistic minorities in central Europe, for example (e.g. Gal, 1979, 1987, 1993, 2001), has focused on the particular historical and economic relations which have resulted in cultural and linguistic domination, and the resistance this engenders.

As suggested perhaps by Gal's emphasis on the significance of local and international economic relations, her work takes a Marxist (or neo-Marxist) angle. She explains that:

[b]ecause codeswitching usually involves the use of a state-supported and powerfully legitimated language in opposition to a stigmatized minority language that has considerably less institutional support, it can also provide fresh evidence of what neo-Marxist culture theory... identifies as "consciousness": how speakers respond symbolically to relations of domination between groups within the state, and how they understand their historic position and identity within a world capitalist system structured around dependency and unequal development (ibid.).

Yet according to Gal, her own work and that of neo-Marxists in general has moved away from purely materialist analyses to incorporate the anthropological interest in symbolism and discourse (Gal, 1989: 345). Thus Gal's work draws on the anthropological theory of Bourdieu (e.g., 1977a, 1977b, 1991) in its exploration of the differential value of languages as a form of social capital and the resulting differences in the symbolic value of those languages. However, the
incorporation of such ideas can be seen not so much as a departure from the neo-Marxist approach as an inclusion of language within it. Language becomes another resource positioned within a marketplace: what Bourdieu calls the 'linguistic marketplace' (1977a). This does not diminish the value of Gal's research, but simply clarifies the degree to which it remains within a neo-Marxist framework.

Where Gal's work does make a departure from neo-Marxism is in its acknowledgement of the many ways in which members of minority groups resist economic and symbolic domination through their language practice. Bourdieu's theories fail to account for the possibility of resistance to domination, presenting instead what has been called an 'overly deterministic' view (Woolard, 1985: 746) of domination. In contrast, Gal draws our attention to the fact that:

the sociolinguistic evidence argues for a less totalizing conception of societal reproduction than Bourdieu's view, one that emphasizes the active, though often self-defeating, resistance of subordinate groups through solidarity-based linguistic practices. (Gal, 1989: 354)

In fact, Gal's work forms part of the valuable body of sociolinguistic literature which challenges Bourdieu's theory through the scrutiny of ethnographic evidence and from which the present study takes its cue.

Another researcher who has successfully incorporated the analysis of macro level social factors into her studies of code switching is Woolard. Some of Woolard's writing has explored and critiqued sociolinguistic theory (e.g., 1985, Woolard, 1994), while other pieces have centred on the socio-economic conditions underlying linguistic behaviours in particular contexts (e.g. Woolard and Gahng, 1990). However, Woolard's work also includes micro level analysis
of switching in everyday Catalanian settings, which is then interpreted in terms of the political and economic relations between Castilian and Catalan speaking populations there (e.g., 1988, 1989).

Woolard's integration of macro and micro level analyses achieves what others have called for but not accomplished (e.g. Auer, 1988, Gal, 1988) in that it includes detailed transcription and analysis of spoken texts within broader discussions of intergroup relations (c.f. Woolard, 1988). In this regard, it is a fuller analysis even than the work of Gal, which tends not to include examples of actual spoken exchanges. For this reason, Woolard's work is also taken as a model for the present study. The only respect in which it, like Gal's work, is insufficient for this purpose is that it addresses speech in the broader community rather than in the classroom.

Much of the code switching research done by Heller, on the other hand, focuses specifically on school contexts in bilingual Canada (e.g. Heller, 1996, 1999, 2001). It combines discussion of historical events and processes, including the development of national language ideologies and movements, with government and school policy and the imposition of linguistic norms, the construction of group and individual identities, and the particular linguistic behaviours which both create and respond to these conditions. For Heller language use is a form of social action within a social structure (Heller, 1999: 274), and the two must be understood in complementarity.

Heller's particular concern in the Canadian school studies is to explore the notion of legitimate language put forward in the work of Foucault and Bourdieu. She aims to examine:
how specific kinds of language practices are legitimized...how
legitimizing those practices helps advance or marginalize the interests of
different groups... [and] what this tells us about the development of
relations of power among such groups through the process of bilingual
or multilingual education (Heller, 2001: 382-3).

A central question which arises for Heller in this exploration is whom education
in the bilingual school context is for (Heller, 2001: 386-7): who belongs in the
school and how they benefit from it. However, her approach to the construction
and reproduction of such discourses is, like Gal and Woolard’s, one which
allows for contestation and resistance. Heller rejects Foucault and Bourdieu’s
monolithic visions of domination, suggesting rather that in every context of
unequal power relations, there is a range of possible articulations, from the more
highly bound and structured to the more loosely connected (Heller, 1996: 7).
She argues that:

No matter how tightly articulated the structure of society, there are
always interstices; that is, spaces where structures fail to seal
hermetically, and which provide sites...where different practices of
resistance (those of students and/or teachers) can be developed and
where different world views can be articulated (ibid.).

It is this recognition of the potential for resistance to domination, together with
Heller’s combination of comprehensive and detailed social and linguistic
analyses, which are taken as guiding principles for the present study.

Heller’s work certainly achieves its own goals; however, the relevance of its
methods and findings to the present study is somewhat limited due to the
differences between the two contexts. Some of the textual features examined by
Heller in the Canadian high-school classroom, for example turn taking structures (Heller, 2001), are not relevant (or are relevant in a different way) in a primary school classroom with a strongly teacher-centred culture. Another difference is much lower second language proficiency in the Nalae context, leading it perhaps to have a larger role in code choice than it did in the Canadian setting. There are of course other major differences between the two contexts – relative language status, age of the students, teaching methods and techniques, and access to resources, for example – which require that the present study modify somewhat the areas and issues for examination.

Research into bilingual education and code switching which is more comparable to the work presented in this thesis has been carried out by Hornberger. Her earlier work includes a study of Quechua and Spanish use in two Peruvian schools, one of which was implementing a bilingual teaching program (Hornberger, 1988). This study situates itself across the disciplines of the sociology of language, anthropology and educational policy studies (Hornberger, 1988: 3), drawing on each of these fields to arrive at a comprehensive analysis of language in the nation, the community and the classroom.

Hornberger applies Hymes' SPEAKING framework (Hymes, 1974: 53-62) in order to examine language use at the community and school levels. Her analysis of language in the classroom also makes use of a simplified discourse analysis based on the work of Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) and of code switching classifications. It is from this model that the present study draws its structure, although not its methodology, beginning with an analysis of the policy, moving on to a discussion of language in the community, then presenting case studies of selected classrooms.
A key strength of Hornberger's 1988 study is its integration of macro and micro level description and analysis. The use of Hymes' SPEAKING model allows Hornberger to focus on the setting and participants of speech events and acts, and by doing so, to situate instances of language use at the micro level in a broader, macro level context. More specifically, the use of the SPEAKING framework allows us to understand the classroom as a microcosm of the village, where language choices in both contexts are dependent on the characterisation of the setting, participants and purpose of the communicative act as 'allyu' or 'non-allyu' (or village and non-village). The micro/macro focus is further facilitated by Hornberger's integration of the other analytical approaches mentioned above such as policy studies and discourse analysis, which address the macro (policy) and the micro (classroom language) levels respectively.

Despite these strengths however, Hornberger's early work lacks some of the analytical delicacy of her later work. While Hymes' SPEAKING framework facilitates the description of communicative events, it does not specify tools for detailed linguistic analysis, especially in bilingual exchanges and in classrooms. Hornberger compensates for this by adapting Sinclair and Coulthard's (1975) twenty-two speech act classifications, but her reduction of the number of speech acts to five somewhat reduces the specificity of the original model. Furthermore, while the adapted Sinclair and Coulthard model allows for the compilation of an inventory of speech acts, these acts become removed from their context and context (i.e. surrounding text), and remain structurally unanalysed. There is some discussion of instances of code switching in the classrooms and community, with mention of inter and intra sentential switching, translation, and speech acts (Hornberger, 1988: 113), however the study did not integrate code switching theories which could have further expanded this discussion.
Horberger’s later work (e.g. Hornberger, 2003b) presents a much more highly developed model for the analysis of bilingual behaviour at all levels. This model, called the ‘continua of biliteracy’, is described by Hornberger as:

A comprehensive, ecological model I have proposed as a way to situate research, teaching, and language planning in multilingual settings (Hornberger, 2003b: 323).

The model includes four nested and intersecting sets of continua, each containing three continua within it. These are: contexts (micro -> macro, oral -> literate, bilingual -> monolingual); development (reception -> production, oral -> written, L1 -> L2); content (minority -> majority, vernacular -> literary, bilingual -> monolingual); and media (simultaneous -> successive, dissimilar -> similar structures, divergent -> convergent scripts). The model suggests that all points on the continua are interrelated (Hornberger, 2003b: 325), and Hornberger argues that the more area covered on each continuum, the greater the chances for full bilingual and biliterate development (ibid.).

As demonstrated in the 2003 collection of articles edited by Horberger, the model can be applied to a range of research settings and questions with interesting outcomes (see for example Bloch and Alexander, 2003, Baker, 2003). It constitutes a development on the earlier models used by Hornberger, firstly due to its potential as a guide for complex investigations which seek not only to describe linguistic behaviour, but to identify relationships between the various aspects of that behaviour. It is also more highly developed than the SPEAKING model, for example, in that it not only provides a framework for analysis, but makes a theoretical postulation regarding the outcomes of particular language practices.
Unlike work specifically focused on code switching, however, the continua model does not present a means for the structural analysis of switched speech or a theory regarding the social, pedagogical and interpersonal motivations for code switching in communities and classrooms. For this reason it has not been adopted as the overarching framework for the present study, although it was taken as an inspiration for the study and a guide to areas for investigation, and its insights have been incorporated into the chapters which follow.

Hornberger's collaborative work with Chick (e.g., 2001), however, has been used extensively in the analysis of classroom code choice which follows. This work presents the concept of 'safetalk' to describe and explain typical L2 classroom language patterns where speaking, reading and writing often serve social rather than teaching and learning purposes. The 'safetalk' concept is used to describe language practices which are highly ritualized and predictably structured but require little cognitive work on the part of students. These practices are 'safe' in that the students (and teacher) do not risk demonstrating their lack of L2 proficiency and thus the overall educational ineffectiveness of classroom activities in that language. They give the appearance of instructional interaction in the classroom (their social purpose) while requiring little engagement with curriculum content (a teaching and learning purpose).

Hornberger explains safetalk as follows:

[Safetalk practices] are all practices that have arisen over time in an attempt to create a learning atmosphere against great odds produced by, among other unfavourable contextual circumstances, the gap between the language of instruction...and the language the children speak and understand... (Hornberger and Chick, 2001: 41).
As is indicated by the very disparate research contexts which the authors respectively observed (Peru and South Africa), the concept of safetalk is highly transferable across contexts. Indeed, the concept of safetalk is central in the analyses of the Lao context which follow.

The studies of language practices discussed above constitute some of the key work which has been done in this field and some of the key theories which have been applied to classroom analyses in the present study. However, as will become apparent in the following discussion, there is a range of other pertinent studies from around the world which can be applied to the linguistic data from Nalae and can contribute to our understanding of language, education and identity there.
6 Saisana: Vigilance, resistance and acquiescence

6.1 Introduction

The following chapter is the first in the series of three classroom case studies presented in this thesis. It discusses the language practice of Saisana and her students in relation to the policy discourses explored in chapter four, making use of the theoretical frameworks outlined in the previous chapter.

6.1.1 Saisana

Saisana is a friendly and outgoing teacher in her late twenties with a strong personality and an open and direct manner. She is ethnic Tai-Lue and was born in the village of Ban Chom, directly across the river from the district centre, but is now married to a Kmhmu man and lives in the district centre with him and their son.

Like other Lue people in the town, Saisana can speak Kmhmu fluently in everyday situations, although her Kmhmu includes a significant proportion of Lao borrowing, like that of most district speakers. Saisana learned Kmhmu while at secondary school with Kmhmu students from neighboring villages. Since that time, her command of Kmhmu has further improved. This has no doubt been facilitated by having a Kmhmu partner and in-laws, and by having taught Kmhmu children for around ten years.

Since graduating from her third year of secondary school in 1996, Saisana has taught first and second grade in three villages in Nalae municipality and has attended a teacher upgrading course offered in another district of Luang Nam Tha during school holidays for three consecutive years. The year this research was carried out was Saisana’s second year teaching in the village of Had Khaô. 49

47 This is not her real name.
48 Comprising the three villages in the district centre and five surrounding villages.
49 Also not the real name.
6.1.2 Ha:d Kha:o village and school

Ha:d Kha:o is a village of 225 people\textsuperscript{50} on the western bank of the Tha river and along the dirt road that leads from Luang Nam Tha to Nalae district centre. In fact, the village is only a few kilometers outside the district centre and visits to and from the centre are frequent. The village was established in 1979 as the administrative centre of the newly created district, but the centre was then moved to its current site in 1983 and Ha:d Kha:o subsequently became a mixed village of Kmhmu Ro:k, Kmhmu Yuan and Kmhmu Lue migrants, for the most part farmers.

The language situation in the village is thus complex, including speakers of three Kmhmu dialects with varying levels of Lao proficiency. Although a detailed survey was not carried out, observation suggests that all men in the village have at least a near fluent command of Lao for commercial and routine official purposes, while most women have a fluent command for everyday communication such as buying and selling at the market and a moderate command for other purposes. However, the language for communication among villagers and between villagers and other Kmhmu people who come to the village is Kmhmu. No parents were noted to speak Lao with their children, and indeed when children first arrive at the school they generally have no command of Lao, perhaps with the exception of some greetings.

A school was built in Ha:d Kha:o in the first years of the establishment of the village, but in 2005 this still consisted of a one-room bamboo structure with lattice windows, a thatched roof, and home-made wooden benches and tables. This structure accommodated a multigrade class of seven second graders, twelve first graders, and two ‘preschoolers’\textsuperscript{51}, as

\textsuperscript{50}This is the number given in Nalae District Education Bureau records for 2005.

\textsuperscript{51}As there is no preschool in the village, children can be enrolled for a ‘pre-first grade’ year in which they attend classes but sit at the back and are not expected to complete written work or participate in reading drills.
well as the occasional younger sibling being babysat while parents were away at their fields, and the occasional parent or grandparent there to be a part of the action.

Despite the cramped and uncomfortable conditions, the students of Ha:d Khao are keen and lively. One bright and extroverted second grader tends to dominate the room, but is followed closely by several other top students, and watched by a few strugglers. First graders range from competent to bewildered, and bewilderment is especially characteristic of those enrolled as ‘preschool’ students only. The atmosphere in the room is one of rowdy confusion before and after classes, but more or less quiet attention during teaching, punctuated by the occasional scuffle or scold.

6.1.3 Students’ Lao language proficiency
Saisana claims that the second graders and repeat first graders all have a command of basic Lao, while the preschoolers and new first graders tend not to:

Mostly it’s the preschoolers, they don’t know Lao. The students who are already studying, they all know it. For first grade, the ones who’ve repeated all know it. There are only six or seven students who don’t know Lao. If they know, they only know a few things like ‘go to school’ and ‘school’s out’, about that much.

Observation of and communication with the students in and out of the classroom suggests that at the beginning of the school year, all but the preschoolers and beginning first graders are able to carry on very simple conversations about daily life in Lao, but prefer to speak Kmhmu if possible. Their Lao vocabulary seems generally limited to common school and household items/activities, foods and animals. As the year progresses, new first graders gradually arrive at the same level although the amount of language learning by preschoolers appears less. Most of these are reluctant to respond to or speak in Lao, although this may be reflective more of shyness than a lack of receptive competence.
6.1.4 Outline of the chapter

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the language of Saisana’s Ha:d Kha:o classroom in order to identify the ways in which the discourses of power and solidarity explored in Part One are reproduced or contested in this classroom context. The discussion begins with an analysis of language practices which constitute what I have called a ‘monolingual Lao vigilance’ on the part of the teacher, thereby reproducing the discourse of Lao ethnic and linguistic centrality. It then moves on to consider how this vigilance is resisted by the students and how the students’ resistance is accommodated by the teacher’s ‘passive acquiescence’. These processes of reproduction and contestation of official discourses in the classroom are then considered in the context of Saisana’s attitudes and practices in the broader community. Finally, a conclusion is drawn regarding the nature and causes of the particular language choices being made in Saisana’s classroom and their relationship to national level discourses.

6.2 Saisana’s classroom language

6.2.1 Monolingual Lao vigilance

6.2.1.1 Kmhmu switches as backstage language

Of the sixteen hours of class time observed in Ha:d Kha:o, Saisana uses Kmhmu on only four occasions, each time for only a single utterance. The first of these occurs when she has moved into the final stage of the lesson, where first grade students are copying the shapes they have been taught into their exercise books. Until now, the entire lesson (47 minutes) has been conducted by the teacher in Lao. As Saisana walks around checking the students’ work, the following exchange takes place:

T: [To S1, a preschooler] Bo: tong khi:an Chœ:.  

*Don’t write, Chœ [student’s name].*

(Taking book) Bo: tong khi:an Chœ:, ao pa vai.  

*Don’t write, Chœ. Put it away.*
In this instance, Kmhmu (shown in bold above) is used as part of a management\textsuperscript{52} interaction with an individual student. The teacher is hurrying to check everyone’s books and responds to this student’s comment in Kmhmu perhaps as a way of achieving the intended management outcome most efficiently in a situation where there has been a breakdown of sorts (the student’s not writing). Saisana uses Kmhmu to elicit information quickly from the student, but switches back to Lao for the more predictable and routine purpose of giving instructions. Of course the use of Kmhmu here by Saisana is triggered by the Kmhmu statement of the student and could be seen as a sort of participant-related switch with the simple purpose of accommodating the student. However, in most exchanges where students use Kmhmu to respond to the teacher, Saisana does not switch to Kmhmu. In this case, the decisive factors appear to be the fact that the teacher is aiming for maximum time-efficiency and that Kmhmu segment of the exchange constitutes an unpredicted breakdown in classroom management which must be quickly overcome rather than a content teaching interaction.

\textsuperscript{52} For the present analysis, classroom discourse was classified as ‘content’, ‘management’, ‘interpersonal’ or ‘metalinguistic’ discourse. This is similar to Ferguson’s (2003: 39) ‘curriculum’, ‘management’, and ‘interpersonal’ classification but adds the category of ‘metalinguistic’ to include utterances with the function of explicit language teaching of any macroskill. See chapter one for a discussion of this.
Firstly, Kmhmu is used as a time-saving strategy in order to allow the teacher to carry on with her initial goal of checking every student’s progress. Martin (1996) notes time saving as one common motivation for code switches by the teacher into students’ L1. If this is indeed Saisana’s motivation, then her use of Kmhmu, at least in some cases, should be understood as more pragmatically than ideologically motivated. That is, it should not be considered the result of a desire to actively maintain the presence of the L1 so much as a practical concession in order to get something ‘out of the way’ with the least disruption. Saisana’s comments support this interpretation:

If you only speak Lao, some people won’t get it. They’ll ask “Miss, what did you say?”. They’ll ask and it’ll slow it [the lesson] down. You have to speak both.

The second characteristic noted in the above teacher-student exchange is that it is outside the formal ‘script’ of classroom discourse. That is, it is not a content teaching exchange, nor does it involve the entire class, and nor is it a routine classroom interaction. It constitutes an unexpected glitch in classroom proceedings. Interestingly, although Saisana explains the necessity of both languages in the above quote, she relegates her use of Kmhmu to such instances where the exchange is at the margins of classroom discourse, or constitutes an ‘unscripted’ moment.

Arthur (1996) uses the term ‘backstage’ language to refer to language relegated to a secondary and unofficial status in the classroom. She notes that lessons in Botswana primary schools (where students are also learning in a second or third language) bear a strong resemblance to stage performances. Teachers are at once co-actors reciting the scripted ‘lines’ of the classroom in the official language, and directors, prompters and stage managers (1996: 25). When playing backstage roles, teachers use the L1, an acceptable choice in such ‘invisible’ contexts. Code-switching then becomes a means of distinguishing ‘doing lessons’ and ‘talking about them’ (ibid: 27).
In a similar vein, Ferguson notes that:

code-switching functions as a resource for the management of classroom discourse. Specifically, code contrast often contextualises a shift of 'frame' (Goffman 1974) away from lesson content and toward some 'off-lesson' concern - to discipline a pupil, to attend to latecomers, to gain and focus pupils attention, for example. It may also demarcate talk about the lesson content from what we may refer to as the management of pupil learning; that is, negotiation of task instructions, inviting pupil contributions, disciplining pupils, specifying a particular addressee, and so on.' (Ferguson, 2003: 42)

This analysis is consistent with Arthur’s and with the material presented here.

The above exchange is an example of the ‘doing lessons/talking about lessons’ distinction, or of the content/management contrast. Saisana uses Lao to give instructions to students on how to carry out a task, which they then go about. Here she and the students are ‘doing the lesson’ (i.e. lesson content), following the routine script of lesson instructions. However, she uses Kmhmu to respond to a student when he fails to do his part in the lesson, or deviates from the script (in this case, copying silently). Here she and the student are ‘talking about the lesson’ (lesson management).

Such ‘backstage’, or unofficial use of Kmhmu occurs again at the end of another lesson. Saisana is giving her usual speech at the end of the day. The (‘scripted’) speech is in Lao, this time with Saisana telling the students that they should visit each other’s houses in the evenings to do their homework together. The pattern observed with such end of school day speeches (not only in Saisana’s classroom) was that the teacher would give a brief monologue summarising the achievements of the day, extolling the virtues of study in general, or in some other way motivating the students to be diligent. However, on this occasion a student makes an ‘unscripted’ interjection in Kmhmu, which challenges the
teacher’s suggestion and violates the usual monologic and oratorical nature of the speech. The student’s unexpected comment is shown below with Saisana’s response:

S: (??) na lav (?) yaam psam ah rōōy.

(??) she [i.e. another student] said (?) at night time there are ghosts [i.e. the students are afraid to leave their homes].

T: Yaam psam ah rōōy go (?) yoh (srut).

*If there are ghosts at night time then (?) go (early).*

Like the previous example, this comment is made to an individual student toward the end of the lesson in response to an unexpected comment in Kmhmu which contradicts the ‘script’ of the teacher. It does not constitute content teaching, is not routine practice, and contains an element of mockery or humor. For these reasons it can also be considered ‘backstage’ language. For such a comment, Saisana chooses Kmhmu, the unofficial, backstage language of the classroom.

This is not to suggest that all ‘backstage’ work of the classroom is carried out in Kmhmu. In fact, the majority is done in Lao. However, Kmhmu switches are never made by Saisana for ‘onstage’ language (whole class, content teaching, or ‘doing the lesson’). Thus ‘backstage’ status is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for Kmhmu switches. Other considerations, in this case timing and topic, combined with backstage status may make a switch to Kmhmu possible but not inevitable. Saisana describes her tendency to use Kmhmu for backstage purposes –non-content teaching and management ‘breakdowns’ – as follows:

A So you speak Lao in the classroom for about what percent of the time?

S Most of the time it’s Lao. [I] speak Kmhmu when we’re taking a break [or] when we set up groups and they don’t know how to count
off, 'one, two, three'. So when we set up groups and they don’t know how, we have to speak Kmhmu.

6.2.1.2 Kmhmu for interpersonal, non-academic purposes

Another point to note here is that these marginal moments in classroom discourse, that is those which fall into the ‘backstage’ category, are sometimes also characterized by a lessening of the interpersonal distance between teacher and students. Saisana’s explanation of her use of Kmhmu in the ‘ghosts’ exchange is as follows:

I just wanted to speak [Kmhmu] with them. I wanted to speak [it] with them, wanted to have a laugh. I wanted to make a joke with them. I wanted to be funny. Usually at the end of the lesson, I like to be funny with them.

This explanation is by no means unusual. In fact, early analyses of code-switching focused on the in- and out-group distinction made by choosing the ‘we code’ or the ‘they code’ (Gumperz, 1982b). This distinction has since been refined by other researchers of code-switching to a focus on ‘social negotiations’ (Myers-Scotton, 1988) and has also been used in the classroom code-switching literature, where use of the L1 for interpersonal motivations has commonly been noted (e.g. Canagarajah, 2001). What this line of analysis emphasizes is the social distance or closeness speakers choose to express through code choice, and in this case, Saisana indicates that the motivation for her choice was indeed a desire to create closeness through joking in Kmhmu. The signal that Saisana is a local and can speak the local language is intended to bring her closer to the students.

Saisana’s explanation draws our attention to two important things: firstly, that Kmhmu is the language of humor in the classroom; and secondly that humor is not a central part of classroom discourse, but a transition from the classroom to the non-classroom context (as occurs at the end of the teaching period). Thus we can see a connection between academic content related discourse (study habits), the classroom space, Lao language, and teacher authority (all ‘onstage’) on the one hand, and non-academic discourse (the supernatural), the
village space, Kmhmu language and teacher solidarity, here expressed through humor (all ‘backstage’) on the other.

Simon (2001) sees such dichotomies in terms of the ‘institutional’ as opposed to the ‘social’ role of the teacher, an analysis which applies Goffman’s ‘shift in frame’ concept (Goffman, 1974). She notes these two distinct and concurrent frames of reference in the classroom, and the tendency for teachers to reserve the ‘native’ language for use in the ‘social’ frame (Simon, 2001: 317-318). We can see the extract above as an example of L1 use to create teacher-student solidarity in the classroom by shifting to the social frame. We can also see that it simultaneously reinforces the status of Lao as the language of official or ‘institutional’ classroom discourse, and the language of the great majority of teacher talk.

6.2.1.3 Rejection of Kmhmu responses
In addition to this backstage use of Kmhmu in the classroom (into which category the two other observed instances of Kmhmu use by Saisana can be placed), Saisana’s language use displays several other communicative patterns which reproduce the centrality of Lao language in the classroom. On the occasions when students provide a correct Lao answer to an elicitation, Saisana usually confirms their answers by saying ‘oe’ [yes] and/or by repetition. This follows the initiation-response-evaluation (IRE) pattern first formally noted by Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) and now accepted in the literature as perhaps the most common teacher-student interaction pattern, particularly in teacher centered classrooms such as those found in many post-colonial countries (Arthur and Martin, 2006: 181). Examples of typical IRE exchanges in Saisana’s classroom can be seen in the following interaction:

T: Hi:an visa: khanitsa:t mi kɔ:n hao hi:an hɔ:t bot thi: thao dai?

*We studied maths the other day up to which chapter?*

S: Sip et.

*Eleven.*
T: Bot thi: sip et.

Chapter eleven.


So, is there anything you need to know about lesson nine? Let’s see if you remember: what did we learn about?

S: Hu:p vong mon.

Circles.


Yes. In lesson nine we learned about triangles and circles.

The pattern of confirmation of student responses is different, however, when responses are given in Kmhmu. Saisana doesn’t always explicitly confirm a correct Lao answer, especially in exchanges which are rushed or which are working towards another, final answer.

However, she never confirms a correct Kmhmu answer by replying ‘yes’ or by repeating it.

When correct answers are given in Kmhmu, Saisana does one of two things. The first is to ignore the answer and repeat her elicitation, as in the following example:

T: Po: ning kʰæːi hen bɔ:, mɑːk si:daː?

First grade, have you ever seen a guava?

Ss: Hen.

Yes [lit. ‘see’].

T: Hen ju: sai?

Where did you see it?
S: Yat da kung.

*In the village.*

T: Ha?

*Ha?*

S: Yat da kung.

*In the village.*

S: Suan.

*Garden.*

T: Khœ:i kin bo?:

*Have you ever eaten one?*

Interestingly, this teacher response is the same as that used when students give an incorrect answer in Lao, as in the following exchange:

T: Le:o hao ao nyang hai an ni: nyai kua ha: sip kao?

*So what do we have to put so it's bigger than fifty-nine?*

S: Ha: sip ha:.

*Fifty-five.*

T: Hm? Tong ao nyang? Ha? Thao dai?

*Hm? What do we have to put? Ha? How much?*

S: Hok sip.

*Sixty.*

T: Ŗe. Hok sip. Hao tong ao hok sip, me:n bo?:
Yes. Sixty. We have to put sixty, right?

This suggests that Saisana’s ‘not hearing’ the Kmhmu response is a clear indication to the student that it is unacceptable, and in fact in some cases the student follows with the same answer in Lao, for example:

T: Mia hø:h hi:an Khamsi: vao kap me: va: ne:o dai? (3) Ha?

When he got home, what did Khamsi say to his mother? (3) Ha?

S: Un ma’ yêëng pwm.


T: Vao ne:o dai?

What did [he] say?

S: Bøeng pim.


T: Bøeng pim het nyang?

Why [should she] look at [his] book?

Saisana’s second response to Kmhmu answers from students is to sometimes confirm the answer, then reformulate it into Lao, as below:

T: Tha: va: thao Tham dai ma:k sø:ng, phø: me: cha nyo:nng nyo:

bo?:

If Tham got two [out of ten], would his parents congratulate him?

S: Bo:.

No.
T: Mm. Cha het ne:o dai? Hm?

*Mm. What would they do? Hm?*

S: Cēh.

*Scold [him].*

T: Ė. Cha da:, ns?

*Yes. They’d scold [him], right?*

This response also indicates to students that while the content of their answer may be correct, their language choice is not. Of course, the translation of student answers into L2 is a common strategy of teachers for introducing new vocabulary and structures in the foreign language classroom and could be understood as a simple recognition of Lao as the ‘target’ language, much as in any foreign language class. In fact, Saisana’s frank response to the interview question below articulates this view:

A: What’s your reason for wanting [them] to speak Lao [in the classroom]?

S: I want them to know Lao!

However, there is an important distinction which must be made here. Saisana’s classroom is not only a language learning classroom, but a content learning one too. It would be possible to forego language learning goals at times if students’ engagement with the content were considered more important by the teacher. In fact, this occurs in other classrooms in Nalae, as will be seen in the following chapters. Some teachers prioritize content learning over use of the ‘target’ language to the point that, at times, Lao is not the target at all despite the fact that it is the language of the curriculum and texts. The fact that Lao is the target language in all content teaching in Saisana’s classroom is not a simple inevitability of the educational context, but a choice. Thus Saisana’s language use can be seen to reproduce discourses of
Lao centrality which are not the inevitable result of practical constraints, but the result of her own ideologies of language in the classroom.

6.2.1.4 Lao as safetalk

In any situation where students are required to understand and express ideas through the L2 as they are in Saisana’s classroom, communication will necessarily occur on several levels. Simon (2001) uses Dabène’s terms ‘communication’ and ‘metacommunication’ to make the distinction between communication in the L2 and communication about communication in the L2 (Dabène, 1984). To these two, Simon adds the term ‘metalinguistic communication’ to refer to communication about the ‘structure and functioning’ of communication in the L2. In Simon’s data, teachers frequently use the L1 for metacommunicative (e.g. instructions) and metalinguistic (e.g. grammar explanations) purposes, although this pattern is not fixed. Others also note the frequent use of the L1 to ‘scaffold knowledge building’ in the L2 (Martin-Jones and Heller, 1996: 9).

In Saisana’s classroom metacommunicative and metalinguistic interactions occur frequently, but because Saisana refuses to use the L1 for these, her metacommunicative and metalinguistic utterances may not be understood by the students. Additionally, her refusal to use the L1 limits the type of metalinguistic communication Saisana can use. For example, she is not able to provide L1 glosses or orally annotate written texts in the L1, two practices noted to occur in similar L2 classroom contexts (Arthur and Martin, 2006: 70, Lin, 1996: 187-188). This leads to a situation where the responsibility for metacommunicative and metalinguistic support of students is taken on by their peers and parents. This will be explored in section 6.2.2.2 below. However, the point to be noted here is that in the absence of meaningful student engagement with curriculum content, which would normally involve a degree of L1 use by the teacher especially for metacommunicative and metalinguistic support, but also for communication of other complex ideas, Saisana must rely on safe, highly routinized practices which give the appearance of learning but may actually involve very little comprehension.
One of these practices is a call and response exchange noted in several lessons. This occurs in more and less scaffolded versions. At the less scaffolded end, the teacher writes a vowel on the board then adds several syllables combining this vowel and different initial consonants, for example ‘œ’, ‘bœ’, ‘kœ’, ‘fœ’, etc (œ, Œ, Œ, Œ). She then leads the students through a reading of the ‘words’ (some of them are nonsense syllables), as in the following example. In this case, the teacher has used two corresponding short and long vowels which the students learned the day before:

T: Ao, ba: ni: khu: si vao, vao sala la: la: le:o ao pakœ: p sai to:.

Right, now I’ll say [them], I’ll say the vowels alone then add the consonants.

An ni me:n sala nyang, an ni?: Bœng phi bœng phi.

What vowel is this, this one? Look over here, look over here.

An ni: me:n sala nyang?

What vowel is this?

S1: Sala œ

The vowel ‘œ’.

Ss: Sala œ

The vowel ‘œ’.

T: Tha hao ao pakœ: p sai to: po: -

If we add the letter p -

Ss: Poe

Pœ
T: An ni mə:n -

This is -

S1: Pəe

Pəe

S2: Pəe pian

P for pian.

S3: Pəe

Pəe.

T: An ni mə:n (3) (writing) An ni mə:n sala æ, no, sai to: pə: -

This is (3) (writing) This is the vowel æ, right, with the letter p -

S: Pəe

Pəe

T: A:n va: nə:o daï?

How do you say it?

Ss: Pəe

Pəe

T: Chi: nə:, sala æ sai to: pə:.

Remember that, the vowel æ with the letter p.

Ss: Pəe

Pəe
T: Chi: bo?, Vanni?: (2) Chi: bo?:

Do you remember, Vanni?: (2) Do you remember?

Tha: hao sai to: o cha pen nyang?

If we add the letter o: [silent consonant] what will it be?

Ss: [some] Ó.

[continues with letter o: and ‘f’, ‘b’, ‘k’, ‘m’]

In this extract, the teacher reads out the vowel (after the students’ initial identification of it) and then reads out each consonant with which it is to be combined. Although some students may actually be reading the syllables, it is not necessary to be able to read them in order to produce the sounds the teacher is eliciting. All that is required is an oral combination of the two sounds she has read out, o and ‘pɔː’ (the name for the Lao letter ‘p’). This is more simple than it would be in English, as Lao letter names all follow the same rule of [represented phoneme + o:], except for the ‘silent’ consonant o: 53 (with which most of the students have difficulty in the above example). Thus students need only identify the initial phoneme of the letter name and add it to the vowel being drilled. Of course, there is nothing wrong with such a drill in itself. It can in fact be a useful pre-reading exercise, as it familiarises students with the syllables resulting from different letter combinations. However, the problem in this case is that it is not being used as a pre-reading exercise, but as the reading exercise itself.

53 The Lao writing system is a syllabic alphabet. Each syllable is written with the onset consonant in central position, a vowel diacritic to the left, right, above, below, or in a combination of positions around the central consonant, and an optional final consonant at the end. In the case of an empty onset – a syllable without a consonant onset – the central consonant position is filled by the letter ‘o’. This then acts as a kind of ‘silent consonant’, filling the consonant position in the writing system, but having no phonetic value.
After Saisana carries out this exercise, she uses two more highly scaffolded call and response exercises. She reads the syllables on the board through once for the students to listen to while she points to them, then reads two syllables at a time, again pointing, having the students repeat after her. She does this twice, interrupting her reading three times to explain the difference between the short and long vowel graphemes and (one has a 'tail'). Again, these exercises require no actual reading of the syllables on the part of the students. It might be useful for them to see the writing on the board and hear the sounds being read, or to listen to the explanation, but it is not reading practice per se.

Rather, these three exercises are safe practices. There is little risk that students will 'read' a syllable incorrectly, in the first case because they are combining sounds already given, in the second case because they are silent, and in the third because they are echoing the teacher. Such exercises do not demonstrate real learning, but give the appearance of learning. It becomes clear when most students cannot read individually at the board during the next exercise but need to be led by the top student or the teacher (another safe alternative), and when a student 'reads' the syllables while pointing incorrectly and the rest of the students repeat incorrectly after him that the reading exercises up to now have been highly routinized and not particularly instructive: formal but not functional. This situation is mocked by the cheeky top student in second grade who, when leading a weaker student reading at the board, 'reads' out Kmhmu instead of Lao words and the weaker student repeats them unknowingly.

This type of highly routinized classroom activity is referred to by Chick (1996), and Hornberger and Chick (2001) as 'safetalk'. With specific reference to reading in the Peruvian context, they recount that '[r]eadinig in this lesson consisted of repeating aloud what the teacher read from the board... In most cases, students were not even looking at the words they were reading' (Hornberger and Chick 2001: 40). They note of these classrooms more generally that 'pupils could look and feel busy, yet little learning was going on since
there was little understanding’ (ibid.). This seems an accurate description of Saisana’s classroom too, which is not surprising given that both contexts involve speakers of an ethnic minority language being taught in an L2 which is essentially foreign to them.

The safetalk practices in Saisana’s classes are not limited to call and response routines. They also include predictable questioning and word prompting, two other patterns noted by Hornberger and Chick (2001: 41). In the former, the teacher asks a closed question to which a choral class response is expected. When introducing new reading units to grade one, these questions are usually about whether or not the students have seen the objects referred to in the reading, for example:

T: Po: ning khæ: i hen bɔː; saːŋ?

*First grade, have you ever seen an elephant?*

Ss: Hen.

Yes.

T: Haː? Hen bɔː; saːŋ?

*Ha? Have you seen an elephant?*

Ss: Hen.

Yes.

T: Hen juː saɪ, diːao niː?

*Where do you see it now?*

S: Huːp.

*Picture.*
hen bo:, si:a?

Yes, you see it in the picture, right, but you haven’t seen one walking around. You see it in
the picture. Now have you ever seen a tiger?

Ss   Hen.

Yes.

T: Ju: sai?

Where?


Picture.

The usual expected response to these questions is a positive one and here the students
provide exactly that, somewhat mystifying the teacher as in this case she probably expected
a negative one (there are no elephants in this area). The students’ answer is however correct
(there are elephants in the picture) and the teacher accepts it and moves on. The point here
is not that there is no comprehension – there clearly is, if students are able to identify where
they have seen an elephant – but that the question follows the usual pattern where all that is
required of students is a one word answer, usually in the affirmative (perhaps the reason
why students reply affirmatively here). Similar exchanges occur regarding drinking glasses,
guavas, and corn in the same lesson.

At other times, all that is required in response to an elicitation is a word from the text. In
these instances, Saisana often prompts students by giving them the preceding words and
initial elements of the word or phrase itself. This is usually the case with second grade, and
is exemplified in the following exchange where the teacher is reading out cloze questions
written on the board:
“Thao Khamsi: kap ma: te: ho:ng hi:an le:o chok ao pim”

"Khamsi comes home from school and takes his book": Takes his book or takes his bag?

Ss: Ao pim.

Takes his book.

T: CE. Ao pim o:k ma: duay khua:m [facing ss] ne:o dai?

Yes. “Takes his book out with ha-” what is it?

Ss: Khua:m di: chai

Happiness.

T: CE. Duay khua:m di: chai.

Yes. With happiness.

This is another low risk exercise in that it is not difficult for students to find the missing word by locating the previous words (and initial elements) even if they haven’t understood the meaning of the words or the text as a whole. Sometimes students can provide the missing word by memory after having already heard the text read aloud several times by the teacher. More proficient students can also rely on grammatical cues such as ‘khuam’, the nominalising prefix given in this example. As with the other safetalk practices mentioned above, this exercise minimizes the risk of incorrect answers from students by minimizing the degree of independent thinking and speaking required of them. The exercise thus fulfills the formal requirement of teacher question – student reply, but not what most observers would consider the functional requirement of effective teaching and learning.

Hornberger and Chick explain the reasons for safetalk in a classroom which Hornberger observed as follows:
On the whole, characteristics of the oral interaction, reading, and writing in this lesson point to a failure in the learning of academic content in this class (and in others of which it is representative). It is our contention that the emphasis on copying as writing, on repetition (and correct pronunciation) as reading, and on teacher prompt-choral response as interaction, are all practices that have arisen over time in an attempt to create a learning atmosphere against great odds produced by, among other unfavorable contextual circumstances, the gap between the language of instruction (Spanish) and the language the children speak and understand (Quechua).

(Hornberger and Chick, 2001: 41)

That is, safetalk is a means of ‘face-saving’ (ibid: 42) whereby teachers manage to appear to be teaching productively in a second (or foreign) language, when in fact their students’ learning is severely limited by the constraints of the situation. Such practices could be predicted in any ethnic minority education context where students are learning in a national language which they don’t speak, and in fact occur in all the other classrooms observed in Nalae. However, in the classrooms where teachers use Kmhmu for content teaching purposes, the proportion of safetalk is dramatically smaller. The reason is simple: when students are being taught in a language they understand, the risk of incorrect or inadequate responses is lower. Complex pedagogical interactions in the students’ L1 are already ‘safe’.

6.2.2 Student resistance

The communication patterns identified above indicate a reproduction of the discourse of Lao centrality by the teacher resulting from a combination of pragmatic and ideological motivations. Yet this is only half the picture. The students in Saisana’s classroom, although participating in the reproduction of Lao dominance to a degree, also contest the role of Lao as the sole language of official teaching and learning. They do this by maintaining parallel Kmhmu discourse not only due to the inevitable constraints of limited language proficiency, but to their will to use the L1 as an alternative to the L2. In response to this discourse,
Saisana engages in a ‘passive acquiescence’ of sorts, whereby she allows the Kmhmu discourse to continue without using the language herself.

6.2.2.1 Students’ and parents’ use of Kmhmu for metacommunicative purposes

It was noted above that second or foreign language classroom interaction occurs on several levels, including the communicative, metacommunicative, and metalinguistic (Simon 2001: 317), but that in Saisana’s classroom much of the metacommunicative and metalinguistic work is done by students (and sometimes parents), their being more willing to communicate in the L1 than the teacher is. This leads to the presence of a parallel Kmhmu scaffolding for students telling them what they should be saying and doing and how, while the teacher carries on content teaching in Lao.

Of course it is difficult to draw a clear distinction between metacommunicative and communicative interactions, as any metacommunicative act is necessarily a communicative act too. Furthermore, many acts which appear to be simply communicative also have a metacommunicative function, thus an instruction such as ‘Now answer the questions in groups’ is at once telling students what the next activity is (communicative function) and telling them how they are to communicate during that activity (metacommunicative function).

Dabène specifies three metacommunicative ‘functions’ or roles which teachers fulfill: information vector (vecteur d’information), moderator (meneur de jeu), and evaluator (évaluateur); and a number of ‘operations’ which may be employed under each of these (Dabène, 1984: 41) For our purposes, metacommunicative acts will be taken to mean any act which directs how students communicate in the classroom in terms of their language production at the phonetic, syntactic, textual, prosodic and kinesic levels, or explains/interprets teacher talk in order to facilitate student communication. This definition allows for but is not limited to Dabène’s ‘operations’, which include ‘informative’,

An example of a student’s providing metacommunicative support in the form of an explanatory operation is given below. In this interaction, the student targeted by the teacher answers her elicitation incorrectly and is helped by a stronger student:

T: Thao Si:vilay, an ni: mën nyang? Si:vilay?

_Sivilay, what’s this? Sivilay?_

S1: Hok sip.

_Sixty._

T: Hok sip thao dai? (3) Hok thao dai? (3) A?

_Sixty what? (3) Sixty what? (3) Hm?_

S2: Sivilay hnaay no!

_Sivilay, [it’s] that one!

T: Ha?

_Hm?_

S1: Hok sip ha.

_Sixty-five._

T: Hok sip ha.

_Sixty-five._

In this interaction, Sivilay (the target student) has appeared to misunderstand what the teacher requires of him; that is to read out a particular number written on the board. When
he reads out the wrong number, his friend directs him to the right one. Of course, Sivilay’s difficulty may have been due to more than language problems, but whatever the cause, support from a stronger student is given in the L1.

At other times, L1 explanatory support is given to the whole class spontaneously by whichever student happens to have understood the L2 content first, as in the following example:

T: [holding up picture] Tha: hao kin khoa bo: la:ng mi: man cha pen bê:p ni:.

Khon pê pian, hen bo?: Hen bo?

If we ate without washing our hands, it’d be like this. See the dirty people? See?

S: Pe blia, gôn na.

They’re not nice [beautiful/clean], those people.

T: [laughs] Khon pê pian dê:.

Dirty people.

Support is also given between students in the form of translation of teacher utterances into L1. This might be characterized as a metacommunicative (or metalinguistic) interaction in that it has the function of explicating the initial L2 communication, however it may be argued that in fact these translations are not ‘above’ the level of the initial communication but simply parallel to it, and thus cannot be termed ‘metacommunicative’. At whatever level these translations are considered to be, they do constitute a form of scaffolding provided by and for students due to the teacher’s reluctance to do so in the L1 herself. As such, they exemplify the students’ open and active maintenance of a Kmhmnu language presence within classroom interactions.
An example is given below. In this exchange, the teacher is asking the first grade students to raise their hands if they have been good and deserve a sweet. When they don’t respond, two of the top second grade students help them:

T: Me:n phai bo: di:, nyok mi: khin, me:n phai si bo: di:, me:n phai bo: di:?  

Who’s not naughty, raise your hand, who’s not going to be naughty? Who’s not naughty?

Ss [no-one raises hand]

S1: Me’ pe dw? Nyôk êe!  

Who’s not naughty? Raise your hands!

T: Ao, me:n phai ja:k kin, nyok mi: khin bœng.  

So who wants to eat [sweets]? Put up your hands and let’s see.

Ss [no hands]

S2: (Bo) pe cu be’? Me’ cu be’?  

Don’t you want to eat [them]? Who wants to eat [them]?

T: Æ:. Bo: ja:k kin de: ce, so:ng khon a:cha:n si kin mot, khan phu: dai bo: nyok mi khin na:.

Right. You don’t want to eat them, so we two teachers will eat them all if you don’t put your hands up.

Ss: [second graders laugh]


Put up your hands and let’s see, who’s not naughty? Put up your hands first.
Ss [no hands]

S1: Ceeng, Sww, go meh me' gam pe dw.

Ceeng, Sww, who's not naughty?

S2: Ceeng. Ny6k, Ceeng.

Ceeng, put up [your hand], Ceeng.

Similar translation by students is shown in the example below, but in this case the translation is of content teaching:


Sintha, what number is this? (4) Add them up first and see.

S2: Luam than me’?

How much do they add up to?

T: Luam khao kan bɔŋ.

Add them up and see.

S2: Luam than me’?

How much do they add up to?

S1: Chet sip ha:.

Seventy-five.

T: (E:. Chet sip ha:.

Seventy-five.

In fact, throughout each lesson, students are quietly asking for and receiving this form of linguistic support from those sitting next to them in order to be able to understand what the
teacher is trying to communicate. With reference to the Sri Lankan context, Canagarajah calls this kind of support part of the “classroom underlife” (2001: 205) through which students are able to explore and clarify classroom content among themselves in the L1. An example of this is seen below:

T: [reading aloud] “Ja: vao kham phœ ve:la: kin khao”.

“Don’t say dirty words when you’re eating.”

Bo: tœng vao kham phœ. Phuak nœng hu: bo:, kham phœ? Hm?

Don’t say dirty words. Do you know “dirty words”? Hm?

Ss: [a few] Bo:

No.

T: Bo: hu?: Ve:la: kin khao bo: tœng vao, an ning bo: tœng vao khi:, no.

You don’t know? When you’re eating, you mustn’t say, one is you mustn’t say “poo”, right.

Bo: tœng vao an chœ an uay.

You mustn’t say dirty, nasty things.

Khi: bo:, bo: tœng vao an nan an ni: ta:m, ta:m an ki- an pœ an pian.

Like “poo”, you mustn’t say this and that, things like fil- dirty things.

Bo: tœng vao ma: ve:la: hao kin khao, de:.

We mustn’t say them when we’re eating, alright.


Right. We must – we’re studying Lao language, lesson number twenty five, “Don’t say dirty words”.
"Ja: vao kham phæ".

"Don't say dirty words".

S1: [quietly to friend] Meh hmeh phæ?

What's phæ?

S2: [quietly] Sng pe blia.

Things that aren't nice [beautiful/clean].

In this example, the teacher is presenting information from a unit in the textbook about correct manners; in particular, what not to say when eating a meal. The idea is something akin to our own taboos around 'dirty words'. In the above example, Saisana attempts to provide metacommunicative support by giving examples ('poo'), paraphrasing ('You mustn't say dirty, nasty things'; 'you mustn't say this and that, things like fil-dirty things') and repeating the new vocabulary ('Don't say dirty words'). However, all of these strategies use the L2 and at least one student is clearly still confused ('What's phæ?'). It is not until another student uses the L1 to provide metacommunicative support ('Things that aren't nice [beautiful/clean]') that her confused classmate appears satisfied.

Such student practices are concisely described by Arthur and Martin:

"In [L2] classrooms such as those in Botswana and Brunei, the official foreign medium can be seen as giving rise to a dislocation between, on the one hand, the teacher-centred routines which are viewed as the main vehicle for teaching and, on the other hand, shared-language discussions among learners which took place more rarely but which were potentially useful sites of learning. (Arthur and Martin, 2006: 193)"
6.2.2.2 Students' and parents' use of Kmhmu for managerial purposes

At times, L1 utterances are supportive not in a metacommunicative or more broadly metalinguistic sense, but in a purely managerial way. This is seen below, when in the second week of term a parent instructs his son to copy the letters from the board:

T: [to S1, helping him hold his pen] CE:, chap be:p ni:, oe: chap.

Yes, hold it like this, yes, hold it.


Khoon, Khoon, look at the blackboard and write the letters up there. Isn't it [your pen] working? Come and get this one.

In all these examples, students (and parents) are taking on the roles of information vector and moderator in order to give metacommunicative, metalinguistic, or managerial support in the L1 which the teacher has either failed to provide, or has provided ineffectively in the L2. They are using Kmhmu openly on the classroom 'stage' with each other in order to balance the teacher's refusal to do so. The degree to which students do this demonstrates that it is not merely a matter of necessity, as children in similar contexts have been shown to use the L1 with the teacher to a much lesser extent or even not at all (c.f. Arthur, 2001: 354). Rather, it is one possible strategy among several which they could choose. Of course, such a strategy is only likely to be employed with teacher acquiescence, more on which will be said in section 6.2.3 below.

It is tempting to interpret these uses of the L1 as a kind of 'banding together' among students in the face of difficult demands being made in the L2; as an articulation of Gumperz' (1982) 'we-code' principle, by which students are expressing their solidarity not only by helping each other, but by helping in the shared language as opposed to the official language of the institution. This interpretation would not be improbable, except that students in this classroom also use Kmhmu to exert control over each other as representatives of the
school order. Frequently, older (but sometimes same-age) students admonish younger ones for not conforming to the norms of school behavior as usually enforced by the teacher. Almost every lesson observed includes exclamations of léet! [quiet!] both within and across class groups. Examples of other admonishments abound, two of which are given below:

e.g. 1.


*Let me see, Kum. Here.*

Ao :k ma: khian.

*Take it out and write.*

(?) bo: hak sa: di: di:; pim na:.

(?) [you] don't look after it well, [your] book.

Bœng. Paa thi thu! (?) pim. An ni: me:n kho:ng khu: hai?

*Let me see. Gosh! (?) book. Is this the one I gave you?*

S2: [to S1] Phaasaa Laav go ah, khanitsaat go ah, tõ pe haksa.

*You've got the Lao [textbook] and the maths one, you don't look after them.*

e.g. 2.


*OK, come out and read. Read one at a time.*

Fang dœ, tit ta:m dœ.
Listen and follow [them].

Ne ne ne ne ne, sõng khôn na:

Hey hey hey hey hey, you two!

S: [to two students] A:i Gum, a:i That (ci cēh) sna nèè.

_Gum, That, [I'll] scold you two, you know._

In these examples and others, students are using the L1 to articulate values associated with the classroom. In a sense, they are speaking on behalf of the teacher, but in the L1; reproducing a discourse of institutionalized discipline, but in a language not usually used by representatives of institutional power in this context. Thus a simple ‘us’ and ‘them’ dichotomy is not sufficient in explaining students’ use of Kmhmu in this classroom.

Lin discusses use of the L1 to admonish students (but in her case, by the teacher) in terms of suspending the [L2] pedagogic frame, highlighting a shift of concerns, and starting to talk to the students as “cultural member to cultural member”, invoking and reaffirming native cultural norms and values” (Lin, 1996: 66).

However, in the above examples students are not talking to each other as ‘cultural members’, the ideal of quiet submissive children being quite foreign in the Kmhmu village context. Here the admonishers are talking to the admonished as institutionalized versus non-institutionalized persons. Thus the common grouping of ‘us/community/our values/L1’ in opposition to ‘them/institution/their values/L2’ does not apply in this case. Rather, students are choosing to use their L1 both as the in-code of student-to-student assistance and the out-code of institutionalized as opposed to ‘natural’ interaction. This contrasts sharply with the teacher’s allocation of language roles in the classroom. Of course, it might be argued that students necessarily use their L1 even for institutionalized interactions as this is the only language they ever speak to one another, but the point here is that they are making loud and
open remarks in the L1 on the classroom stage at all. The alternative – to be silenced by the prohibition or at least unlikeliness of the L1 for this type of interaction – is equally possible.

6.2.2.3 *Students' on-stage interactions in Kmhm u*

The institutionalized role of Kmhm u is further enforced by the students in their use of this language with the teacher. It was seen earlier that students sometimes engage in ‘backstage’ interactions with the teacher in their L1. However, they also carry out on-stage interactions in Kmhm u, despite the fact that Saisana participates in Lao. At times, the reason for this may be competence related; however, at other times the student’s use of Kmhm u is clearly not a matter of competence, as can be seen in this example:

T:  

*Question two. What did the mother say to her child?*

S:  
Va: lu:k keng 

*That he was excellent.*

T:  
Va: lu:k keng. Keng, keng an ni: si (?) khi: kan bo?: Hm?

*That he was excellent. Excellent, excellent, that will (?) the same? Hm?*

Kho: thi: ning va:-

*The first question said -*

S:  
-va: sala:t 

- *That [he was] intelligent.*

T:  
- vao ne:o dai? 

- *what did [she] say?*

S:  
va: sala:t.

207
That [he was] intelligent.

T: Salat: ne:o dai? Vao ne:o dai, salat?

Intelligent how? How did [she] say [it], intelligent?


Question one was “What did Khamsi say to his mother”, right? That’s right, isn’t it?


When he got home, what did Khamsi say to his mother? (3) Hm?

S: Un ma’ yèëng pwm.


T: Vao ne:o dai?

What did he say?

S: Bøeng pim


T: Bøeng pim het nyang? (3) Bøeng pim het nyang?


S: Yèëng dé’ khanem.

Look at the grade.

T: (4) Thao Khamsi: vao kap me: va: ne:o dai? (2) M?

(4) What did Khamsi say to his mother? (2) Hm?

S: Va: lu:k keng.
In this rather confusing exchange, the teacher begins by eliciting the answer to question two in the textbook. The student’s answer is the same as the answer to the first question (‘that he was excellent’), so the teacher reviews the answer to question one presumably with the intention of moving on to question two again later. However, the student seems to think that the teacher is still eliciting the answer to question two and when the teacher accepts the same answer she rejected in the beginning through her repeated questioning (because now it’s in response to question one), he answers back with “You said that wasn’t right”.

There are several points to note regarding this exchange. Firstly, the student involved is the top student in grade two, who has a fluent enough command of Lao to discuss simple everyday topics and does so at other times. Thus it is highly unlikely that he is using Kmhmu to answer the question due to limited L2 proficiency. Secondly, it is clear from his switching that he is capable of providing Lao answers (‘bœng pim’, ‘va: lu:k keng’). He presumably has the lexical and syntactic resources to have replied ‘bœng khane:n’ rather than ‘yèëng dé’ khane:n’ if he had chosen to do so. Thirdly, the student is actually translating Lao content from the text into Kmhmu in order to provide his Kmhmu answers. They are thus further from the text than Lao answers would have been, and do not display the common tendency to make quotations in the language of the original statement (Auer, 1984: 46). Finally, the student’s last comment indicates a degree of frustration with the teacher.
All these characteristics support the interpretation that in this exchange, the student uses Kmhmu for an 'on-stage' content interaction not due to low L2 proficiency or as a textual device, but as a marker of resistance both to the teacher’s angle on the content and the language she uses to express it. Of course the student’s use of the L1 here is perhaps precisely because it is a ‘marked’ choice signaling a renegotiation of normal roles (Myers-Scotton, 1988), and as such cannot be taken to be representative of usual teacher-student interactions, but this is exactly the point. By using Kmhmu in this instance, the student stands himself in opposition to the teacher and to her ideology of the inappropriateness of the minority language in the classroom. He is using the L1 as a form of resistance to dominant discourses on the centrality of Lao. Here Kmhmu is being used by a student not simply as the language of the school, but as the language of the student’s voice in the school.

6.2.3 Teacher acquiescence

As was noted earlier, such uses of the mother tongue are perhaps unlikely to persist without a degree of acceptance by the teacher. Although Saisana uses Lao for the majority of her classroom discourse and generally discourages Kmhmu responses in content interactions by ignoring or reformulating them, her stance is not as strong as it might first appear. In management or other backstage interactions, Saisana very rarely speaks Kmhmu herself. However, she frequently responds to students’ Kmhmu utterances, as is seen in the following examples:

e.g. 1.


Watching. I’m going to draw a picture. A picture of a square.

S:  Khu: un cõt bõt hien?

Do you want us to copy the lesson down?
T: Ko: chot o:.

_of course, copy it._

e.g. 2.

S: [while copying the lesson] Ō pe chaay hmeh.

_I don't know how to do anything._

T: Bo: sa:ng ko: tham o:].

_If you don't know how then ask._

e.g. 3.


_I don't have any chalk. The chalk is finished. The other day I asked you to (get it) Sët._

S: Yōng yoh sih da hré.

_My father [who has the key to the village store house] is staying at the field house._

T: Khu (bo: mi:) so: kha:o de, khi:an di:a:o ni:.

_I (don't have) chalk to write with now._

Furthermore, although Saisana discourages the use of Kmhmu for content interactions, she does not prohibit it by using disciplinary measures such as scolding and mocking, which she uses for other breaches of conduct and displays of incompetence, and which were frequently employed in colonial ethnic minority education contexts to prohibit the use of the mother tongue (c.f. McCarty, 2004: 81). Of her acquiescence to the use of Kmhmu in the classroom, Saisana says:
Extract 1.

[They] shouldn’t speak it, Kmhm. [They should] speak [Lao] with the teacher, the official language \textit{[pha:sa: ka:ng]} with the teacher. But they don’t speak it. They can but, they speak [Kmhm] and speak and they know [it] and I know [it]. I speak Lao with them and they answer in Kmhm and they understand and I understand them, the kids.

Extract 2.

A: When they speak together, when they use Kmhm together you don’t forbid it?
S: I don’t forbid it...
A: It’s just when they speak with you, you want them to speak Lao?
S: Mmhm.
A: But if they don’t give in, you give in, is that it? You give in to them?
S: Yes, I give in to them! [laughs] There are a lot of them and only one of me. I can’t keep up with them!

Extract 3:

A: Why don’t you forbid them? Is it because you can’t manage it, or because you don’t want to?
S: If you were to say it’s forbidden, you’re not allowed to speak it, you’re not allowed to speak it, it’s still their language, you see. I don’t forbid it. If they want to speak it, then they can speak it as they wish, then when we’re studying they speak the official language with the teacher. I don’t forbid it.
These comments confirm that while Saisana considers Lao (the ‘official language’) to be the appropriate language of the classroom and wants her students to speak it with her for content teaching interactions, she is willing to accept their use of Kmhmu with her and among themselves firstly because the students insist and secondly because she considers such insistence natural (“it’s their language”). She thus articulates a passive acquiescence to Kmhmu use in the classroom, encouraging the use of Lao but resigning herself to the students’ use of Kmhmu.

6.3 Saisana’s community language

The language practices employed by Saisana in the classroom are consistent with her language practices and beliefs in relation to the wider Nalae context. In her interactions with Kmhmu speakers and her comments on these interactions, Saisana articulates a preference for speaking Lao in what she seems to consider official contexts. For example, when discussing their children’s school attendance or performance with individuals or small groups of villagers from Ha:d Khao in the school grounds, Saisana was observed to use Lao even though the villagers spoke mostly in Kmhmu. Similarly, Saisana was observed to use only Lao at the District Education Bureau and when discussing interactions in this context, she herself says;

A: What about at the [DEB] office? Suppose you go to the Education office or to a meeting, what language do you speak?

S: If I see a Lao person, a Tai-Lue person, I speak our Tai-Lue language. Mostly it’s Hakson [a Kmhmu official] who tends to speak Kmhmu. I just answer in Lao. He speaks Kmhmu and I answer in Lao. Bouathian [another Kmhmu official] is the same.
Furthermore, Saisana articulates a belief that Lao is the ‘official language’ \([\text{pha:sa: ka:ng}]\), or translated literally from Lao, the ‘central language’ of communication in the wider social context. She says:

Most of the time when we go here and there, if we go to the market or go out we use the official language \([\text{pha:sa: ka:ng}]\), most of the time. It’s not like when people speak among themselves they’ll speak the local language \([\text{pha:sa: th:xng thi}n]\). When we come across each other like this, if we go to the market or wherever, it has to be the official language.

Saisana’s intended meaning seems to be that for interaction among speakers of different languages (or perhaps even among speakers of the same language but above the level of close interpersonal relations), Lao is and should be the usual medium of communication. This seems a common sense assertion in a multilingual context like Laos, yet it contradicts the actual linguistic situation in Nalae and other predominantly ethnic minority districts, where minority languages are often used for trade between groups and in administrative contexts (e.g. Kmhmu in Nalae, Phunoy in Phongsali, Ho in Samphan, Katu in Ta-Oy and Jru’ [Laven] in Paksong).

Despite her preference for Lao in these contexts, however, Saisana does use Kmhmu occasionally in interactions outside the classroom. She says that when she passes Kmhmu people whom she knows on the street, she generally asks after them in Lao but if they answer in Kmhmu, she then continues the dialogue in Kmhmu. She also relates that she uses Kmhmu when joking with friends in social situations such as weddings and festivals, and this was indeed observed during the research. These tendencies parallel Saisana’s use of Kmhmu in the classroom in response to student utterances in Kmhmu for non-official (backstage) interactions and in humorous exchanges.

Saisana’s discussion of language roles in the community suggests that although her own use of Kmhmu is limited, and although she holds a view of Lao as the necessarily dominant
language of social interaction, she does consider Kmhmu proficiency to be an asset. When asked whether she was satisfied with her current Kmhmu proficiency or would like to know more, she replied that she would like to learn more, giving the following reason:

Next time, if they’re working – if they move me to work at the [DEB] office, when they’re working I’ll understand, speaking with the people [farmers], working in the countryside.

That is, with greater proficiency Saisana would have no trouble understanding Kmhmu officials and villagers when they engage in work-related discussions in the villages (although the comments and behavior noted earlier suggest that she might not speak Kmhmu herself in such interactions). These comments indicate a pragmatic recognition of the necessity of Kmhmu use in certain situations or contexts, much like Saisana’s recognition of the need to use Kmhmu in the classroom for timesaving. Her recognition of the role of Kmhmu in the community might also be seen as a parallel to her concession to the students’ use of the language in the classroom despite the fact that it is not her preferred language.

A simple challenge to these interpretations is the suggestion that Saisana’s language choices are the result of competence rather than ideological orientations. Yet Saisana was observed to understand Kmhmu interactions at the DEB and in social settings, her responses to students’ comments in the classroom further indicate receptive competence, and her occasional use of Kmhmu suggests that she has a productive proficiency level at least high enough to carry out everyday communicative functions fluently. Her comments on the matter confirm these observations. When asked how well she spoke Kmhmu when she first started teaching in Ha:\d Kha:o , Saisana said:

I knew about two thirds. This year I know everything. I’ve got it down pat this year.

When asked why she didn’t usually speak Kmhmu, she replied:
I know everything [in Kmhmu]! I can say everything, but I just don’t want to use it.

6.4 Conclusion

It has been shown above that while Saisana uses Lao for the majority of her classroom discourse, allocating Kmhmu a secondary role for interpersonal and ‘back stage’ purposes, the students in her class use Kmhmu as the main and central language of their classroom interaction. They use the mother tongue not only for utterances which could be classed as interpersonal or back stage, but for discussion of curriculum content amongst themselves and with the teacher. At times these uses of Kmhmu with the teacher deliberately challenge the teacher’s attempts to constrain them to use Lao.

While we might expect these student strategies to be met with strong opposition from the teacher, in fact Saisana often acquiesces to their use of Kmhmu with her and always acquiesces to their use of Kmhmu amongst themselves. She sees this as a natural tendency and one which she is powerless to contest.

The relationship between these language practices and official discourses will be examined in detail in the conclusion to this thesis. For now, we can conclude that the language practices in this classroom constitute a substantial, but not a total reproduction of official discourses on the centrality of the Lao language and the naturalness of minority language attrition. While Saisana for the most part attempts to maintain the centrality of Lao in her classroom, the students do not collaborate on this project, and even her own efforts are at times half-hearted. Furthermore, while official views express the naturalness of Lao domination over minority languages, Saisana’s own views on the persistence of minority language use do not.
We now turn to the second of the case study classrooms in order to examine how the teacher and students in this classroom respond to the challenges of education in a second language.
Khamsuk: Pragmatic bilingualism

7.1 Introduction

7.1.1 Khamsuk
Khamsuk, as I will call him, is a young Tai-Lue teacher from Bān Om, the same village as Saisana. From the age of nine to sixteen he was a novice in the Buddhist temple there, where he completed his primary and lower secondary education. This might partly explain Khamsuk’s quiet and easy-going manner, although he says it’s just ‘in his nature’ to be this way. Since graduating from his third year of secondary school in 2000, Khamsuk has been teaching at primary schools in villages throughout Nalae District, including one Lamet village, one ethnically mixed village, and three Kmhmu villages. He has lived in each of these villages, as they are out of commuting distance from Bān Om, but continues to spend holidays and, when he can, weekends in his home village. He has also completed three teacher upgrading sessions in Meuang Sing during school breaks.

7.1.2 Khamsuk’s Kmhmu language proficiency
As there were no Kmhmu children in the monastery where Khamsuk lived and studied and few Kmhmu families living in Bān Om, he had very little exposure to the Kmhmu language before being sent to a mixed Kmhmu, Lamet and Tai-Lue village in his second year of teaching. Khamsuk’s native language is the Tai-Lue influenced Lao (or vice-versa) spoken in Nalae district (for more information on Lao and Lue, see chapter five above). He recounts that he learned the Lamet language in his first year of teaching, then picked up some Kmhmu vocabulary in his second year, but only learned to speak the language fluently in his third year, when he was living in an exclusively Kmhmu village. Khamsuk says that when he first went there, he knew ‘about 30% of the language’ and that this wasn’t enough for his teaching purposes, but after listening carefully and asking questions he managed to gradually increase his fluency. He says of his current Kmhmu language proficiency that he ‘doesn’t know it fully yet’ nyang bɔː dai sombun thːa but ‘knows a certain amount’ dai sam dai sam ning.
Khamsuk was observed to participate fluently in Kmhmu interactions in the school and village contexts, but to have some difficulty with specialized vocabulary such as ritual and botanical terminology. For example, he was able to speak Kmhmu fluently during social interactions such as meals and parties and during professional ones such as the official opening of the school year, but said that he didn’t understand the ritual language used by a visiting Kmhmu shaman. Khamsuk also had to ask students the Kmhmu names of various plant specimens which he brought in one day for a lesson. Additionally, Khamsuk’s Kmhmu is characterised by Lao-influenced pronunciation of some phonemes. He pronounces word-final ‘n’ as ‘n’, and word final ‘c’ as ‘t’, while the Kmhmu rhotic ‘r’ is pronounced as the lateral ‘l’. These interference features are common to Lao/Tai-Lue speakers of Kmhmu.

7.1.3 A note on transfer and borrowing in Khamsuk’s Kmhmu

Another feature of Khamsuk’s Kmhmu which distinguishes it from the variety spoken in the village and which complicates analysis somewhat is its high levels of transfer and borrowing from Lao. As noted above, borrowings (or ‘loanwords’) are generally defined as any non-native lexis which has been integrated into the receiving language lexicon through general usage, often with phonological and morphological assimilation (Gumperz, 1982a: 66), while ‘transfer’ is the ungeneralized (i.e. not regular within the speech of individuals), unstandardized (i.e. not common across speakers) and unassimilated (i.e. not phonologically or morphologically adapted) use of lexical items from one language while speaking or writing another. However, in actual speech the distinction is blurred by several factors, which are all relevant to the speech of Khamsuk and his students.

54 ‘Transfer’ is the term used by Auer (1988) to refer to code alternation which does not cause a change in the main language of interaction (or a ‘code-switch’). That is, transfer is the insertion of only one lexical unit (usually a word but sometimes a phrase) from another language into discourse in the original language, after which interaction in the original language is continued. ‘Transfer’ is not used here in the common language teaching sense of ‘interference’ from L1.
Firstly, in languages with similar phonological and morphological systems (particularly those with no word inflection), and/or in cases where speakers tend to pronounce all source language items according to receiving language phonology (or vice-versa for non-native speakers), borrowing and transfer may not be distinguishable from each other purely on the basis of form (Woolard, 1988). This is generally the case with Lao and Kmhmu.

Secondly, in contact situations such as that of Nalae, languages can be in a highly unstable state of change whereby what is transfer for one speaker might be borrowing for another. For example, older speakers or those in the more remote villages in Nalae tend to use the Kmhmu numbers one to three for money, whereas younger speakers and those in the district centre generally use the Lao (origin) numbers. Thus the use of the Lao number ‘sɔɔng phan’ (two-thousand) instead of the Kmhmu ‘baar phan’ to talk about money might be a once-off transfer from Lao for an older/village speaker but a case of established borrowing from Lao for younger/district centre speakers.

Furthermore, some lexical items have only recently been needed in Kmhmu, and only in certain restricted contexts such as the classroom. Thus an item which might be considered a transfer in terms of the speech patterns of the wider community might be a regularly borrowed item among a specific population, such as teachers and native Kmhmu speakers of school age. Of course, transfer can also be motivated by limited fluency among individuals (such transfer is often referred to as ‘interference’), and when an item which is not an established loan is regularly transferred into the speech of an individual for reasons of proficiency or preference, it might be more useful to classify it as a kind of ‘personal borrowing’ rather than a transfer. This has been argued by Gumperz (1982b) and Woolard (1988) for Yiddish-English and Spanish-English, and Catalan-Castillian borrowing respectively.

All of these issues are relevant in discussing Khamsuk’s speech in that they potentially confuse the distinction between what is Lao and what is Kmhmu, and hence what is a code-
switch. (Borrowing from a Lao source into Kmhmu would be considered Kmhmu, whereas transfer of a Lao word would be considered a switch to Lao.) For the purposes of this research: Lao-origin words in Kmhmu which are in frequent usage as borrowings among village and/or district speakers of Kmhmu have been classified as Kmhmu (rendered in **bold**); Lao words which appear only once in the data in a Kmhmu utterance by Khamsuk have been classified as transfer (rendered in normal lettering, i.e. as Lao); and words which could be considered either borrowings or ‘regular transfers’ particular to this classroom context due to Kmhmu lexical limitations or Khamsuk’s own language proficiency or preference have been classified as ‘indeterminate’ (**underlined**). That is, they could be considered Lao transfers, or simply as borrowings characteristic of Khamsuk’s personal variety of Kmhmu.

The classification of ‘indeterminate’ has also been applied to whole phrases or sentences which could be analysed as either language; that is, phrases constituted entirely of Lao-origin words borrowed into Kmhmu. For example, the utterance ‘pa: ning ko khao cha a?’ (lit. class one also understand INT = ‘Does first grade also understand?’) is made up entirely of Lao words which have been borrowed into Khamsuk’s Kmhmu, with a function word (interrogative particle) common to both Kmhmu and the Nalae dialect of Lao. It is thus classified as ‘indeterminate’, as it could be a Lao or a Kmhmu sentence. Such a system of analysis is obviously not intended to be definitive, but is believed to suffice for the present purposes. It highlights the proportion of Lao-origin items in Khamsuk’s idiolect without labelling them as ‘transfer’ (Lao) or ‘borrowing’ (Kmhmu).
7.1.4 The village and school

The village of Ban Hua Yen\textsuperscript{55} is located about two and a half hours walk from Nalae district centre. At the time the research was carried out, there was no road to the village but the walking track was not excessively steep or arduous. Access to the village is often cut off during the rainy season due to the flooding of several streams on the way, none of which has a bridge; however, this generally occurs only for brief periods, outside of which movement between the village and the district centre is frequent.

The village itself was established in 1968, but many of the current households relocated from another site higher in the mountains in the early 1990s. The village had a population of 337 in 2005\textsuperscript{56}, all Kmhmu Lue and all farmers, except for one Tai-Lue family which runs a small shop in the village in addition to farming. The original village school was built in 1973, but was replaced in 2004 by an Australian-funded school complete with updated and modified text books and a specially-trained teacher recruited from the village.\textsuperscript{57} The new school has separate grade one and two classes and a multigrade three and four class, Khamsuk being responsible for the latter. In 2005 there were nine students in grade three and seven in grade four.

The atmosphere in Khamsuk’s classroom is usually quiet and more or less disciplined, although students laugh at Khamsuk’s occasional jokes and can become animated during group activities, of which there are many. There is also frequent scolding of an intellectually disabled teenager who comes to watch and smoke cigarettes at the window, and occasional communication with parents or siblings who come to give news or instructions. This communication is in Kmhmu, as is all communication between villagers, including between the Tai-Lue family and their Kmhmu neighbours. The only times Lao was heard in the village were during classes in the school, at the official opening of the school year when the

\textsuperscript{55} Not its real name.
\textsuperscript{56} According to Nalae District Education Bureau statistics.
\textsuperscript{57} This was done under the Lao-Australia Basic Education Project (AusAID).
head of the school cluster and Khamsuk read out official documents (but not for the subsequent discussion), with visiting Lao staff of a German funded development project who had come from other districts and provinces, and in some conversations with me.

7.1.5 Students' Lao language proficiency

As in Ha'd Kha'o, first grade students generally know no Lao when they first arrive at the school. By the second semester of grade one, they have picked up some common vocabulary and by grade two many can read the short texts in their text books and communicate simple, everyday messages in short phrases or sentences. Third grade students were observed to answer simple Lao questions about themselves or based on their texts with one Lao word or a short phrase, although they tended to prefer Kmhmu both in and outside the classroom. Most fourth grade students were able to answer questions on more complex texts with less common vocabulary, although linguistic and academic ability varied greatly, and even the more competent students were observed to have frequent difficulties with the vocabulary in their reading texts. Like other students, they showed a strong preference for Kmhmu. No student was observed to speak Lao fluently and confidently in any context, although as in Saisana's classroom, this undoubtedly relates to shyness as well as low proficiency, and is not necessarily any indication of receptive ability either.

7.1.6 Outline of the chapter

This chapter will examine the language of Khamsuk's classroom with particular attention to the tension between the use of Lao as the ideal language of classroom communication and the pragmatic use of Kmhmu for the effective teaching and learning of both content and language. These tendencies will be explored in turn before moving on to an examination of their relationship to policy discourses.
7.2 Lao as ideal language

7.2.1 Lesson and activity frames

Khamsuk reproduces the discourse of Lao centrality in education not through the amount of Lao he uses in the classroom; it will be seen in the discussion below that he uses significantly less Lao than Saisana, often maintaining extended stretches of Kmhm language discourse during certain phases of the lesson. Rather, Khamsuk maintains a degree of Lao centrality in the classroom by using the language at key moments which might be seen as encapsulations, or crystallized representations of the formal teaching and learning taking place.

One way in which he does this is to use Lao for what I will call 'lesson and activity frames'. That is, Khamsuk uses Lao at the beginning of a lesson or activity to introduce its main content, and at the end to summarise it. In this way, he presents a formal picture in Lao of the curriculum work which will be or has been achieved in the lesson or activity, rendering invisible at these times all the Kmhm-language teaching which will contribute to or has already contributed to that work.

In one lesson, Khamsuk moves to third grade after completing an exercise with fourth grade and tells the third grade students to begin their individual reading task with the following instructions in Lao:

1 Ao (?) ma: a:n. [loud] Ao, fang. Mit, fang, tit ta:m.

Right (?) come and read. [loud] Right, listen. Quiet, listen and follow.

While the student reads aloud at the board, Khamsuk gives further instructions and scolds the other students, all in Kmhm (with some Lao borrowing/transfer) except for one instruction to go to the board (‘Pai’) in Lao:
Cap da ki. Cap ca’ gi.

_Hold it [the book] here. Hold it like this._

Aan dé’, aan dé’. Léét, léét, léét.

_Read it, read it. [To other students] Quiet, quiet, quiet._

1 Ao, tit tain.

_Right, follow this._

Ao, (name). [next student goes out to read]

_Right, (name)._  

Gmyèëng dé’, gmyèëng dé’. [student reads]

_Listen to it, listen to it._

Gmyèëng, gmyèëng. [teacher corrects word; student keeps reading]

_Listen, listen._

Pai. [next student goes out; teacher makes corrections, student repeats them]

_Go on._

Gmyèëng, gmyèëng. [student keeps reading]

_Listen, listen._

Hôoc lê? Hôoc.

_Finished already? Finished?_

When the students make it clear that they have finished, Khamsuk stands up from his desk and says the following in Lao:

Right, if you’ve finished then I’ll give a summary of everyone’s reading [ability].


So lots of people could read [it] well, right.

Te: mi: chamnua no:y nyang a:n nyang bo: than li:an lai di:.

But there are a few who still don’t read so fluently yet.

[Teacher goes on to give extended feedback in Lao on students’ reading.]

It can be seen clearly in this example how Khamsuk uses Lao to frame an activity (at points 1 and 2) a significant portion of which in fact takes place in Kmhm. Despite the fact that much of the managerial and scaffolding work done during the task is in Kmhm, Khamsuk’s official representation of the task at these key beginning and end moments is in Lao. The significance of the final summary as an ‘official moment’ is confirmed by Khamsuk’s change in body position from sitting to standing at this time, as official contributions in lessons or meetings are generally made from the standing position in Laos.

Other examples of Lao activity frames in Khamsuk’s teaching abound, among them the following, which occurs after two students have read out their answers to a comprehension question. (The beginning of this extended reading activity is not transcribed here, but consists of the instruction ‘aao bot hian’ (lit. ‘read lesson’) which could be either Lao or Kmhm):

T: Aan dé’, un no gmyêng.

Read it for them to listen to.

S: [student reads quietly]
T: [to other students] Meh?

[Is that] right?

Ss: Meh.

Yes.

T: Nang long.

Sit down.

Ao, keng lai, sɔ:ng khon. Top mi: somsɔ:i.

Right, very good, you two. Give them a clap.

Ma:i thoeng va: khamsap an dai thi: bɔ: khao chai no,

So that means that any word which we don't understand yet,

ve:la: hao ma: nɛ:o ni: hao tɔ:ng tham va:, 'ao khur: a:n an ni: hai fang de:,

when we do this we have to ask, 'oh, sir, read this for us to hear please,


we don't know how to read this yet', or, or, 'write it on the board for us to read'.

Ao, te: la khon a:t cha khao chai, a:n dai, samlap na: thi: ha:.

Right, everyone probably understands and can read it, page five.


Now let's go on and study page six.

Pe ah tii, khön ci aan pe bwan? Ah a?

There isn't anyone, is there, who can't read it? Is there?
Ao, na: thi: hok.

Right, page six.

[holding up text]. Yèèng huup gi.

Look at this picture.

Bœng, Beeng ju: ni:. Khao het nyang ni:?

Look, look here. What are they doing?

At the beginning of this example, Khamsuk uses Kmhmu to give instructions and to elicit feedback on a task. After this, he uses Lao to give a routine instruction (‘sit down’) and to give feedback (‘very good, you two. Give them a clap.’) These two routine acts are usually carried out by Khamsuk in Lao, more on which will be said in section 7.2.4 below. The important point to note here is that after carrying out the comprehension task mostly in Kmhmu, Khamsuk moves to Lao for his final comment and evaluation (‘That means that...’; ‘Right, everyone probably understands...’). He then gives an instruction introducing the next task in Lao, once again providing a Lao framework for what might otherwise become a predominantly Kmhmu exercise.

Until now, the exchange resembles more or less the first example given above. However, at this point, something interesting happens. Khamsuk backtracks on his ‘wrapping up’ of the task, fearing that perhaps some students haven’t understood and that he might need to provide more explanation. He uses Kmhmu to do this, indicating to the students by this switch that perhaps this isn’t the formal end of the activity. When he realises that in fact everyone has understood, he moves on to the next activity, perhaps unintentionally staying in Kmhmu before realising this accidental linguistic follow-on and switching to Lao. Once again, we can see in these switches that Khamsuk attempts to begin and end activities in Lao, providing a formal lesson framework in that language despite much of the ‘nitty-gritty’ of the teaching being done in Kmhmu.
With reference to primary school classrooms in Burundi, Ndayipfukamiye notes teachers' tendency to 'operate' within a frame of doing lessons in French' (1996: 43), despite the fact that much of the explanatory work is done in Kirundi, the local language. Her evidence for this is the use of French discourse markers and the opening and closing of exchanges in French. The claim that the use of French discourse markers in Kirundi constitutes a 'framing' of lessons is contentious: the borrowing of discourse markers is a common feature of language contact (Thomason 2001: 70) and has been personally observed to occur in African languages outside the classroom context. Although Khamsuk also uses Lao discourse markers in his Kmhmu, this is not taken to be highly significant here. However, the second tendency noted by Ndayipfukamiye - the opening and closing of exchanges in French - is considered highly relevant and parallels Khamsuk's switching patterns exactly.

Ndayipfukamiye suggests that the framing of teaching/learning exchanges in French, coupled with the interspersal of French elements, indicates the teachers' 'mindfulness' of the official medium' and 'creates' an overall impression of teaching in French' (1996: 43). These interpretations are applicable in Khamsuk's case. He mentions throughout his interviews his use of Lao in the classroom, especially for the initial and final stages of teaching, as in the following comment:

When the teacher speaks, at first [I] use Lao, but in the middle [I] go back and forth, [I] use both languages. Then at the end, when we're about to finish, most of the time it's Lao.

Perhaps this awareness of the use of Lao to frame activities is indicative of Khamsuk's more general mindfulness of the need to maintain a Lao language presence in the classroom as the official language of instruction. By providing lesson or activity frames in Lao, Khamsuk is creating an impression of teaching in Lao, thereby maintaining his commitment to the official medium of instruction.
7.2.2 Reformulations

Another means by which Khamsuk articulates the centrality of Lao language in the classroom is by reformulating Kmhmu utterances into Lao, particularly in content teaching exchanges. Like lesson and activity frames, this serves to maintain the visibility and centrality of Lao by allocating it to tasks of an official or final nature, such as final confirmations of answers to questions in the textbook. An example of this is seen below, where Khamsuk tries to elicit the answer to a comprehension question from two students.

T: Lèèng, (?) Yi:n.

Lèèng [name] (?) Stand up.

I: [reading from the textbook] Nyo:n nyang tha:o Yangli: ching tok chai?

Why was Yangli nervous?

S: [no answer]

T: Pe neeng?

You don't know?

An lav khuam i’?

If you say it in our language58?

Bo: hu:?

You don't know?

Ao, meh me’ ci toop?

Right, who's going to answer?

58 See section 7.4 for a discussion of this reference to Kmhmu as 'our' language.
Because of what was Yangli then nervous? Miss Phi, answer and let’s see.

S: Pe neeng.

I don't know.

Lav khuam i’.

Speak our language.

S: (?)

T: Pe neeng?

You don’t know?


He was afraid he couldn’t recite the lesson.

Lav khuam i’ go (?) lao bo: hi:an bo: dai.

If you say it in our language (?) couldn’t recite the lesson.

Lav yèèng.

Say it and let’s see.

Lav un no gmyèèng.

Say it for them to listen to.

S: (?)


He was afraid of reciting the lesson. OK, sit down.
Ao (?) tham va: pen nyang thao Yangli: tok chai ju: nai bot,

Right, (?) asked why Yangli was nervous in the reading.

Ju: nai ni:a nai kho:n man (?) ni:.

in the [text] content (?) here.

Va: 'pen nyang ching tok chai?'

It says 'Why are you nervous?'

An ni: me:n khamtham kho:n na:ng Khamsi:, tham thao Yangli:, no.

This is Khamsi's question, she asks Yangli, right.

'Kao: nyox va: ja:n lao bot hi:an bo: dal',

'It's because [I'm] afraid [I] can't recite the lesson';


or '[I'm] afraid [I] can't recite the lesson fluently'. So he's nervous.

In the above extract Khamsuk switches from Lao to Kmhmu, then back to Lao. He begins the exchange with an instruction in Lao and then reads out the Lao question from the textbook (point 1). When the targeted student doesn’t answer, he switches into Kmhmu and encourages the student to give her answer in Kmhmu (indicating that he believes the student's silence to be due to unwillingness/ inability to speak Lao). He stays in Kmhmu to elicit another volunteer, then translates the original question into Kmhmu, after this also encouraging the second student to answer in Kmhmu. When this student is likewise unable to answer the question, Khamsuk provides the answer himself in Kmhmu (point 2) before translating it into Lao. This is followed by some more instructions in Kmhmu, telling the student to repeat the answer the teacher has modelled. After the student says something in Kmhmu, Khamsuk states the answer in Lao, gives a routine instruction in Lao to sit down.
(an instruction always given in Lao), and then gives an explanation of the question and a final version of the answer, all in Lao.

The switches in this exchange from Lao to Kmhmu then back to Lao parallel on a micro level the activity frames described above, with Khamsuk beginning the questioning in Lao, moving into Kmhmu to achieve the content teaching goal, then moving back into Lao at the end of the exercise. They also exemplify Khamsuk’s tendency to recapitulate or reformulate answers to questions into Lao for a ‘final version’. In this instance, Khamsuk has already given the correct answer to the question in Kmhmu at point 2 (‘he was afraid he couldn’t recite the lesson’), but finds it necessary first to translate his answer into Lao for the student to repeat, then to repeat the final version of the question and answer in Lao before moving on to the next question.

In the above example, Khamsuk reformulates his own Kmhmu answer to a question, but at other times he reformulates answers given by students, as in the example below, where he is eliciting the answer to a question from the textbook which he posed a few minutes earlier.

T: Lav yêêng, lav yêêng

*Answer and let’s see, answer and let’s see.*

S: [stands]

T: Gam i’ (aan) bôôc yat na sip ét ah hmeh ah hmeh dê, gam no pnswm?

*The one we already read on page eleven, what is there that they plant?*

S: (?) (ma:k thua) (ma:k te:ng)

(?) (beans) (cucumbers)

T: Mi: ma:k thua, mi: ma:k te:ng, mi: phak hɔ:m po:m, gap hmeh dê? Hɔ:m thi:am?

*There are beans, there are cucumbers, there’s coriander, and what? Garlic?*
Cabbage.


Cabbage? And what? (6) That's all? (5) Is that right, her answer? Is it right?

Ss: Thīk.

It's right.

T: Ao, meh hmeh gam taang? Tāp yèeng. (?) Sīi?

So, what's different? Answer and let's see. (?) Sīi? [Name]

S: (lists Lao words from text)

T: Thīk lē? Me' tāp no?

Is that right? Who'll answer?

Ah phak bua, ah phak sīi, ah phak thī:am, ah hō:m pō:m, ah ma:k thua, ma:k tē:ng.
Thīk? Thīk?

There are onions, there's dill, there's garlic, there's coriander, there are beans, cucumbers. Is that right? Is that right?

Ss: Thīk.

That's right.

T: Thīk. Thīk tē:ng, no? Ao, top mī: som sō:i. [ss clap]

That's right. It's right, right? OK, give a clap.

Ao, keng laːi nāːng Ling.

Ok, well done Miss Ling.
[to other s still standing] Na ng Ling to x ko thi k, te va to x gla st, yat na sip et pe ah, no, t 'lô.

*Miss Ling answered correctly, but she answered ahead. On page eleven there isn’t any cabbage, is there?*

Ah tc., ee, ah phak bua gap gam i’ s onthana.; gam bo pe neeng khamsap, l’ lav meh hmeh lè?

*There’s only, um, there are onions and the one we discussed, the one you didn’t know the word for, what did we say it was?*

Mi phak bua, mi phak thiem, mi hoom poom, mi phak sii, mi maak thua laeo ko maak taeng.

*There are onions, there’s garlic, there’s coriander, there’s dill, there are beans, then there are cucumbers.*

Here once again, Khamsuk uses Kmhmu to achieve the content-teaching goals of the exchange before switching to Lao for a reformulation of the final answer to the question. Initially, Khamsuk uses Kmhmu to elicit the answer to the question. After this he stays mainly in Kmhmu, using Lao only for some quotations (a common type of switching referred to by Auer (1988) as ‘textual switching’) and for some routine classroom language (also a common pattern, which is discussed in the following section). After this mainly Kmhmu interaction, Khamsuk switches to restate the correct and complete answer entirely in Lao at the end of the exchange. Like the first example, this demonstrates Khamsuk’s allocation of a central role to Lao in the classroom in terms of the high value of the tasks for which Lao is used: the final achievement of curriculum goals such as the provision of correct answers to questions from the textbook is performed in Lao, even when this is redundant from a content-teaching perspective, correct answers already having been provided and confirmed in Kmhmu.
Others have noted the formality and redundancy of such official medium utterances in minority classrooms. Arthur (Arthur and Martin, 2006: 191), quoting Barnes (1976), describes English utterances in Botswana primary classrooms as taking a ‘final draft form’. That is, the English which is used is highly formal and gives the impression of ‘written language spoken aloud’ (Arthur 1994 cited in Arthur and Martin, 2006: 191). Arthur goes on to suggest, using Haugen’s terminology (Haugen, 1987) that English has a ‘rhetorical rather than communicative’ role in these classrooms (ibid). While Khamsuk’s Lao does not always display such formality, in exchanges such as those discussed above it does remain close to the Lao of the original text. It also appears to fulfil a mainly rhetorical function, serving to indicate to students that ‘this is the final answer’ and to remind the students, the teacher and any other observers that ‘the real teaching and learning here is being achieved in Lao’.

Lin (1996) provides an example of official-medium reformulation of L2 academic content from an English-medium science class in Hong Kong. In her extract, the teacher explains an English term (‘climate’) in Cantonese before switching to English for a recapitulation of the definition. Lin states that:

> What is to count as the official, legitimate knowledge corpus established in the lesson (Heap 1985) seems to be the concluding English part. The preceding Cantonese utterances are merely expedient annotations of what is to be taught and learnt... (Lin, 1996: 70)

Khamsuk’s switches into Kmihmu in the middle of teaching and learning exercises or activities might likewise be seen as a form of ‘annotation’ of the ‘official, legitimate knowledge corpus’ which, in the example above, is the material from the reading text. However, while Lin’s analysis suggests that the L2 annotations have an ‘illegitimate’ status in the classroom, it will become apparent in section 7.3 below that despite their lesser status at times, Kmihmu utterances do have a degree of legitimacy in Khamsuk’s classroom.
In addition to the teacher's reformulation of academic content which he has provided himself, Lin notes in the same paper the special structure of the 'knowledge coproduction format' (Heap, 1985) used by teachers and students in English-medium Hong Kong classrooms. The common Elicitation-Response-Feedback (ERF), or Initiation-Response-Feedback (IRF) structure first identified by Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) is modified in these classrooms to an E (L2>L1) – R (L1) – F (L1>L2) format. That is, the teacher first elicits content in the L2 (here Lao), then restates this elicitation in the L1 (Kmhmu). The student answers in the L1 and the teacher then restates this answer in the L1 before reformulating it into the L2. This is exactly the structure of the first example given above. Lin argues that the purpose of this format is to incorporate students' familiar knowledge into the formal academic context:

Since what the students are able to offer are often their most familiar knowledge and lifeworld experiences, which are naturally encoded and expressed in their L1, the teacher uses this special discourse format to elicit, transform, and incorporate their otherwise illegitimate L1 contribution into the official L2 knowledge corpus (Lin, 1996: 73).

According to this analysis, by reformulating students' contributions into Lao, Khamsuk is both increasing the legitimacy of those contributions as formal academic learning and reproducing the centrality of Lao to the teaching-learning process.

Of course, in addition to legitimising Kmhmu utterances by transforming them into Lao ones, and maintaining an apparently central role for Lao in the classroom, reformulations into Lao can also been seen as an attempt to provide a linguistic model for the students. After all, the excerpts above do come from a Lao language lesson and one of Khamsuk’s overarching teaching goals is to improve students’ Lao language proficiency. Khamsuk himself explains:
A: When the students finish fourth grade, what do you want them to be able to do?

K: I want them to be able to read and write... to read things, to read various thing in Lao.

and later in the same interview:

A: For the students who finish fourth grade, what level of Lao language do you want them to have?

K: I want them to know about 60%... They should be able to use some words that they didn’t know, they should be able to say them.

Providing linguistically (i.e. Lao) as well as topically correct model answers, combined with metalinguistic work such as that discussed in section 7.3.3 below, is perhaps one way in which Khamsuk attempts to contribute to students' Lao language development. However, this does not render the practices insignificant in terms of the centralisation and legitimation of Lao in the classroom. If anything, it simply provides one rationale (among others) for them.

7.2.3 School discourse related code choice

In addition to legitimising Lao as the language of the ‘official knowledge corpus’ (Lin, 1996: 73) through reformulations, Khamsuk reproduces the central role of Lao in the classroom by using that language for items particular to the formal teaching and learning context, even where Kmhmu equivalents exist. In doing this, he signals that Lao, not Kmhmu, is the appropriate language of institutionalised academic knowledge.

It was noted in section 7.1.3 above that Khamsuk’s variety of Kmhmu includes high levels of borrowing or transfer from Lao, practices which are difficult to distinguish in this case. Some of this borrowing/transfer is undoubtedly competence related and would thus be
termed interference by many linguists (e.g. Gumperz, 1982a, Thomason, 2001). Other borrowing or transfer is likewise not highly significant to the present analyses: some Lao-origin items are used due to the lack of an exact equivalent in the Kmhmu lexicon, for example the terms 'pim' (book), 'khon khua' (research), 'tua ja:ng' (example), 'visa:' (subject), and 'khanitsat' (mathematics). Still other instances of what could be considered Khamsuk's borrowing or transfer are characteristic of the district variety of Kmhmu, in particular the use of function words such as 'khan' (if), 'ching' (then/therefore) and 'je:' (but). This is a common feature of lexical change due to language contact (Thomason, 2001: 70).

Borrowing and transfer which are due to a lack of knowledge or availability of lexical items in Kmhmu or which reflect wider processes of language change cannot be taken to indicate an intentional legitimation of Lao in the classroom context (although they may constitute an unintentional legitimation). However, the use of Lao items such as 'buak' (plus/add) and 'phasa:' (language) in the midst of Kmhmu utterances when Kmhmu equivalents exist (tmp6', gam/guam) and are used by the teacher in other contexts does indicate a preference for Lao lexical items in content teaching exchanges and thus an active and purposeful legitimation of Lao as the language of official classroom teaching and learning.

The term 'buak' is used by Khamsuk for all mathematical calculations with both grades, as is the Lao term 'lop' (minus/subtract). The Lao terms 'pen' (is, as in 'two plus two is four') and 'thao' (equals) are used in most calculations, although the Kmhmu word 'meh' does appear once in the data in this context. Consistent with the use of Lao terms for mathematical relations, Khamsuk uses the Lao numbers one to three (ning, so:ng, sa:m) in

59 These items do still hold some significance, however, in that they reaffirm the link between school-specific behaviours and ideas and the Lao language.
60 In fact, this is a borrowing from the Lao 'khuam' and is now an established replacement in western Kmhmu varieties for the native Kmhmu term 'hirlo', which is still used the in eastern varieties.
mathematical contexts, but usually uses the Kmhmu equivalents (mōy, baar, pê) at other times, for example when counting students or objects in the room.

It could be argued that Khamsuk’s use of Lao (-origin) lexis for mathematical calculations is an example of the common tendency of traditionally non-literate minority languages to borrow from the dominant literate language in order to distinguish new semantic domains or referents. Certainly written mathematical calculations are a relatively new domain in Kmhmu and Khamsuk’s use of Lao lexis to distinguish numerals from numbers, for example, or the term ‘buak’ to distinguish arithmetical addition from more general addition or combination is unsurprising in light of this.

However, the fact that such a practice is frequent among smaller languages does nothing to detract from the fact that it indicates a desire, or at least a willingness among speakers (native or otherwise) to separate formal, academic, or institutionalised semantic domains from traditional ones and to associate the former with the majority language. This is far from inevitable, as is seen in cases where speakers of a minority language create new lexis from native morphemes to distinguish new semantic items or domains (e.g. Montana Salish. c.f. Thomason 2001: 80), or in cases where speakers extend the original meaning of native lexis to include new referents or domains (e.g. Hmong for mathematical terms, Mithong Souvanvixay 2005, personal communication). Nor does the fact that borrowing non-native lexis for new domains is common prove that for Khamsuk it is indeed a case of borrowing from Lao, not transfer.

In fact, Khamsuk’s comments regarding his use of Lao (-origin) lexis for mathematics indicate that he is making a conscious choice to use what he sees as Lao terminology as opposed to Kmhmu equivalents in this context. That is, when teaching mathematics Khamsuk is transferring Lao items into his Kmhmu speech, not borrowing Lao-origin items which then ‘become’ Kmhmu. When asked about his use of the term ‘buak’, Khamsuk says:
'Buak' is Lao, right. 'Buak' in Kmhmu would be 'tmpô', right. Most of the time [I] use Lao for 'buak', if it's third or fourth grade. If it's first grade, we'd use ['tmpô'], but now they understand a little, the students understand a little, so we use Lao.

This comment suggests that for Khamsuk, the ideal practice is to use Lao for academic terminology, and that the only reason he wouldn't do so is students' lack of comprehension. Once students know what the Lao term means, Khamsuk considers it the more appropriate form and (as seen in the data) uses it even when it is the only Lao item in an extended stretch of Kmhmu discourse. These comments and practices confirm the interpretation that Khamsuk's use of Lao academic terminology is one whereby he willingly reproduces the legitimacy of Lao rather than Kmhmu as the language of institutionalised knowledge.

7.2.4 Routine classroom language

Similar to the use of Lao for terminology specifically associated with academic content, Khamsuk tends to use Lao for acts which constitute routine classroom interaction; that is, for acts which are associated with the daily work of classroom teaching and learning.

Instructions such as 'stand up' (yìn / luk khêん), 'sit down' (nang long), and 'go [back to your] seat' (pai bo:n) occur in the data only in Lao. This is also the case for the routine feedback 'right' (thî:k), 'excellent' (keng la:i) and 'top mi: som sèi' (lit. clap hands congratulate = 'Give a round of applause'). Whether these items are borrowed or transferred, like the school discourse related switching discussed above, they constitute a strong association of activities which are specifically classroom-related with the Lao language, and thus a reproduction of the status of Lao as central to the classroom context.

Code-switching for management (instructions) or interpersonal (feedback) purposes such as these is not uncommon in classrooms. It is one effective means by which teachers differentiate non-content from content teaching exchanges. However, as that statement might
suggest, most cases of switching of this nature are noted as switches from L2 for content to L1 for non-content – the opposite of the switches occurring here.

Ferguson lists three types of code-switching in post-colonial classrooms: for curriculum access, for management discourse, and for defining interpersonal relations (2003: 39). He suggests, referring to Goffman’s (1974) theory, that when used for management discourse, switching may serve to contextualise a shift of frame ‘away from lesson content and toward some off-lesson concern’ and ‘may also demarcate talk about the lesson content from what we may refer to as the management of pupil learning’ (2003: 40). Ferguson provides examples from the data of Canagarajah (1995), Lin (1996), and Camilleri (1996) which illustrate his point, yet none of these examples includes switches to the students’ L2 for management reasons. Similarly, Ferguson notes switches for interpersonal interactions where the teacher gives positive feedback, citing data from Adendorff (1993), but here again the switches are into the students’ L1, not into L2 as in the data from Khamsuk’s classroom.

One reason for this contradiction between Ferguson’s (reviewed) data and the present study may be that in the classrooms he mentions (in Sri Lanka, Hong Kong, Malta and South Africa), the majority of content teaching occurs in the L2. Switches in order to mark shifts in frame or interpersonal distance are therefore necessarily into the L1. However, in Khamsuk’s classroom, content teaching occurs both in the L1 and the L2 (see section 7.3 below). Thus switches to distinguish frames and relationships may occur either into L1 or into L2, depending on the particular context.

Furthermore, Ferguson’s analysis focuses on the idea that management and interpersonal interactions are ‘off-lesson’ (an assumption which fits neatly with his data). However, in Khamsuk’s classroom, management interactions such as giving routine classroom instructions and interpersonal interactions such as giving routine feedback on academic performance may be off-content, but they are certainly not off-lesson. In fact, they can be seen to represent the day-to-day workings of the classroom as a place of institutionalised
learning where students engage in particular forms of embodiment (standing in front of their classmates to talk; sitting up at their desks) and particular authoritarian relationships (teacher elicits, student replies, teacher evaluates) which are foreign to their non-classroom lifeworld. In this context, switches to the official medium of instruction for management and interpersonal interactions do not seem an unusual way of marking such particularity.

7.3 Pragmatic bilingualism

The preceding discussion in this chapter has focussed on the ways in which Khamsuk’s language use reproduces the centrality of the Lao language in the classroom. It has been argued that there are several language practices which indicate Khamsuk’s orientation to Lao as the more legitimate language of teaching and learning.

However, as was mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, Khamsuk uses Kmhu extensively in his classroom. The degree and nature of his use of Kmhu, in addition to his comments on language, society and education, indicate that while Khamsuk does hold Lao to be the ideal language of classroom interaction, he values the instrumental role of Kmhu and at times grants it a legitimate, if secondary, place in the classroom. His approach might be referred to as ‘pragmatic bilingualism’, in that Khamsuk’s use of the students’ mother tongue is primarily to facilitate effective teaching and learning, and indicates neither a strongly positive nor a strongly negative attitude to the language itself.

7.3.1 The interpersonal and beyond

There are examples in the data of Khamsuk’s use of Kmhu for asides (Zentella, 1981), breakdowns, and other ‘backstage’ language, as Arthur (1996) calls it. This is similar to the pattern described in chapter six for Saisana’s classroom, where Kmhu is used for interactions which are outside what is perceived to be the normal classroom script. There are also instances of Khamsuk’s switching to Kmhu to lessen the interpersonal distance between himself and the students. This is again similar to tendencies identified in Saisana’s teaching.
The use of L1 for ‘backstage’ and personalized moments in classrooms where the official medium is the students’ second or other language is well documented and theorized. There is of course Arthur’s (1996, 1997, 2001, Arthur and Martin, 2006) work on Botswana classrooms, from which the ‘on-stage’/‘backstage’ analysis used in chapter six and here is drawn. Similarly, Zentella notes the use of the L1 for ‘asides that momentarily [break] with the main focus of the elicitation’ (1981: 122). She suggests that the use of the L1 in asides where there is an element of behaviour evaluation creates closer interpersonal relations by ‘softening of the admonition’ (ibid); again the ‘less interpersonal distance’ analysis. In the same vein, Ferguson describes the use of the L1 for ‘off-lesson’ concerns, as discussed above, and ‘to build rapport with individual pupils, create greater personal warmth and encourage greater pupil involvement’ (2003: 43). This analysis is paralleled in the work of Canagarajah, who writes that

‘[t]he use of [the L1] personalized the institutional relations between teachers and students. It served to build a rapport between teachers and students by evoking the values and ethos of the community outside the classroom’ (2001: 203).

Such analyses are obviously not rare in the code-switching literature, beginning with Gumperz’ (1982b) ‘we’ and ‘they’ code analysis and being reproduced in present-day micro studies from around the world. Even classroom code-switching studies which recognise the specifically academic motivations for some switches tend to subvert the importance of this switching by emphasising the social dimensions of language choice (c.f. Adendorff, 1993, Simon, 2001).

Certainly that switching to the L1 may mark a shift in concerns from content to non-content teaching and/or a lessening of the interpersonal distance between teacher and students is supported by much of the data analysed here and elsewhere. However, an analysis which focuses primarily on these two motivations for L1 use fails to adequately address the many
instances of 'on-stage', 'on-lesson', authoritarian, classroom-focussed use of the L1; a usage
which is found extensively in Khamsuk’s teaching and which will be explored below.

7.3.2 Kmhmu for complex elaboration

It was noted in section 7.2.1 above that lessons, activities, or exercises are frequently begun
in Lao by Khamsuk then pursued in Kmhmu before a switch back to Lao at the end. The
focus above was on these Lao frames in order to illustrate one way in which Khamsuk
centralises the Lao language in the classroom. However, the nature of the switches to
Kmhmu in the middle of these exchanges was not considered in detail. Most of these
switches to Kmhmu constitute a move into the L1 in order to undertake complex teaching
interactions, whether these are content-related, management-related, or metalinguistic.

Often, Khamsuk switches to Kmhmu in order to explain curriculum content which is new or
complex or to elaborate on a complex content elicitation. An example of this is seen below,
where Khamsuk leads a third grade mathematics activity on using abacuses:

T:  Le:o khi:, hao a:n an ni: kap an ni: [board and abacus], khi: kan bo?:

    Now are they the same, when we read this one and this one [board and abacus], are they the
same?

S:  (bo: khi:)

    They’re not the same.

T:  Bo: khi:

    They’re not the same.

S:  Bo: khi:

    They’re not the same.
T: Lèèv ci lav ca’ me”?

Now what would you call them?

S: (kh?)

(?)

T: Ee, (kh?). (kh?) gi meh than me”?

Yes, (?) How much is this (?)?

S: Mōōy

One

T: Mōōy. [removing beads] Khi: a, bat ni:?

One. Are they the same now?

S: Khi:.

They’re the same.

Ss: Khi:. Khi:.

They’re the same. They’re the same.

T: Ge gi no lav meh tua ya:ng no. Lèèv yèèng tua ya:ng lèèv ee,

This is what they call an example, right. Now look at the example then um,


‘look at the example then read and write the amounts according to the counting beads.’

[holding up abacus] Gi ci aan lav than me”, gi?

This one, how much would you read it as, this one?
S: (Phan.)

A thousand.

T: CĒː ning phan sōŋ hɔːy hɔː sip saːm no.

Yes, one thousand two hundred and fifty-three, right?

Gi lav meh hua hmeh? Hua nuay (2)

What do you call this row? The row of (2)

S: Sip.

Tens.

T: Sip.

Tens.

Eː gi go aan hua nuay hua sip, hua hɔːi, hua phan.

Yes, these ones you read as the ones row, the tens row, the hundreds row, the thousands row.

After reading out instructions in Lao from the textbook telling students to compare pictures of an abacus (not included in the above transcript), Khamsuk holds up a real abacus and asks a student to compare it with a diagram on the board. This elicitation consists of a simple closed question in Lao (‘Are they the same?’). After the student provides the correct answer in Lao, which the teacher confirms, Khamsuk then switches to Kmhmu for a more complex open question (‘What would you call them?’) and to elicit a mathematical calculation (‘How much is this one [worth]?’). When the student answers correctly (using the Kmhmu number, which Khamsuk does not reject), Khamsuk then switches back to Lao for the same simple closed question which he asked earlier (‘Are they the same now?’). Again receiving the correct answer, he switches into Kmhmu for some more explanation of
the exercise and more mathematical elicitations (with a textual switch in the middle in order to quote the Lao question from the textbook again). Here we can see how Khamsuk moves into Kmhmu for interactions which involve a degree of conceptual complexity as compared to the more simple teaching and learning exchanges, which he carries out in Lao.

Another example of complex mathematical content being dealt with in Kmhmu, in this case with fourth grade, is seen below. Prior to this exchange, Khamsuk has instructed the student in Lao to go out and solve a problem at the board. He then explains the problem in Lao, setting it up for the student on the board:

T: Katai, lackha: me:n ning ho:i hok sip so:ng kip. Bat ni: khoa hai ngoen,

*The rabbit, the price is one hundred and sixty-two kip. Now they pay,*


*they pay two hundred kip. They give change, yeah, look at the change, right. The change is-

[writing on the board] Ao. Si het – si het me:o dai hai man o:k hok sip so:ng?

*Right. How will you do – how will you do it so it comes out at sixty-two?*

(1) o:k ning ho:i hok sip so:ng?

(1) *comes out at one hundred and sixty-two?*

S1: [does nothing at the board]

T: Ke: khi: kao. (1) B:eng, bo: an man do:, me:n tua ja:ng han ke:.

*Solve it like before. (1) Look, don’t read it [in the book] OK, it’s the example we’re solving.*

Bo: an do:. [checking text]

*Don’t read it, OK.*

The, buying a doll, right. The doll is (4) one hundred and sixty-two kip.


They give change from two hundred. One hundred kip. A hundred kip. Eighteen. One hundred.

[p; writing the sum on the board] Ao.

Right.

S1: [still doing nothing at the board]

S2: [to friends] Na pe chaay.

She doesn’t know how.

T: Yeèng, ge gi. Soong hooy buak soong thao than me’? Khien ro’ hni ɖ.

Look at this one. Two hundred plus two hundred is how much? Write it here!

S2: [tries to do the sum]

T: [goes on to explain and elicit in Kmhmu]

The above is an example of Khamsuk’s switching to Kmhmu to begin an explanation of content which a student has not understood. This exchange is followed by approximately fifteen minutes of teaching in Kmhmu, at the end of which the student manages to solve the problem with help from a classmate. Some might argue that Khamsuk’s use of Kmhmu during and following on from the above exchange is motivated by the fact that he is primarily engaged with an individual student, rather than the whole class, and the interaction is thus ‘off-stage’. However, although Khamsuk is addressing an individual student here, his explanations are delivered loudly at the board for the whole class to hear, and the purpose of the exercise is to model the arithmetical process for the class. The exchange cannot
therefore be considered ‘backstage’ or ‘off-lesson’. The argument that Khamsuk’s use of Kmhm on this content-teaching exchange does constitute ‘on-lesson’ teaching is further strengthened by the existence of several examples of Khamsuk’s use of Kmhm for whole class textbook-based teaching with both grades in both mathematics and Lao language lessons.

In a third grade Lao language lesson, Khamsuk uses Kmhm for an extended teaching interaction beginning with the elicitation below and continuing with an explanation and further elicitations in Kmhm. In fact, from the switch point in the extract below, the rest of the lesson (approximately fifteen minutes) is conducted all in Kmhm except for some Lao transfer for routine classroom language. The extract begins with Khamsuk reading out a text comprehension question from the textbook:

T: Ao, thao Pa:n. (2) Langcha:k an na: (1), na:ng Somchai

Right, Pa:n. (2) After um, (1), Somchai

an chot mai hai pu: nya: fang l-e:o, pu: kho:n la:o jaj dai nyang de:?

reads the letter for her grandfather and grandmother to hear, what does her grandfather want?

(4) Ta’ kho:n na hni cu dé’ hmeh?

(4) Her grandfather wants what?

Un c- un Somchai khien chot maai un yong Sali têng un. Meh hmeh?

That I- that Somchai write a letter so that Sali’s father makes [something] for him. What’s is it?

S: (?) (?) un na têng chot maai (hôp) yong ge, un dé’ (?) (gmuul).

That she write a letter to his father to get (?) (money).
In this example, Khamsuk begins by reading the question out in Lao (‘After, um, Somchai reads...’), but after a short silence from the students, he goes on to translate the question into Kmhmu then pose more specific questions in Kmhmu (and read out the beginning of the relevant section of the Lao text) in order to direct the students to the correct answer. Even though the questioning and explanation here are drawn directly from the reading text, which is in Lao, Khamsuk chooses to carry them out in Kmhmu.

Other researchers in the L2 classroom have noted the use of the L1 for complex content teaching. Canagarajah describes the use of the students’ and teacher’s L1, Tamil, when teachers
wanted to discuss culturally relevant anecdotes... to give explanations... or to provide illustrations to clarify the lesson content (Canagarajah, 2001: 204).

Canagarajah goes on to focus on the village = L1/school = L2 dichotomy whereby teachers use the L1 to ‘refer to the world beyond the classroom’ and to ‘relate the lesson content to knowledge gained outside the classroom’ (2001: 204-205). Similarly, Ndayipfukamiya comments on the use of the L1 by teachers in Burundi to contextualise content from the textbook and ‘compare the new concepts to those [the teacher] felt were familiar to the students’ (1996: 45). Once again, the emphasis here is on the association of the L1 with the familiar lifeworld of the students. However, throughout the example above and in the ensuing interaction, Khamsuk is not relating the content to students’ background knowledge or placing it in a village context. Nor is he moving ‘backstage’ (Arthur 1996) or ‘off-lesson’ (Ferguson, 2003). He is carrying out prescribed work from the Lao language curriculum in the mother tongue of the students in order that they be able to engage successfully in the activity.

Camilleri (1996) notes the use of Maltese rather than the official medium, English, to translate elicitations which the teacher makes based on textbook material. She explains this as a means of ‘open[ing] an opportunity for the learner to make a contribution to the session in a medium that [is] more comprehensible to all the learners’ (Camilleri, 1996: 99). In the examples examined above, it may be more appropriate to consider the use of the L1 not only as a cue for students to answer in their own language, although it certainly is this, but also as an effective means of explaining and narrowing the teacher’s elicitations so that students will first understand the material, then be able to answer in a comprehensible medium.

A practice which confirms that Khamsuk uses Lmhmu in teaching interactions not only as a link to students’ background knowledge, or as a cue for students’ own language choice, but as a more effective medium of complex communication is his use of the L1 for complex
management and metalinguistic interactions. Below is an example of a switch to Kmhmu to clarify instructions from the textbook:

T:  *Kho: thi: sa:m, no?*

*Exercise number three, right?*

[Reading aloud] Chong sangke:t le:o si:p to: khian chamnuan ti:m sai i:k,

*Notice and continue [the pattern] by writing the missing amounts in,*

the:o la ha: chamnuan.

*five amounts per line.*

Yeëng, ki ah si (?) no? Un bo khien, tua ya:ng, no,

*Look, here there are four (?) right? You should write, for example, right,*

the:o thi: ning haa sip, haa sip haa, haa kap haa sip haa too yoh

*line one, fifty, fifty-five, five and fifty-five and so on*

(?) than me’ (?) gi. (?)

(?) how much? (?) this one. (?)

Khien go hök sip, hök sip haa lè ci meh than me’, than me’, than me’?

*You’d write sixty, sixty-five, then how much would it be, how much, how much?*

In this example, Khamsuk explains the written instructions from the Lao text in Kmhmu, not relating them to anything outside the classroom and not expecting any verbal contribution from the students. Examples of management interactions such as this (and others where Khamsuk gives his own Kmhmu instructions not from the textbook) are frequent in the data, as are examples of metalinguistic interactions in Kmhmu such as the following:
Example 1:

T: Gi meh huup hmeh?
   What's this a picture of?

S: Khon.
   People.

T: Ee, khon no. Gi?
   Yes, people, right? This?

S: Gmprang.
   Horses.

T: I' lav meh hmeh?
   What do we call them [in Lao]?

Ss: Ma:.
   Horses.

T: ᄒे, ma:, ᄒे. Khon, ma:.
   Yes, horses, right. People, horses.

Lèèv bòt gi lav ‘nya:m na:o ju: khet phu: dɔi’.

Now this lesson says ‘the cold season in mountainous areas’.

Aːt ci meh ladu: gi lèèv na, ladu: gat hni.

That would be this season, the cold season.
Example 2:

T: Ge eh viek hmeh?

What work does he do?

S: Ge eh lek.

He makes iron.

T: Eh lek? Eh lek meh eh hmeh? K’eeey ca’ me’, eh lek?

Makes iron? Makes iron is makes what? What do you call it [in Lao], to make iron?

S: Ti: lek

To forge iron.


(1) Yes, to forge iron. So say forge iron. It’s not make iron.

Ti: lek, no. Ti: lek le:o.

To forge iron, right. To forge iron, that’s it.

In these brief examples, Khamsuk elicits Lao translations for Kmhmu words from the students; however, it is not only the target lexical item for translation which is in Kmhmu, but the entire exchange surrounding the Lao translation. At other times, Khamsuk provides extended metalinguistic support in Kmhmu, including translations, explanations and elicitations. These interactions are noted in section 7.3.3 below. At this point, the two examples above combined with the examples of management interactions in Kmhmu suffice to highlight the fact that in this classroom, Kmhmu is allocated an important role as the most effective medium of communication in a whole array of teaching-learning situations, and not only as an interpersonal device or a link to the non-academic world.
7.3.3 Kmhmu for text scaffolding

Another way in which Khamsuk uses Kmhmu to increase the effectiveness of ‘on-lesson’ teaching is his practice of text scaffolding, which involves the oral ‘annotation’ (Arthur and Martin, 2006: 187) of Lao language texts in Kmhmu for increased student comprehension. This practice might be considered a type of complex content elaboration in that its aim is to clarify and expand in L1 on L2 lesson content. However, it is distinct from the more general practices of complex elaboration in its primarily textual and metalinguistic focus: the specific objective of text scaffolding is to provide translations and contextualisations in order to render a Lao reading text more accessible to the students.

There are many examples of text scaffolding in the data, one of which is given below. The scaffolding process is shown here at length in order to illustrate the way in which Khamsuk annotates the whole text. The extract below is a monologue spoken by Khamsuk. Sections read from the text are shown in quotation marks.

Ao, tit ta:m. Ain na: thi: (2) sa:m sip pct.

Right, follow [this]. Reading page (2) thirty-eight.


It says “One day, Somchai got a letter from her cousin. She took the letter and ran happily to her grandfather and grandmother. Grandfather: Whose letter is that?”

Ge gi meh laksana maan yo’ no. Maan, tham.

This is like asking each other, right. Asking, asking.

“Somchai: It’s a letter from Sali. Her grandfather read it for” – oh, “Read it for Grandpa to hear and let’s see”.

Ge gi meh snq ta’ ge lav, no.

This is what her grandfather said, right.

“Na:ng Somchai chik s:ng chot mai – chik ao s:ng chot mai a:k ma: an.”

“Somchai tore the envelope – tore it and took the envelope [sic] out to read.”

[fast] Ee, ge gi le, neua nai chot maai, aan lav ca’ gme’.

Right, it’s this, the content of the letter, what she read out.


“Huai Ke:o village, the tenth of October, Nineteen – two thousand and one”, right, there’s no nineteen.


Dearest Somchai, Since my mother and father and I came to Huay Ke:o village over a year ago, I haven’t sent you any news. Are you well? I hope that Grandpa and Grandma, Uncle
and Aunty are well. My parents and I are well. This year I’m studying in first form. Now my father doesn’t do construction work anymore. He changed and is forging iron. He forges machetes, knives, hoes, spades and other things for my mother to sell at the front of our house. During the next school holidays I’ll come and visit you and Grandpa and Grandma. Lastly, I’d like to wish you and everyone else good health. With love, Sali.”

Œ, an ni: men ni:a nai chot mai, no.

Yeah, this is the content of the letter, right?


[I’ll] read all of it, right. There’s only a bit left. There’s still one page. Page forty-one.

“Langehak Somchai an chot mai sut le:o, pu: vao kap la:n,


“After Somchai had finished reading the letter, [her] grandfather said to his granddaughter,

Grandfather: It’s good that your uncle is forging tools. He’s doing exercise and getting a lot out of it. I’d like a shovel and a sickle.”


That’s the one at the top here, this page, right. A shovel.


Somchai hap pak pu: le:o fa:o pai khi:an chot mai to:p a:i Sali:”.

“Write a letter telling your uncle to send them to me please. Somchai: Yes. Somchai listened to her grandfather’s words then rushed off to write a letter back to Sali.”
Ee, meh gam attibai neua nai lae. Lèèv aan ge gi hnoong ‘moon me’ dèè, gam ci nyaak, gam ci aan pe bwan, ah a?

*Yeah, it’s the bit explaining the content. Now reading this, which parts are still hard, parts that you can’t read, are there any?*

[Students go on to point out difficult parts and Khamsuk explains in Kmhmu.]

The above extract contains two annotations in Lao, at points one and two respectively. The reasons for these are difficult to establish, but the first might be due to the degree of embeddedness of the utterance in Lao discourse: it occurs as an interjection between an unfinished (Lao) sentence from the text and the continuation of the (Lao) reading, and as a simple correction, is not intended to interrupt the flow of the text by ‘framing’ or marking a new stage or speaker. In contrast, the second Lao utterance is a discourse framing device marking the completion of the ‘letter’ stage of the text and as such, the use of Lao is anomalous, as all other such frames in the monologue are in Kmhmu. It could have occurred here as an accidental Lao follow-on from the extended Lao reading Khamsuk has just carried out. Such follow-ons do occur occasionally in the data (as seen in section 7.2.1) and are often corrected by a switch to Kmhmu shortly after, as is this one.

Aside from these two Lao utterances, all annotation of this reading text is done in Kmhmu. Khamsuk uses Kmhmu first to mark the beginning of the text (‘it says’). He then uses Kmhmu to orient the students to the various stages or turns in the text by framing each one (‘This is like asking each other’, ‘This is what her grandfather said’, ‘it’s this, the content of the letter’, ‘it’s the bit explaining the content’). In doing this, Khamsuk is supporting the students by giving them information such as speaker and topic, which will help them make sense of what will be or has been read out. In addition to providing such framing of the text

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61 ‘Framing’ is used here to refer to the verbal marking-off by the reader of new stages and/or speakers in the text. That is, ‘framing’ here refers to the use of interjections during the reading aloud of the text in order to orient the listeners to new topics or voices as they arise. As such, it does not strictly constitute a ‘shift in frame’ as analysed by Goffman (1974).
stages, Kham suk uses Kmhmu to give an explanation of unfamiliar lexis ("That's the one at the top here... shovel"). Once he has finished the reading, Kham suk then continues the activity in Kmhmu ("Now reading this, which parts are still hard...").

The use of the L1 for such scaffolding is common in the L2 classroom. Martin notes that 'annotating the text in Malay... is an extremely common practice in Brunei classrooms [where the medium of instruction is English]' (Arthur and Martin, 2006: 187), while Lin describes what she calls 'Cantonese-annotated English academic monolingualism', a practice also mentioned above, in which 'the main purpose of using Cantonese... [is] to expediently annotate English (L2) key terms, key statements, or texts to students who have limited English linguistic resources' (1996: 70). Similarly, Ndayipfukeniya (1996) and Camilleri (1996) identify oral L1 commentaries on written L2 texts in Burundi and Malta respectively.

What these studies have in common is that each one identifies L1 use as a practical means of mediating unfamiliar L2 texts for students, particularly through translation and paraphrase.

Kham suk's use of Kmhmu to provide explanations of lexis, as in the above activity, or translations, as in other activities, fits neatly with the practices described in these studies, although his use of Kmhmu to frame the stages of the text is somewhat more sophisticated than the annotation techniques identified there. The important point to note, and one perhaps underemphasised in the above studies and elsewhere (c.f. Adendorff, 1993, Simon, 2001), is that by using the L1 in such a content-teaching role in the classroom, teachers manage to maintain the official presence of the recognized medium of instruction (through the reading of written texts) while simultaneously according a crucial academic role to the mother tongue. Of course, this role and that accorded to the L2 cannot be considered equally legitimised, as only the L2 occurs in written form and, as the term 'annotation' suggests, the L1 takes somewhat of a supporting role in these activities. However, this does not negate the fact that teachers are communicating curriculum content in the L2 not as a means of
marking solidarity or stepping out of their academic roles but as an integral part of their primary role as ‘information givers’. In Khamsuk’s classroom, this fact coupled with the sheer amount of Kmhmu used by the teacher, serves to render the L1 if not equally legitimate to Lao then at least considerably less marginalized than it is in classrooms such as Saisana’s.

7.3.4 Acceptable necessity

As suggested earlier, the fact that Kmhmu has a greater presence and a more legitimate role in Khamsuk’s classroom than in some others does not necessarily indicate an ideology of ‘linguistic human rights’ (Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson, 1994) on his part. Rather, the classroom and interview data suggest that Khamsuk takes a pragmatic view which values the instrumental role of the L1 in teaching and learning while still holding the L2 to be both the ideal means and an end goal of the education process. That is, Khamsuk seems to consider Kmhmu to be a necessity rather than an ideal in the classroom. When asked with reference to several different classroom activities and speech acts why he uses Kmhmu or Lao, Khamsuk repeatedly refers to the necessity of the L1 for student comprehension:

I scold the students in Kmhmu – it’s like I don’t say it to them every day, so they don’t know it, they don’t understand, so I have to scold them in Kmhmu... Making speeches is the same, in that I don’t make speeches to them every day like I tend to say ‘what day is it’, I tend to ask the month and year, that stuff. I don’t speak like that [i.e. don’t make speeches] every day so they don’t understand. So I have to say it in Kmhmu.

If I say things in Lao the children might not know. If I can say it in Kmhmu, I have to use Kmhmu with them.
With mathematics that I’ve taught in the past, for those lessons most of the time I’ve tended to use Lao. That’s because they could understand a bit. With third grade there are some cases when I’ll ask in Kmhmu. Most of the time it’s because they don’t understand yet.

These comments indicate a pragmatic approach whereby the use of Kmhmu is somewhat of a concession to the practical demands of day to day classroom teaching rather than the result of a strongly positive valuing of the L1 in the classroom. However, such a concession could not be made without a degree of openness to the potentially positive role of the mother tongue, or at the very least, without a lack of strongly negative attitudes to the use of the mother tongue in the classroom.

Although Khamsuk describes his use of Kmhmu as a ‘necessity’, as was seen in chapter six, negative attitudes to the L1 can lead teachers to speak almost exclusively in Lao. Thus we should ask whether his concession to use the L1 should be seen simply as a matter of necessity (isn’t it equally necessary for Saisana?), or whether this ‘necessary’ concession can only be made by Khamsuk because he considers the L1 an acceptable medium of classroom communication. This attitude of linguistic pragmatism, which takes for granted the acceptability of the L1 in both social and educational contexts, emerges in Khamsuk’s community language use.

7.4 Khamsuk’s community language

On one of my visits to Ban Huay Yen, I went to the stream with Khamsuk and some of the students to watch them catch our lunch. After diving under the water several metres away from the students and from me, Khamsuk came up into the rather cool air and said quietly to himself ‘gai!’, which means ‘cold’ in Kmhmu. The comment was not directed at anyone, but was a spontaneous exclamation of discomfort – in Kmhmu. When asked about his occasional spontaneous comments in Kmhmu, Khamsuk said ‘I’m used to it. I’m used to speaking it’. This spontaneous comment and its explanation reflect Khamsuk’s high degree
of exposure to and integration into Kmhmu life in Ban Huay Yen, as does his tendency to
refer to the village (in and outside the classroom) in Kmhmu as ‘kung i’ (our village/home)
and the Kmhmu language as ‘guam i’ (our language)\(^2\).

In fact, at the time of the research, Khamsuk had spent five years living in Lamet and
Kmhmu villages and in that time, had participated widely in village life. In Ban Huay Yen
he lived with the Head of the school (a local man) and his family, fished and trapped with
them, ate with them, and attended village festivals and ceremonies where he joined in the
often excessive eating and drinking bouts which characterise Kmhmu celebrations. On every
occasion where he was observed interacting with villagers, including the two other school
teachers (both Kmhmu), Khamsuk spoke Kmhmu. Outside the school, it was only when
speaking with me and when reading a formal document at a village meeting that I observed
Khamsuk to use Lao in the village, although he said in interviews that he occasionally spoke
Lao with some individuals in the village if they spoke Lao with him first.

This high degree of cultural and linguistic exposure and immersion might have caused
Khamsuk to develop a sense of the naturalness of the Kmhmu language for communication
with villagers (or even with himself!). As he said, he’s ‘used to it’. Such a sense of
naturalness could partly explain Khamsuk’s acceptance of the use of Kmhmu in the
classroom. After all, the children are the same villagers with whom Khamsuk speaks
Kmhmu every day in his non-teaching life. This differs considerably from the circumstances
in which Saisana lives, where she speaks more Lao than Kmhmu on a daily basis and is part
of a mixed Kmhmu and Tai-Lue community.

\(^2\) Proschan has noted the same linguistic in-group identification by outsiders living in
Kmhmu communities. He relates this to what he calls the ‘fungibility of ethnic identity
among the Kmhmu’, whereby people are able to leave and enter the Kmhmu ethnic group
by affiliation without requiring a Kmhmu bloodline PROSCHAN, F. (1997) "We are all
Kmhmu, just the same": ethnonyms, ethnic identities, and ethnic groups. *American
Ethnologist*, 24, 91-113. In Khamsuk’s case it is not a matter of assuming a Kmhmu identity,
as he refers to himself only as Tai-Lue or lowland Lao. However, it does seem to indicate a
high degree of integration into the community.
However, intensive exposure alone is not the cause of Khamsuk’s participation in community life, or possibly even of his sense of the naturalness (and thus acceptability) of using Kmhmu in the village and school. Some ethnic Tai-Lue teachers living in other villages in Nalae do not immerse themselves as Khamsuk does: they were noted to spend much of their time alone or only with other teachers, to avoid village festivities, and/or to prefer to speak Lao.

Khamsuk’s social and linguistic behaviour must originate at least partly with an openness to Kmhmu culture and language. This openness allows him to join in village activities, to use the language with villagers even when he need not (all the men speak Lao to some degree), and to consider Kmhmu a natural and acceptable part of interaction inside and outside the classroom, even if it does have a lesser status than Lao, being a ‘necessity’ rather than an ideal choice. That is, Khamsuk’s village experience both reflects an attitude of openness to Kmhmu language and culture, and fosters that attitude through continued exposure to and participation in local life. This attitude does not prohibit the use of Kmhmu even in official contexts such as the school, when it is the most pragmatic solution to the problems of teaching and learning.

Khamsuk’s pragmatic openness to the use of Kmhmu even for official purposes is expressed in the following comments from an interview. After mentioning the importance of villagers’ learning Lao for official communications, Khamsuk says:

There are some things we want to say in Lao, about education, to liaise with people...

He then says people in the district centre should also know Kmhmu:

If we want to go and liaise with people but they don’t know Lao, we have to use it, liaise in Kmhmu, speak in Kmhmu.
Once again, this is a discourse of necessity, but within this discourse of necessity is an unstated assumption of the very possibility of making such a language choice when to others, such as Saisana, it contradicts the correct linguistic order of things.

7.5 Conclusion

The analysis of Khamsuk's classroom language practice identified his tendency to symbolically accord Lao a significant role in the classroom while practically according the central role to Kmhmu. His practices and comments indicate that while he recognizes the importance of Lao in institutionalized education, he holds a positive orientation to ethnic diversity and an openness to the benefits of mother tongue education which allow him to combine the two languages in the classroom as he sees fit. As in the previous chapter, these practices cannot be seen as a reproduction of the official discourses in full. In fact, Khamsuk's classroom language practice constitutes an even stronger challenge to those discourses than previously seen.

The nature of this challenge will be examined more fully in the conclusion to this thesis. For now, we turn to the last of the classroom case studies in order to explore another local response to the Lao national policy.
8 Ceng: Signalling Lao status, sharing Kmhmu identity

8.1 Introduction

8.1.1 Ceng

Ceng is a quiet but endearingly humorous Kmhmu Lue man in his late thirties. He was born in Ban Phangbok, a Kmhmu village high in the mountains two and a half hours walk from Ban Huay Yen, where Khamsuk teaches. After completing his primary education in a nearby village, Ceng went to the district centre to pursue his secondary education. Upon graduation from his third year of secondary school in the district centre, Ceng returned to teach in his home village for six years before being sent to teach in two other Kmhmu Lue villages, a Kmhmu Røk village, in his own village once again, in a mixed Tai-Lue and Kmhmu Røk village, then in the district centre, each for a period of one to two years and each time as a first and/or second grade teacher, except for one year teaching fourth grade. While being employed in these villages, Ceng also completed the Meuang Sing teacher upgrading program during school holidays.

At the time of the research, Ceng had just started teaching in Ban Phu: khão, a Kmhmu village within the Nalae district municipality. He and his wife, (who is also Kmhmu Lue) and two children were living in the district centre, from where Ceng made the steep half hour trip to and from Ban Phu: khão every day on foot.

8.1.2 Ceng’s Kmhmu and Lao language proficiency

Being ethnic Kmhmu and having grown up in a Kmhmu village, Ceng speaks the Kmhmu language fluently. Having spent several years teaching in Kmhmu Røk villages and then living in the ethnically mixed district centre, he is familiar with the different dialects of Kmhmu spoken in Nalae (his own Lue, as well as Røk and Yuan) and the different varieties

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63 Kmhmu orthography has been used here, as this is a Kmhmu name (but not the real name of this teacher). The name ‘Ceng’ would be written as ‘Chreng’ in the Lao orthography used here.

64 Not its real name.
spoken in many of the villages. Not only is Ceng able to communicate fluently in Kmhmu, but he is also able to use the language eloquently and to humorous effect: he demonstrates a knowledge of traditional vocabulary now less used by the younger district speakers and is adept at using the rhyming collocations valued in Kmhmu rhetoric.

However, his variety of Kmhmu also includes a substantial degree of Lao borrowing, or ‘metatypy’\(^6\). As will be seen below, Ceng uses Lao-origin discourse markers such as ‘ching’ (therefore) and other function words such as ‘le:o’ (past-tense adverbial) and ‘khan’ (if). His Kmhmu also includes phrases and sentences which appear to have been calqued onto the Lao structures (e.g. \textit{Pe ah me’} = Bo: mi: phai. Lit. No have who = ‘There isn’t anyone’), as well as lexical borrowing and semantic parallels with Lao in entrenched collocations (e.g. \textit{Le hrriwam} = Di chai. Lit. Good heart = ‘Happy’). These four realisations of metatypy noted above are well established in the western dialects of Kmhmu, although they occur to different degrees depending on the age and residence of the speaker.

While Ceng’s Kmhmu is more fluent and includes less Lao-based metatypy than that of many younger bilingual native speakers in the district, it displays a higher proportion of metatypy than the more conservative variety spoken by older Kmhmu people outside Nalae district centre.

Ceng’s Lao is fluent and he is able to reproduce the various spoken genres which he needs professionally and otherwise, although at times he has difficulty reproducing the highly formalised Lao which is conventionally used to discuss government policy (see section 8.4 below). Ceng’s Lao also displays Kmhmu influence, most notably in its phonology (tones are realised differently from local Tai speakers or lowland Lao people from other areas) and in lexical borrowing, although there is also some calquing. These characteristics are typical

\(^6\) This term is sometimes used to refer to linguistic changes resulting from language contact instead of the more common term ‘borrowing’, as the latter focuses attention on lexical changes rather than giving equal weight to lexical as well as phonological, morphological, syntactic and semantic change.
of the Lao spoken by Kmhmu people in Nalæ and some are even present in the speech of non-Kmhmu locals (see section 5.4.2 above for a discussion of this). They are thus not considered to be a form of individualised language ‘interference’.

Although the more widely established instances of Lao-origin lexis in Ceng’s Kmhmu are identified as borrowing (or metatypy) and are thus analysed as Kmhmu, others are more difficult to identify definitively as either borrowing or transfer. This problem was noted in relation to Khamsuk in chapter seven and the same approach is taken here. Those instances of Lao-origin lexis which also occur in the Kmhmu of the wider Nalæ speech community are considered borrowings, and as such are treated as Kmhmu lexis (rendered here in bold). Those Lao-origin items which occur neither in the Kmhmu speech of the wider community nor regularly in Ceng’s own Kmhmu speech are considered transfers and are thus treated as switches to Lao (rendered in normal script). Lao-origin items which occur as regular ‘borrowings’ in Ceng’s classroom speech due to the lack of a Kmhmu equivalent, or which could be analysed as either language (e.g. phrases constituted entirely of borrowed words) are considered ‘indeterminate’ (underlined).

8.1.3 Ban Phu: Khiaö village and school

The village of Phu: Khiaö clings to the mountain slopes a few kilometres from the district centre, in between the steep banks of the Tha river on one side and the steep mountain-rice fields and gardens of the villagers on the other. In 2005 it had a population of 232, all Kmhmu Lue families (except for one Lamet man) relocated there between 1998 and 2005 from a site much higher up in the mountains. The village is at the end of the road leaving the district centre. Beyond this point, further travel is only possible by boat or on foot.

Although the village is close to the district centre and some villagers travel between the two every day (especially upper primary and secondary school students, who must continue their studies in the centre), there is a sharp contrast between the lives of most Phu: Khiaö villagers and most district centre dwellers. The great majority of villagers consists of
subsistence farmers, some of whom are able to supplement their incomes by selling agricultural and forest products or by hiring out their labour. Most of these farmers did not complete primary school, and many of them (particularly the women) did not attend school at all. The people of Phu: Khi:ao village continue to produce and use traditional implements and clothing, although they also use commercially available products when they are able to buy them. Although life in Phu: Khi:ao today is very different from life in the original village before 1998, many residents of the district centre consider Phu: Khi:ao residents to be 'backwards' ('la lang') or 'uncivilized' ('bo: chale:n'), and attribute this to their having 'come from the mountains' ('ma: te: phu: te: pha:').

The language of communication among Phu: Khi:ao villagers and between villagers and Kmhmu outsiders is Kmhmu. Lao is only spoken in the village when non-Kmhmu people come to conduct government business or trade (although trade with non-Kmhmu locals is also carried out in Kmhmu). However, there is a generator-powered television in the village where locals can watch Thai broadcasts (the Lao signal is not received here) and frequent interaction with those in the district centre means that most adult residents of Ba:n Phu: Khi:ao have at least some proficiency in Lao. This proficiency ranges from limited receptive ability (for many women) to oral fluency and basic literacy (for some of the middle-aged men).

Ba:n Phu: Khi:ao school was founded in 1998 with the establishment of the village, although the original school building was replaced more recently with a more solid structure funded by a Japanese NGO. The new school is a two-room concrete-floored, tin-roofed wooden building with wooden slat windows open to the elements. At the time of the research, only one of the rooms was being used for the combined grade one and two class. At this time, the sixteen grade one and nine grade two students sat at home-made wooden benches facing the

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66 These comments were made by a staff member of the Nalae District Education Bureau and were echoed in informal conversations with other district centre residents.
front with three or four students to a row. The benches were rickety and uneven, too tall for most of the first grade students. The teacher’s desk was positioned at the front and centre of the class under the cracked blackboard. It was from this point that much of Ceng’s teaching was carried out.

8.1.4 Students’ Lao language proficiency

Like children in the other villages described here, the children of Ban Phu: Khiao generally do not learn Lao until they enter school, and then to varying degrees of success. During their first year of schooling, they learn some basic vocabulary, especially numbers, nouns like animal and food names, and some common verbs. In their second year, this vocabulary is expanded and some children demonstrate that they are able to compose simple sentences in Lao. Lao questioning of students suggests that many second graders are able to comprehend simple questions about classroom topics and daily life in Lao. However, they are for the most part unwilling (or unable) to produce Lao responses. Similarly, by second grade many students are able to read their prescribed Lao texts aloud, but rarely provide Lao answers to comprehension questions unless quoting directly from the book. As with the school students in other villages, it is difficult to know whether this reluctance stems from linguistic inability, shyness, or both.

8.1.5 Outline of the chapter

This chapter will consider the ways in which Ceng acknowledges the role of Lao as the official language of institutionalised teaching and learning while maintaining Khmu as the main medium of classroom interaction. It begins with an investigation of ‘on-stage’, routine, and school-discourse related classroom language, pointing out that these practices are similar to but less well-established than those in Khamsuk’s classroom. The chapter then moves on to a discussion of the dominance of Khmu in management and content interactions in this classroom, and the significant interpersonal causes and effects of this. These classroom language practices are then considered in the context of Ceng’s linguistic
and social behaviour outside the classroom and found to be highly consistent with it. Finally, conclusions are drawn regarding the relationship between official government policy discourses and the language beliefs and practices of this teacher. It is suggested that Ceng’s language practices challenge some widely accepted arguments on the nature of language and legitimacy.

8.2 Signalling Lao Status

Like the other teachers in this study, Ceng establishes a link between Lao language and the official work of classroom teaching and learning. Many of the means by which he does this are similar to those employed by Saisana and Khamsuk; however, the extent to which Ceng does this is considerably less. Furthermore, not only is Lao rarer in Ceng’s classroom than in the others, but this relative rarity of Lao leads to some unexpected differences between this and other classrooms in the marking of central and non-central classroom discourse.

8.2.1 Routine classroom language

Ceng gives the simplest and most common classroom instructions and feedback in Lao. The instructions ‘sit down’ (nang long), ‘go back to your seat’ (pai bo:n), and ‘be quiet’ (mit) are found only in Lao in the data for Ceng, as are the items ‘that’s right’ (thi:k), ‘well done’ (keng la:i), and ‘clap your hands to congratulate [him/her]’ (top mi: somsoc:i). Other routine language, such as the daily elicitations ‘is that everyone?’ (khop bo:?)) and ‘what day is it?’ (van nyang?) occur mostly in Lao, although there are occasional instances of these elicitations being made in Kmhmu. This usually occurs when the elicitations follow on from an earlier stretch of Kmhmu discourse rather than being in lesson-initial position. It is notable, however, that even when such elicitations are made in Kmhmu, they tend to include Lao transfer or borrowing and thus still associate classroom-specific behaviours with the Lao language.

For example, after making some comments in Kmhmu to grade one, Ceng asks grade two ‘khin lôc a?’ (lit. go up all INT = ‘Has everyone come?’). Instead of using the Kmhmu
words ‘gaay’ (come) or ‘root’ (arrive), Ceng chooses the Lao ‘khin’ here. This word forms part of the Lao collocation ‘khin ho:ng’ (come to class). The second item of the collocation is omitted here, but the first item is borrowed/transferred in isolation to distinguish the action of coming to class from the more general action of coming or arriving elsewhere.

Another occurrence of Lao for routine classroom language is Ceng’s use of the Lao terms of address ‘na:ng’ (Miss/Mrs) and ‘tha:o’ (Master/Mr) before students’ names when he is speaking either Lao or Kmhmu. This is a common practice among ethnic Lao teachers at all levels of education, and reflects the wider tendency for Lao people to use titles, whether they be politeness markers or not, before personal names in the second person. This contrasts with the Kmhmu tendency to use only the personal name without a title, or a pronoun when speaking in the second person. Thus Ceng’s use of the Lao titles with students’ personal names construes both the students’ classroom identity and their relationship to the teacher as Lao not Kmhmu, not only by the presence of the Lao lexical items ‘na:ng’ and ‘th:ao’, but by the presence of any title at all.

The transfer of terms of address has been identified in other L2 and L3 classrooms. Merritt (1992: 117) notes the use of the L1 terms for ‘son of’/‘daughter of’ and the L2 term for ‘young man’, as well as the L3 (English) ‘my sister’ and ‘our brother’, among others in Kenyan classrooms. She explains the use of these terms as ‘softeners’ (ibid.); that is, as a means of lessening the interpersonal distance between teacher and student. It is the transfer of L1 terms of address into L2/L3 teacher speech which appears to be the most common in Merritt’s data and which she claims achieves the greatest informality and thus solidarity.

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67 Kmhmu people sometimes use the Kmhmu kinship title (without the personal name) instead of the pronoun or the personal name when speaking in the second person, but this appears to be a case of metatypy modeled on the Lao. In any case, this still differs from the practice identified above firstly in that the titles in non-classroom Kmhmu speech are Kmhmu not Lao lexical items and secondly, in that titles in Kmhmu do not usually occur together with personal names.
Similarly, use of L1 terms of endearment is noted in other studies of the L2 classroom (e.g. Adendorff, 1993, Cazden et al., 1980, Martin-Jones and Saxena, 2003). As does Merritt’s study, Adendorff’s identifies transfer of terms of address from L1 to L2 for the purpose of creating teacher-student solidarity. The transfer in these cases differs from Ceng’s in that in Ceng’s case the transfer of terms of address is always from L2 to L1, is not for terms of endearment but for formal titles, and thus cannot be understood as a solidarity-building technique. Rather, Ceng’s transfer of the Lao titles na:ng (Miss/Mrs) and tha:o (Master/Mr) is a means of creating a more formal, distant, and ‘foreign’ (i.e. Lao) relationship between the teacher and students as opposed to the close, informal and ‘local’ relationship which they maintain in the Kmhmu speaking village context.

In addition to his use of Lao titles for the students, Ceng establishes his own classroom identity as a Lao one by frequently referring to himself using the Lao phrase ‘a:i khu:’ (lit. ‘older brother teacher’), whether in a stretch of Kmhmu or of Lao speech. Once again, such a combination of a kinship title (older brother) and a professional title (teacher) is distinctively Lao, not Kmhmu. It at once creates an identity which is specifically Lao and specifically classroom-related. Although the use of a Kmhmu kinship title such as ‘hèem’ (older brother) together with the word ‘khu’ (teacher) would be unacceptable according to the rules of Kmhmu syntax, Ceng could use the Kmhmu first person singular pronoun ‘ô’ if he wanted to refer to himself using conventional Kmhmu terminology and thereby construe his classroom relationship with the students in traditional Kmhmu terms. He could even use the term ‘khu’ (teacher) alone to indicate a relationship specific to the classroom but less markedly Lao. The use of a noun such as ‘khu’ in the first person is characteristically Lao, but the fact that this noun also exists as a loanword in Kmhmu and that it is not marked here by a Lao kinship title would render it a less obvious marker of the classroom teacher-student relationship as Lao.
The assumption of, or aspiration to, majority identities through the taking on of majority language names is not uncommon and can be observed among minority communities worldwide. This is not surprising, given that appellation is the most explicit means of attributing identity to ourselves and others. Pavlenko (2004: 47) notes the practice of assuming English names among early American immigrants, and Norquay (1998) does the same for Canadian immigrants, in both cases with the aspiration of ‘becoming’ majority group members. Although the use of Lao titles here is not equivalent to a change of personal names, it is perhaps the next most effective means of indexing the assumption of majority identities in the temporary sphere of the classroom.

Ceng’s use of Lao for routine classroom interactions and appellations parallels Khamsuk’s: both teachers associate institutionalised learning with the Lao language by referring to and establishing practices and relationships which are particular to the classroom in Lao. That is, both Khamsuk’s and Ceng’s students are being socialised into the bodily behaviours and interpersonal relationships of the classroom in Lao: they are being transformed from Kmhmu children into Lao students. The fact that many of Ceng’s students call out classroom-typical routine utterances such as ‘finished’ (le:o) and ‘not yet’ (nyang) in Lao whether the teacher’s progress-check (‘finished?’) occurred in Lao (le:o bo?:) or Kmhmu (hōōc a?), or even when there was no progress-check, suggests that these students participate to some degree in this Lao language classroom socialisation. The fact that the students often take up Ceng’s terminology and refer to him as ‘a:i khu:’ (lit. ‘older brother teacher’ in Lao) rather than using a Kmhmu pronoun, or even a Kmhmu kinship term, also indicates their participation in the construal of the institutional relationship between teacher and students as a Lao one.
8.2.2 School discourse related code choice

Also like Khamsuk, Ceng uses Lao (-origin) words for objects, processes and relationships which are specific to the academic context. Some of these words have been borrowed or transferred into Kmhmu due to the lack of a Kmhmu equivalent. Examples include, but are not limited to: 'pim' (book), 'bot' (lesson), 'visa' (subject), 'khq' (point), 'ha:ng' (class), 'ni:a nai' (content), and 'khon khua' (study/research). Other items frequently transferred or borrowed by Ceng include function words, particularly markers of cohesion such as 'lang chack' (after), 'ph: va:' (because), and 'thi: va:' (it’s like/that means), which are commonly used in the Nalae district variety of Kmhmu.

As was argued in chapter seven, we cannot consider these two types of borrowing/transfer as highly purposeful associations of the academic learning context with the Lao language on the part of the teacher. However, as was also seen in chapter seven, borrowing or transfer from Lao due to the lack of a Kmhmu equivalent is not insignificant, as 1) it would be equally possible to create new (compound) words from native Kmhmu lexis or to extend the semantics of existing Kmhmu words if Kmhmu speakers like Ceng found it important to do so; and 2) the use of Lao (-origin) words for school-discourse related items, whatever the motivation, nevertheless differentiates the village and the school contexts and reproduces the link between the school context and the Lao language, at least as long as speakers recognize borrowed/transfered words as Lao in origin.

There are other examples in the data of borrowing/transfer where Kmhmu equivalents do exist but Ceng has chosen to use a Lao (-origin) item instead, for example the Lao 't:zn' instead of the Kmhmu 'yaam' (period/time). As was mentioned in section 7.2.3 above with regard to the term 'buak' (add/plus), it could be argued that this is a case of lexical borrowing to make a semantic distinction: a morning school period (t:zn sruat) lasts for a more or less set number of hours and involves the study of one academic subject. Morning time (yaam sruat) is a period not fixed by the clock and potentially involving any type or number of activities. However, Ceng is even less constrained here than in cases such as
those mentioned in the previous paragraph to use a Lao (-origin) term to make this
distinction, or even to make the distinction at all. He could equally have coined a Kmhmu
compound word (e.g. *yaam hien* = ‘study period/time’) to distinguish the slightly different
semantics. He could also have chosen not to distinguish the items semantically at all, but to
include the new meaning (study period) under the general term ‘*yaam*’ (period/time), as we
tend to do with the word ‘period’ in Australian English. Like Khamsuk’s, Ceng’s
borrowing/transfer from Lao here is significant firstly in that he finds it important to
distinguish academic (school) practices from non-academic (village) ones, and secondly in
that he reproduces the association between academic practices and the Lao language.

Other examples of the use of Lao for specifically school-related items within a Kmhmu
stretch of discourse include three words also noted for Khamsuk: ‘*thi:k*’ instead of ‘*mèèn*’
(correct), ‘*pen*’ instead of ‘*meh*’ (to be) for mathematical calculations, and ‘*buak*’ instead of
‘*tmpô*’ (add/plus). It is perhaps important to note here that not all teachers of Kmhmu
students use these Lao (-origin) terms when teaching mathematics. The previous teacher in
Bān Huay Yen, also a native Kmhmu speaker in his thirties who lives in the district centre,
was observed to use the Kmhmu terms ‘*tmpô*’ (add/plus) and ‘*pic*’ (subtract/throw away)
instead. In addition to these three terms, Ceng also uses the Lao words ‘*phakphæ:n*’ instead
of ‘*hrlu*’ (rest/take a break), ‘*chi:*’ instead of ‘*prneeng*’ (remember), ‘*kum*’ (group), and
‘*li:ang*’ (story/topic), among others.

The association of the academic context with the Lao language and the village context with
Kmhmu is illustrated in the following example, in which Ceng refers to the students’
appearance:

T: Nak hian kung i’ je’ na?

*The students from our village are dirty, aren’t they/you?*
Bo yat lèh hni ōm tng raa.

You’re right near the Nam Tha river,

Grwam go piang, hong hian go je’.

but your clothes are stained and the school’s dirty.

1 La’ pwam prneeng dèè, plan dèè.

Next time remember. Change [it].

Ge gi go hmwan yo’, hruk nan, tēēp tiao.

This one [student] is the same. Your top and trousers are filthy.

Here, Ceng is discussing a topic in Kmhmu which does not constitute curriculum content or relate specifically to the school, except in that he is addressing students. In fact, he is discussing behaviour which he believes should take place in the space of the village, not the school. For this, he uses the Kmhmu word ‘prneeng’ (at point 1) for ‘remember’. All other uses of the word ‘remember’ in the data are to exhort the students to remember their lessons—a plea which Ceng makes frequently and which forms part of the academic discourse of the classroom. In all these other examples, Ceng uses the Lao word ‘chi’; whether or not he is otherwise speaking Lao. This suggests a distinction being made between non-academic topics or practices as Kmhmu and academic ones as Lao. In fact, Ceng himself says:

68 The Kmhmu word ‘prneeng’ consists of the causative prefix ‘pr’ and the verb ‘neeng’ (know). Its meaning is thus literally translatable as ‘cause oneself to know’. As such, it has an agentive sense. This is different from the Lao ‘chi:’, which can be used in an agentive sense (‘Remember this!’) or a non-agentive sense (‘Do you remember?’). However, this distinction does not affect the argument made above, as Ceng uses the Lao ‘chi:’ both in an agentive and non-agentive sense throughout the data. Thus his use of the Kmhmu ‘prneeng’ here is not only in order to distinguish this agentive meaning.
[In the classroom, I] speak Lao if it’s whole-class work [viak luam]. If it’s just talking normally, like outside issues or whatever, I use Kmhmu...

This comment suggests an ideological orientation to Lao as the official language of teaching, even if this ideology is not put consistently into practice, as will be seen in section 8.3 below.

The use of L2 words or phrases in L1 stretches of teaching discourse as in the examples discussed above was found in Kenyan primary classrooms by Merritt (1992). According to her, teachers transferred English lexis during science lessons because:

[When the English terms of the required vocabulary put together semantic features of the domain in a way that differs from local expression, the teacher will find difficulty in making direct translations (Merritt, 1992: 112).]

The examples given were ‘air’ and ‘land’, both of which have several possible but not exactly equivalent translations in Luo (the students’ L1) which fail to convey the meanings intended in the English language science texts, and neither of which could be used appropriately in the scientific discourse being articulated. While Merritt’s explanation is plausible in relation to her data, it is not sufficient to account for the examples from Ceng’s teaching. In his case, many of the L2 items replace L1 synonyms with an equivalent meaning (in as much as any translation can be considered truly equivalent) as shown above. Furthermore, many of the items which Ceng transfers (like ‘correct’ and ‘remember’) are not specific to the subject matter being taught, and would have little bearing on the accurate transmission of academic knowledge.

Use of L2 words for specifically school-related items in L1 discourse is also found in the data collected by Camilleri (1996: 98-99). In Camilleri’s examples, the teacher is using the L2 (English) for scientific terms such as ‘stomata’ and ‘chloroplasts’, which the students have just learned in an English text. Although Camilleri doesn’t mention this, the teacher in
her study may be borrowing or transferring these English words into her Maltese speech because she assumes the students do not know their Maltese equivalents. She may also be repeating the English words to consolidate the students’ learning of them as new vocabulary items. However, in Ceng’s case, most of the L2 items being used are not technical in nature and do have L1 equivalents (listed above) which the students would know. Furthermore, it is unlikely that Ceng is modelling the L2 items as new vocabulary as, unlike the Maltese teacher’s scientific terms, they are not particular to one lesson, but form part of his daily classroom teaching. A more satisfactory explanation for Ceng’s borrowing or transfer in these instances is that he uses Lao for items which are particular to, or even emblematic of the academic context in general in order to maintain the regular and visible presence of Lao not only as a language in the classroom, but as the language of the classroom.

8.2.3 Explicit Lao language teaching

The students in Ceng’s class appear to learn some of the routine language of the classroom quite rapidly through the frequent repetition to which they are exposed. Words such as ‘keng’ (excellent), ‘nang long’ (sit down), ‘pim’ (book) and ‘chi:’ (remember) can be used by Ceng dozens of times in one lesson and, a few weeks into the school year, the children are able to respond to them appropriately. However, students predictably have greater difficulty with Lao words, phrases, or sentences which relate to specific lesson content and are not used as frequently in the classroom. They may also have a receptive proficiency with some more commonly used items, but not produce those items themselves. For some of these items, Ceng engages in explicit vocabulary teaching. This is seen in the example below, where Ceng is eliciting information from first grade students on a picture in the Lao language textbook:

T: [holding up the text] Ki, huup gi meh huup hmeh?

Here, what’s this a picture of?
T: Huup hmeh?

A picture of what?

S: Huup gôn.

A picture of a person.

T: Huup gôn?

A picture of a person?

Ss: Ee.

Yes.

S: Gôn gmpong gleh.

A bald person.

T: Huup kôn. Meh phunying a, phusa:i a?

A picture of a person. Is it a girl or a boy?

S: Phunying.

A girl.

T: Meh cmgwn a? Cmbro’ a?

Is it a girl or a boy?
S: Cmbro'.

A boy.

T: Cmbro'? Ee. Cmbro' hni, cmbro' a:t cha meh phunying a? Meh phunying a? A boy? Yes. This 'boy', would 'boy' be 'phunying' [girl]? Is it 'phunying' [girl]?

S: Phusa:i.

'Phusa:i' [boy].

T: (E: chi: na? Phunying meh cmgwn, me:n bo?: Phussai meh cmbro' me:n ti:? Yes, [you] remember, right? 'Phunying' is girl, isn't it? 'Phusa:i' is boy, right?

Ceng's question 'Is it a girl or a boy?' indicates that he wants the students to use Lao words, even if they are transferred into Kmhmu discourse, to describe the picture. The vocabulary teaching which follows on from this highlights the importance of this goal to Ceng: when a student answers with the incorrect Lao word ('A girl'), Ceng translates his question into Kmhmu (Is it a girl or a boy?) to ensure that the students have understood the question and know the answer in Kmhmu (A boy). He then successfully elicits the correct Lao translation for the answer ('Phusa:i') and confirms it by explaining that in Lao 'Phunying is girl, right? Phusa:i is boy'.

Of course such language teaching, although demonstrating the importance of Lao language in the classroom, does not necessarily indicate an ideological orientation to Lao as the more appropriate language of classroom interaction: the text from which the students will be working is in Lao and the students will eventually need to read Lao words including 'phunying' and 'phusa:i' from that text. Thus such Lao language teaching might be seen as a necessity if Ceng is to successfully work through the prescribed material. However, vocabulary teaching also occurs at times when it is less integral to the content being taught.
This is seen in the following example, where Ceng is consolidating first grade students’
knowledge of Lao numbers and trying to encourage the students to use them rather than
their Kmhmu equivalents:

T:    [Holding up a picture] Meh hmeh?

   *What’s this?*

S1:   Gôn.

   *A person.*

S2:   Gataay.

   *A rabbit.*

S3:   Gataay.

   *A rabbit.*

T:    Huup gataay ge ah than me’ tê?

   *How many rabbits are there in the picture?*

S2:    Pé’.

   *Three.*

Ss:    Pé’.

   *Three.*

T:    Garn i’, i’ lav pé’. Gam laav lav sa:m. Sa:m.

   *In our language, we say ‘pê’ [three]. In Lao [we/they] say ‘saam’ [three]. ‘Saam’.*
T: Sa:m, me:n ti? Ta: la khon ko lav meh sa:m de.

'Sa:m' [three], right? Everyone say it as 'sa:m' [three] OK.

Ss: Ee.

Yes.

T: Ki, ki. Yëng tukataay. Ah than me’?

Here, here. Look at the doll. How many are there?

S: Pë'.

Three.

T: Gam laav, lav meh sa:m, me:n bo? Mi: sa:m. Sa:m to:, me:n a?

In Lao, [we/they] say 'sa:m' [three], right? There are three. Three of them, right?

I' lav ah pé’ tô, me:n ti? Le:o to: ma:, ge gi meh hmeh, ge gi?

We say there are 'pé’' [three] of them, right? Now the next one, what's this, this one?

S: G’né’.

A mouse.

T: Huup g’né? Ah than me’ tô?

A picture of a mouse? How many are there?
S: Ah baar.

_There are two._

Ss: Baar.

_Two._

T: Garr laav lav ca' gme'? _How do [we/they] say it in Lao?_

Ss: So:ng.

'So:ng' [two].

T: CE, so:ng. So:ng to:, mein bo?: Chi: no, so:ng to:.

Yes, 'so:ng' [two]. Two of them, right? Remember that, two of them.

In the above example, Ceng first tells the students how to say the number three in Lao (In Lao [we/they] say sa:m), then tells them they should say it in that language. When a student answers the next question with the Kmhmu number three (P6'), Ceng once again gives the Lao translation, using it in a short sentence this time (In Lao, [we/they] say...). When he moves on to the next question, the answer to which is the number two, the students once again provide the number in Kmhmu (Ah baar), at which point Ceng successfully elicits the number in Lao (How do [we/they] say it...) and likewise models it in a Lao phrase (Yes, 'so:ng' [two]...).

Although his efforts to make the students use the Lao numbers are not met with initial success here (perhaps because the students are more concerned with the content of the questions than their form), Ceng is providing explicit and consistent language instruction,
the goal of which is to teach students to use Lao numbers for mathematical calculations. However, unlike in the previous example, it is evident here that Lao is the preferred language for at least some of the academic work in this classroom for more than practical reasons. Unlike in Lao language lessons, the students would be equally able to carry out the tasks of this lesson (counting objects and drawing dots) and most other mathematics lessons entirely in Kmhmu if their teacher found it acceptable for them to do so.

8.2.4 'On-stage' Lao and 'back-stage' Kmhmu

Another similarity with both Saisana’s and Khamsuk’s language use in the classroom is Ceng’s use of the L1 to distinguish between ‘on-stage’ and ‘backstage’ (Arthur, 1996) interactions. In one example, Ceng uses Kmhmu to differentiate a brief aside, or momentary lapse in performance, from the routine work of teaching and learning. When a first grade student writes the correct answer to an exercise on the board in the first days of the new school year, Ceng gives the following feedback:

T:  [to the other students] Thikk a?

.Is that right?

Ss:  Thikk.

.It’s right.

T:  Top mi: som sē:i. [teacher claps with ss]

.Give a round of applause.

Keng lai: no - [pointing to student at board] meh me’ ge gi?

.Excellent, right - who’s this one?
S: Mantieng.

*Mantieng.*

T: Mantiang ni: keng la:i, Mantiang.

*Mantiang here is really excellent, Mantiang.*

After carrying out a routine elicitation of feedback from the other students using the borrowed or transferred Lao word for ‘correct’ (thi:k), to which the students reply using the same word, Ceng starts to give his own routine positive feedback in Lao to the student at the board (‘Give a round of applause’, ‘Excellent, right-’). However, at this point he realises that he does not yet know the student’s name and so cannot include it in the feedback routine as he usually would. He thus asks another student what this student’s name is – in Kmhmu *(who’s this one?)*. Once he has obtained the student’s name, he switches back into Lao to pick up the routine where he left off, this time including the student’s name (Mantiang here…).

For the section of the interaction which does not constitute a part of the usual ‘on-stage’ feedback routine, Ceng uses Kmhmu. In doing this, he is at once signalling that this section of the interaction is a momentary ‘backstage’ support for the classroom routine and reproducing the role of Lao as the ‘onstage’ language of the classroom. It might be argued that Ceng switches to Kmhmu here for reasons of competence: most of the grade one students have not been in school for long and might not understand the same question (‘who’s this one?’) in Lao. However, there are some repeat students in the class who would understand and from whom Ceng could elicit the information in Lao. Thus it seems that Ceng finds it important to carry out routine classroom exchanges such as feedback in Lao even if beginning students might not understand, whereas something like a brief aside is not important enough to insist on the use of Lao even where it is possible.
Although there are a few examples of such ‘backstage’ use of Kmhmu in Ceng’s classroom, there is a more common tendency for Ceng to use Lao, not Kmhmu, for ‘backstage’ utterances. Examples include:

Example 1:

[while doing an exercise placing letter cards in slots to make syllables]

T: Sala a: sai to bo: pen ba:

*The letter a with the letter b is ba.*


[Holding up new card] Boeng to: ni:

*Look at this one.*

I [some students leave the room] Ao, khi: va: ox lai, nak hi:an.

*Hey, why are so many students walking out?*

To hmeh gi?

*What’s this letter?*

In the above example, Ceng is carrying out a letter combination activity using the Lao structure ‘x sai y pen xy’ (x with y is xy). This is a routine phrase which Ceng always uses for this purpose; another example of Lao for routine classroom language. Although this ‘reading out’ phrase is always in Lao, the rest of the activity is carried out mainly in Kmhmu, as is indicated by the switch to Kmhmu in the last line. The point to note here is
that for the sentence at point 1 above, where Ceng makes a comment which breaks from the (Lao) teaching discourse before it, he uses Lao not Kmhm.

Example 2:

toward the beginning of the first lesson of the day

T: Dai ke: le o bɔ:, bot fik hat?

*Did you already do [lit. solve] it, the homework?*

Ss: Ke:

*Yes.*

S: Ö hɔ̀ːc ke: hɔ̀ːc da hɔ̀ːng hien.

*I already did it at school.*

T: [Looking at his watch] Phɔː diː peː t mɔː ng. (?) tɔː m kheː:i.

*Just on eight o'clock. (?) as usual.*

S: K'ni ge khuaay.

*He's late.*

T: Pe khuaay, pe khuaay. Pɛɛt mɔ̃̃ng plo̩, ge haak hlien vaar.

*I'm not late, I'm not late. It's only eight o'clock. It's just sunny [already].*  

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69 During this season there's usually a morning mist in the village which doesn't clear until 9 or 10 am. Because it's already sunny at 8 o'clock on this particular day, the students think it's later.
Here Ceng similarly begins with a routine in Lao, in this case checking homework, before making a comment which breaks with that routine ('Just on eight o'clock...'). As in the previous example, this comment is also in Lao, not in Khmu as we might expect such an aside to be. When a student understands the comment and makes her own comment in Khmu to a friend, Ceng then addresses her in Khmu ('I'm not late...').

Example 3:

T: [writing on the board] Van thi: ning, men bo?:

[The date is! The first, right?]

S: Ee.

Yes.

T: Di:an sip et, pi: s:ng phan ha; khi: kao.

The eleventh [month], two thousand and five, like before.

Visa: pha:sa; Lao:

Lao language class.


Gosh, [we/you] study so slowly.

Ao, yeeng gdaan, yeeng gdaan.

OK, look at the board, look at the board.

In the third example, Ceng is once again carrying out a classroom routine in Lao, or sentences composed almost entirely of Lao words which have been borrowed into Khmu. After completing the routine chore of writing the date and subject on the board ('...language
class’) and before plunging into some content teaching with a call for attention in Kmhmu (‘Ok, look...’), Ceng makes a comment on how slowly the students are progressing. Again, although this comment is not central to the work being undertaken and constitutes a momentary aside, it is made in Lao not Kmhmu.

The use of Lao for such ‘backstage’ utterances is in marked contrast to the patterns noted for ‘backstage’ comments from Saisana and Khamsuk and appears contradictory to the tendencies noted in all the code-switching studies mentioned in relation to those teachers in chapters six and seven. However, it is easily explained in the context of Ceng’s classroom and of these exchanges. Although Ceng maintains a Lao language presence during lessons in the ways discussed in section 8.2.1 – 8.2.3 above, it is in fact Kmhmu which is the dominant language of his classroom. (This will be discussed in section 8.3.2 below.) The students and Ceng are all native Kmhmu speakers and the usual language for (non-routine, non specifically school-discourse related) communication between them is Kmhmu. It is only Ceng who is fluent in Lao and uses that language, together with Kmhmu, for a range of spontaneous and routine communicative purposes in his daily life. Thus when Ceng wishes to make a comment to which he does not want the students to respond – one which is not a routine classroom act or a school-discourse related item – he marks it as being outside the bounds of teacher-student interaction by saying it in Lao.

The examples of ‘backstage’ utterances given above are not instances of student management or other interactional concerns momentarily impinging on a content-teaching interaction and thus being differentiated by code choice. They are instances of non-interaction. That is, Ceng is using Lao to purposefully exclude students from his comments. As was seen in the second example, when a student does respond, Ceng then switches to Kmhmu to interact with her. This use of Lao can be seen as a form of participant-related switching (Auer, 1988), or ‘addressee specification’ (Gumperz, 1982b), whereby the speaker excludes others through the choice of a language in which those others are not proficient.
From the analysis above, it can be seen that Ceng does maintain a Lao language presence in the classroom by using Lao for routine classroom language and for specifically school-discourse related items, by explicitly teaching and encouraging students to use Lao vocabulary, and at times by marking ‘on-stage’ interactions in that language. In doing this, Ceng is reproducing to some degree the official status of Lao as the language of institutionalised education. However, Ceng’s participant-related switching to exclude students from spoken interaction with him when he makes ‘asides’ suggests two important things. Firstly, it indicates that Lao is effectively a foreign language for the majority of classroom members; one that may be present, but is largely unavailable to them as a communicative resource beyond the most routine of functions. Secondly, and following on from this, it suggests that it is in fact Kmhmu which is the language of most teacher-student engagement in this classroom. It is this dominance of Kmhmu in classroom interaction which will be examined in the next section.

8.3 Sharing Kmhmu identity: Kmhmu dominance in the classroom

Several means by which Ceng establishes an important role for Lao in the classroom were identified above. However, despite these various means of marking classroom learning and relationships as Lao, the majority of interaction in this classroom – even more than in Khamsuk’s classroom – occurs in Kmhmu. This includes interpersonal, management and metalinguistic interactions as well as curriculum content teaching and learning.

Some of the reasons for this dominance of Kmhmu in Ceng’s classroom might be similar to reasons identified for the use of Kmhmu by Khamsuk: Ceng certainly has pragmatic motivations for carrying out some classroom tasks in the students’ mother tongue. However, he is not always constrained to do so by low student proficiency in Lao. Furthermore, he is clearly also motivated by a desire to establish his identity among the students as a fellow Kmhmu and to avoid the negative interpersonal effects which perceived rejection of that identity would have. Ceng’s use of Kmhmu thus has an added interpersonal aspect which
Khamsuk's and Saisana's do not. Analysis of Ceng's extensive use of Kmhmu in the classroom as compared to his limited use of Lao, coupled with his own comments on language and education, suggests that Ceng and the students pay 'lip-service' to the official role of Lao as the medium of instruction, while maintaining Kmhmu as their primary language of communication and as the marker of a shared identity.

8.3.1 Borrowing from Lao as contact induced

It was noted in section 8.2.2 above that much of Ceng's use of Lao in the classroom consists of Lao items borrowed or transferred into his Kmhmu speech. This borrowing or transfer is significant in that can indicate a (conscious or unconscious) desire or willingness to associate the classroom context with the Lao language, and even where it may not indicate such a desire, it may result in that association regardless. However, as was also noted in the same section above, much of Ceng's Lao borrowing/transfer is a manifestation of the effects of language contact on the district centre variety of Kmhmu and is not motivated by classroom concerns at all. Furthermore, whatever the causes may be, much of this borrowing/transfer may not contribute to the identification of classroom-specific discourses as Lao. In fact, the association of some borrowed items with Lao at all must be qualified: while it may be easy for linguists to point out loanwords as Lao in origin, some Kmhmu speakers may not perceive these items as non-Kmhmu and their significance to discourses on the 'Lao-ness' of the classroom must thus be questioned.

One case in which the borrowing of Lao words may not be motivated by or result in an association of the Lao language with the school context is function words. As noted in section 8.1.2 above, Ceng borrows or transfers many of these into his Kmhmu speech. Frequent items include the markers of textual cohesion (or 'discourse markers') noted above as well as the past tense marker 'le:wa' and the future marker 'cha', the adverbs of possibility 'act cha' (maybe) and 'bang thia:ta' (sometimes/maybe), the adjective 'te:la' (every), the subordinating conjunction 'khan' (if), the emphasis particle 'doe:', the interrogative particles 'na:' and 'ti:', and the tag 'me:n bo:' (isn't it?).
As mentioned above, Camilleri (1996) and Ndayipfukamiya (1996) have both noted the use of L2 discourse markers in stretches of L1 speech by teachers and explain this as a means of creating an L2 ‘frame’ for the L1 discourse. However, Thomason (2001: 70), in her well-known reference text on language contact, identifies function words as one of the first types of borrowing to occur in language contact situations, even where contact is only ‘slightly more intense’ than ‘casual contact’ (ibid.). This suggests that the borrowing of function words which is evident in Ceng’s Kmhmu is not motivated by classroom concerns, but is simply a basic feature of language contact, which can only be expected in a situation of extended contact such as that of Nalae. In any case, even if L2 discourse markers were being used here to create an L2 discourse frame while actually carrying out communication in the L1 as Camilleri and Ndayipfukamiya argue, this would not explain the borrowing of function words which are not discourse markers but have other grammatical purposes, such as some of the words listed above.

There is another reason for us to qualify the statements in section 8.2 above regarding the significance of borrowing and transfer from Lao into Kmhmu: certain Kmhmu speakers may not be aware that even some of the more recent borrowings from Lao into Kmhmu are in fact loanwords. Examples include names for days of the seven day week, which may not be recognized as originally Lao by children who have grown up with this system in daily use in addition to the traditional Kmhmu ten day (working) and twelve day (ritual) weeks, and Lao-origin verbs like ‘read’ and ‘write’, which most Kmhmu people in Nalae today have likewise grown up with. 70 Although linguists can identify these items as originally Lao, and as a continuing link with the Lao language, some Kmhmu speakers might not. This issue is relevant for much of the borrowing from Lao into Kmhmu. These facts suggest that while borrowing from Lao into Kmhmu is significant in the classroom context, we should not

70 There is a Kmhmu word for ‘write’ (kood), but this is not in use in the Western dialects.
place too much emphasis on its role in the association of the Lao language with classroom discourse.

8.3.2 Proportion of classroom communication in Kmhmu

Another characteristic of Ceng’s classroom communication which indicates that we should perhaps question the significance, or certainly the centrality of Lao in this context is the sheer proportion of communication which is carried out in the mother tongue. Despite being symbolically loaded as the language of some specifically school-related discourse, Lao is rarely used in much of the interaction between Ceng and his students.

Aside from the most routine management acts such as giving instructions to sit, stand, or raise hands, which were noted above to be carried out in Lao, most of the management work in Ceng’s classroom is carried out in Kmhmu. This includes regular acts such as progress checks (‘bôôc a?’ = finished?), calls for attention (‘yêêng g’daan’ = look at the board) (although both of these occur occasionally in Lao too), and simple instructions (e.g. ‘méêt pwm méêt bik hlien’ = take out your books and pens), as well as more specific instructions for particular exercises such as in the following example where a grade two student has just finished giving his answer to a comprehension question:

T:  Ao, thîk lê:o top mi: somsaê.i.

OK, if it’s right then give a round of applause.

Ao, tø: pai, tø: yoh gni lê. Dé’ cmgwn lav, nô?

Ok, following on, following on from this one. We’ll have a girl answer, right?

Sap yo’ nô? Baat hni na:ng Tii, baat hni. Oor lav.

Mix them up, right? Now Miss Tii, now. [I’ll] invite you to answer.
Lav yeëng. Lav un gmyëeng.

*Answer and see. Answer for them to listen to.*

S: Pe neeng.

*I don’t know.*

T: Lav hvay, lav hvay.

*Answer quickly, answer quickly.*

In this example Ceng gives feedback in Lao, as usual, then stays in Lao for a discourse marker (‘to: pai’) before switching to Kmhmu to give instructions for the next exercise (‘following on from this one. We’ll have a girl answer’). It is notable that while the instructions are not routine, they are also not particularly complex. It is probable that the second grade students would have understood such instructions had they been given in Lao. Ceng’s use of Kmhmu here can therefore not be attributed solely to the practical issue of comprehension. From the many examples such as this in the data, it can be seen that although the routine acts which are perhaps most emblematic of classroom interaction are performed in Lao, most management interaction occurs in Kmhmu, even when this is not essential for comprehension. Lao might have a relatively high symbolic value when present, but it is largely absent and, as such, it is difficult to consider Lao central to this teaching and learning context.

It is perhaps unsurprising that such management work is done in the L1: the studies cited in section 8.2 above all argue in their own ways that management work is not central to the classroom but constitutes a backstage support, and as such it is often carried out in the L1. According to this argument, such use of the L1 by teachers does not contribute to the legitimation of that language in the classroom, and conversely, does not detract from the centrality of the L2, as management is an ‘unofficial’ classroom task.
Management interactions may be considered less ‘official’ or ‘central’ by teachers and students and as such, the L1 may be considered an acceptable medium for these but not for more ‘important’ work. This fact cannot be ignored. Yet these management interactions nonetheless constitute a large proportion of classroom time. Fuller and Snyder found that in Botswanan classrooms, teachers spent 16% of class time off academic tasks (1991: 284). However, the real proportion of time spent by these teachers on what has been called ‘management’ here may even be greater than this, as much management interaction occurs within academic tasks. Hornberger (1988: 122-133) similarly notes the high proportion of classroom time which is not spent ‘on task’. Out of 10 hours of observed classroom time in a Peruvian bilingual classroom, she recorded only 1.5 hours spent on active teaching. This does not prove that the remainder of the time was spent on management, but it is likely that in these 8.5 non-teaching hours (minus the 4.5 hours in which students were left alone), a considerable proportion of the interaction was of a managerial nature, especially as students were engaged in doing exercises and performing classroom maintenance. It seems unjustified to consider L1 management interactions completely irrelevant to the centrality or otherwise of the L2 when they can take-up such a considerable proportion of classroom time.

Furthermore, in Ceng’s classroom as in Khamsuk’s, it is not only management work which is largely undertaken in the L1, but content teaching work too. If the management interactions discussed above do not constitute a significant challenge to the centrality of Lao in Ceng’s classroom, the high proportion of L1 use for content teaching interactions certainly does.

In one lesson, where first grade students are copying letters from the board and Ceng is leading second grade through a maths activity, the only Lao used is for the occasional transfer of words or phrases, many of which might in fact be considered borrowings. During this one hour lesson, which consists of teacher talk punctuated by the occasional student
answer, Ceng only uses Lao or Lao-origin words for: feedback ('thik': correct, 'top mi: somsae:i': give a round of applause); instructing a student to go to the board ('na:ng Si: pai': Miss Si go); single word school-related items (numbers one to three, 'phakpho:n': rest/break, 'ke:': solve, 'hoa:ng po: ning': first class, 'mack khampha:i': ballpoint); short school-related sentences ('attiba:i de: ho:ng po: son': I'll explain, second class, 'khu: tat khane:n': I'll take off marks) which occur once each; and function words ('to: pai': following on, 'le:o': then/next, 'ching': therefore, 'somut': suppose [subordinating conjunction], 'te: va:': but). Lao thus has a very minor presence in this lesson in comparison to the amount of communication which takes place in Kmhmu. This contradicts the tendency noted by Fuller and Snyder (1991: 288) for teachers in Botswana to limit L1 use in the teaching of 'high status' subjects such as mathematics and English. Unlike these Botswanan teachers, Ceng often almost exclusively uses the mother tongue for the official teaching and learning of core curriculum subjects. In doing this, he challenges the symbolic value of Lao in the classroom.

This Kmhmu dominance in content teaching is also found in Ceng’s Lao language lessons. The first grade Lao language curriculum is built around reading and writing the alphabet and one-syllable letter combinations. Although first grade students are expected to read 'texts' later in the school year, these generally consist of short nonsense rhymes, each focusing on the letter(s) learned in that lesson. As students are generally not interacting with meaningful texts, it is not necessary (or perhaps even helpful) for the teacher to engage in extended Lao language discourse while working through the curriculum. Instead, teachers can carry out most of the teaching of Lao letters and letter combinations in the L1 if they so wish, which is precisely what Ceng does.

In a first grade Lao language lesson where students are calling out letter names and placing letter cards in a slot-board to make syllables, Ceng uses Lao for the first half of the lesson only for: common transfers noted above (e.g. 'chi:': remember, 'thi:k': correct); routine
phrases/sentences specific to the classroom context (e.g. ‘sala a: sai to: ko: pen ka:’ = the vowel a: with the letter k is ka:); and feedback, including a feedback interaction in which responses are elicited from second grade students. These brief Lao transfers are made into a steady stream of Kmhmu teaching discourse. About half-way through the lesson, Ceng switches to Lao to give a brief explanation of an unfamiliar letter combination:

Ao, phai hu?: Bo: mi: phai hu: va:? Bo: mi: phai hu: ai si va: de:.

OK, who knows this? No-one knows? If no-one knows, I’ll tell you.

[pointing to the board] An mi: n sala a. Sai to: ko: n ka, mi: n bo:?

This is the letter a. With the letter k it’s ka, isn’t it?


With the letter d it’s da. Ka, k for kai is ka.

Sala a: to: do:, do: dek pen da:.

The letter a: and the letter d, d for dek, is da:.

Chi: de:. [holding up a new card] Lø gi meh hneh ge gi?

Remember this. Now this one, what’s this one?

After giving this Lao explanation, Ceng switches back into Kmhmu to carry out the second half of the lesson much as the first. It is difficult to establish Ceng’s reasons for switching to Lao here but not for other similar explanations during this lesson, except perhaps that this exchange forms a sort of brief synopsis of the teaching so far. Simon points out that the rules for marked and unmarked code-choices in each classroom are highly unstable at the level of the task and even within tasks, and reasons for switches may be incomprehensible to
non class members (2001: 327). This is undoubtedly true, and it may not always be useful to offer necessarily tentative explanations for anomalous switches such as the one above. The important point to note here is not what Ceng’s motivation was in this particular instance, but that this brief explanation in Lao is the only departure from Kmhmnu language discourse which is above the level of the individual sentence during the entire lesson. In this lesson, as in others, the central role in teaching and learning is allocated to Kmhmnu not Lao, even in lessons where the stated curriculum aim is to increase Lao language proficiency.

8.3.3 Interpersonal dimensions of code choice
As has been shown above, much of Ceng’s use of Kmhmnu is for official content teaching and thus should not be analysed as code-switching with the motivation of lessening interpersonal distance or marking a shift out of the academic frame. That is, most uses of the L1 discussed for Ceng so far can be understood to have a primarily ‘academic’ rather than ‘social’ function (Adendorff, 1993). However, at times Ceng’s use of the L1 for academic content teaching has the added interpersonal effect of creating solidarity between the teacher and students by linking them through shared cultural and linguistic knowledge not available to most non-Kmhmnu, and/or by placing the teacher in the role of mediator between the shared world of the village and the unfamiliar world of the classroom text. This is a role in which the other teachers discussed here were not seen to engage.

Such mediation is seen in the example below, taken from a first grade Lao language lesson on the letters ᵃ (th: rising tone) and ᵆ (th: high tone). Here, Ceng tries to elicit information from the students on a picture in the textbook:

T: Lèèv mehv gôn eh hmeh, ca’ ke?

*Now it’s a person doing what here?*

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71 See chapter six for a discussion of this in relation to Khamsuk.
S: Gôn glam s'oong.

A person dragging [carrying] wood.

T: Glam s'oong? S'oong hmeh, gi?

Dragging wood? What kind of wood is this?

S: (?)

(?)

S: G'mong.

A fighting stick.

T: E? G'mong? G'mong, nà? Lèèv bo lav meh g'mong w? '

Huh? A fighting stick? A fighting stick, right? So you say it's a fighting stick, right?

Ss: Ww.

Yes.

T: Te: la khon yèèng meh g'mong a? Meh a?

Does everyone think it's a fighting stick? Is it?

Ss: Ww.

Yes.

S: Meh.

It is.
T: Bo joo guuñ a, no glam ca’ gi?

Have you ever seen people drag [something] like this?

S: Ww.

Yes.

S: Pe, pe guuñ.

No, [I] haven’t seen it.

T: Ee. Hni, gi ke hni meh gôn glam thay?? Thay gam no vak thraak, dè.

Right. Here, this here is a person dragging a plough. A plough like they attach to buffalos.

Cap yoh joom luang kn’hni thraak. Thay hrnaa eh ke’ néé.

You hold it and walk behind the buffalo. You plough rice paddies like that.

Pe meh g’mong de. Chi: bo?: Gôn glam thay thay hrnaa. Ee.

It’s not a fighting stick. [Will you] remember that? A person pulling a plough for ploughing a rice paddy. Right.

In this example Ceng elicits information on the picture from the students, perhaps predicting that they will be unfamiliar with the images. They do indeed misinterpret the picture: their families plant mountain-rice rather than paddy-rice so the students have never seen a plough before. Ceng then takes on the role of mediator of cultural knowledge. He understands and recognizes the first student’s answer that it is a fighting stick, then explains what the picture really shows. Three points are important here.

?? This is a loanword from Lao.
Firstly, Ceng directs students' attention to the picture rather than ignoring it and moving straight on to the teaching and learning content of the unit (the letters тl and т класс). It is most likely his insider's knowledge of the disjoint between students' familiar lifeworld and the world of the text, and his recognition of the importance of this disjoint, which lead him to do this. Secondly, Ceng understands the word ‘g’mong’ (fighting stick), which would probably be unfamiliar to most non-Khmhu, being specialised vocabulary referring to a traditional item not in common use today, but referred to in Khmu folktales. Thirdly, Ceng introduces the unfamiliar item (thay = plough) by giving a simple and accessible explanation in the students' L1. These three aspects of the exchange demonstrate how Ceng is able to position himself at once as an insider who shares students' cultural and linguistic knowledge, and as a link to the outside Lao world. Such mediation, a common characteristic of Ceng's teaching and one which is seen in several extended interactions such as the example above, allows him both to effectively achieve the academic goals of the classroom (the students now know a Lao word beginning with the letter тl - the word for plough) and to achieve a closer interpersonal relationship with the students. It also adds a dimension to L1 use which is not seen with the other teachers described here.

The technique of using the L1 to link curriculum content to students' familiar lifeworlds is one much noted in the code-switching literature (c.f. Canagarajah, 2001, Lin, 1996, Ndayipfukamiya, 1996). However, the interpersonal dimension of such academically motivated switching is perhaps best explained by Adendorff, who argues that in cases of content mediation such as the one above, the L1 becomes the code of both clarification and encouragement, which 'intercedes between the complexity of the [content], the efforts of the teacher, and the morale of the students' (1993: 147). Ceng likewise notes the dual academic and interpersonal effects of L1 use. In response to a question about why teachers use the mother tongue, he says:
Suppose we use Lao and they don't understand, then we use the mother tongue. It's based on necessity. If we don't use the mother tongue, they don't understand. Speaking the mother tongue is translation, it's a summary for them so they remember well. That's the first thing. The second thing is that it's a way of appealing to them emotionally [ding chit chai khao], so they form an attachment to us [tit chai hao]... If we only use Lao in the countryside or in remote areas, they'll be afraid of us and they won't have a -form an attachment to us.

In addition to the interpersonal effects of the L1 when it is employed for primarily academic purposes, Ceng also creates an interpersonal bond through markedly non-academic L1 use. For example, in one lesson a student asks Ceng a question about something he has written on the board. Ceng checks which word the student is referring to by asking him a question in Ban Phu: Khi:ao dialect 73, smiling as he says it. The students all laugh and Ceng promptly rewrites the word on the board. By doing this, Ceng is simultaneously demonstrating that he is able to speak the village dialect and good-naturedly teasing the students for their characteristic speech patterns. In this way, his shared linguistic knowledge allows him to create a friendly intimacy between himself and the students. Use of the L1 for relationship building teasing and banter is similarly noted by Adendorff (1993: 149), who suggests that such exchanges 'are easily subsumed within Scollon & Scollon's (1982) category of solidarity/politeness strategies'. Here it is obviously the solidarity strategy which is being employed.

Although non-Kmhmu teachers might achieve a degree of closeness with their students by demonstrating some knowledge of Kmhmu, none was observed to appeal to the students with Kmhmu community in-jokes like this, which teasingly pit one village against another.

73 Ceng says 'Gni'? Eh ca' hné a?' for 'This one? Like this?' instead of the more common 'Gni'? Eh ca' gl a?'.

303
while confirming common membership of the wider group. In fact, at times non-Kmhmu teachers’ use of Kmhmu emphasises their non group membership. In one observed case, Saisana’s incorrect pronunciation of a Kmhmu word was met with whispered mocking by students at the back of the room. The lack of a positive response to outgroup members’ use of the minority language has been noted in the literature. Woolard found in an experiment with Catalan speakers that ‘outgroup members are not rewarded with increased solidarity for venturing to use the other [ingroup] language when it can be detected that they are outsiders...’ (Woolard, 1989: 123), although it was not clear from Woolard’s experiment whether outgroup members would be rewarded for switches to the ingroup language in actual conversation or not.

From the discussion of classroom practices above, it can be seen that Ceng’s use of Lao and Kmhmu in the classroom both resembles and differs from Saisana’s and Khamsuk’s. It resembles the other teachers’ language use in that Ceng likewise legitimises Lao in the classroom to a certain degree by using it for some of the relationships and activities most emblematic of that context. Like Saisana, when asked about the roles of the two languages, Ceng mentions the importance of Lao in the classroom due to its status as the language of wider communication:

A: Which language is more important in the classroom?
C: Lao.
A: Why is Lao more important?
C: Because it’s the common language [pha:sa: luam].
A: Of the country, or of what?
C: That’s right, of the country.

Yet while legitimising Lao in the classroom to some degree, Ceng, like Khamsuk, also challenges the centrality of Lao to classroom teaching and learning. He uses Kmhmu not only for backstage interactions, but for the teaching of curriculum content. Here Ceng’s
language practices diverge from Khamsuk’s: Ceng uses Khmu more extensively than
Khamsuk does in content teaching interactions, often including little or no Lao language
apart from the occasionally transferred word, phrase or sentence. Ceng also uses the L1 for
simple management interactions which could likewise be carried out in the L2. In fact, the
majority of communication in this classroom occurs in the L1. Such extensive use of
Khmu for all kinds of classroom tasks poses a significant counterbalance to discourses on
the centrality of Lao such as that articulated by Ceng in the quote above. It suggests a form
of lip-service to Lao as the language of the classroom, but a simultaneous reality of Khmu
dominance.

Apart from the dominance of Khmu in Ceng’s classroom, which distinguishes it somewhat
from the other two classrooms discussed here, this context is also distinguished by the
particular relationship of solidarity achieved through L1 use. Unlike the other two teachers,
Ceng is able to relate to the students as an insider and a mediator with the outside world.
His use of the mother tongue thus lends it value both as a language of classroom instruction
and a marker of shared identity.

8.4 Ceng’s language in the community

The discourses which Ceng articulates on the roles of Lao and Khmu in the classroom,
both in his teaching practice and his interview comments, parallel his language practices and
beliefs in relation to the wider community. In response to an interview question asking
whether Ceng thought everyone in Nalae should be able to speak Lao, he said:

My feeling is that I’d like everyone to know [Lao], for when they listen to
teachers, or to the news. If they know Lao it’s better. Some people don’t
understand [lit: can’t listen], so they can’t do things. Every day if you go to
work and you don’t know Lao, you won’t know how do develop yourself and
your family. If you go on [like that], you can only live off your mountain rice
fields and gardens and that’s all.
In making these comments, Ceng articulates a discourse on Lao as the language of modernization, or 'development' (kaːn phathanaː). This development is presented in opposition to the 'undeveloped' traditional Kmhmū practices of highland farming. This discourse will be further explored below; however, at this point it can be noted that it is consistent with the marking of those practices which are emblematic of classroom teaching as Lao. According to Ceng, in the community, Lao is the language of modern livelihood practices: those things which go beyond the familiar way of life of the Kmhmū village and give access to social and economic development. In the classroom, Lao is likewise the language of new forms of interaction (formalised teacher-student relationships) and new practices (routinized sitting and standing, written mathematical calculations and literacy74) which represent the shift from the traditional to the modern and give access to non-agrarian livelihoods.

Indeed, for Ceng the school is the site where the project of social and economic development begins. He describes how school students differ from previous generations, who did not go to school, in their knowledge of hygiene:

‘if they haven’t brushed their teeth and washed their faces, they don’t eat’

and in their knowledge of appropriate and moral behaviour:

‘People who have knowledge and skills, who have learned their lessons, they know how to speak correctly [i.e. express correct ideas] [kaːn pɑ:k kaːn vao man ko thːk tɔːŋ]... If they have knowledge [education], they’ll know right from wrong, know how to repay their moral debt to their parents...’

74 Although it was noted that most of the talk in Lao language lessons occurs in Kmhmū, those utterances which are most emblematic of the practice of literacy are made in Lao, for example the example ‘the vowel aː and the letter k is kaː’ given in section 8.3.2 above. This sentence structure, used in all letter combination exercises, almost always includes the Lao verbs ‘sai’ [put] and ‘pen’ [to be], (as well as the Lao words for ‘vowel’ and ‘letter’) rather than the Kmhmū equivalents ‘roː’ and ‘meh’.
According to Ceng, people who have passed through the education system will also be able to manage household resources and undertake commercial activities:

'In the past, if their parents had money, they didn’t know how to use it.... All they did was plant their mountain rice fields like this. If we [people with education] have financial resources, we know how to use them. We know how to change our [livelihood] activities, how to do things in the wider society. We know how to follow the wider society.

For Ceng, this contrasts with uneducated Kmhmu people, who are lax in managing household finances and morally reprehensible:

'If they [uneducated people] had money, they’d just leave it... Suppose our children don’t have knowledge [education], they’ll speak however they want to. Their parents don’t know right from wrong... Whether it’s right or wrong, they’ll get drunk, sometimes there’s even violence against parents.'

In sum, for Ceng education is the means of bringing social and moral development to Kmhmu people. For him, this development is distinctively Lao, not Kmhmu: it is achieved through the learning of Lao language and Buddhist (i.e. Lao) morality.

The association of linguistic group membership or language proficiency with degrees of moral and social development is common. Irvine and Gal explain that:

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75 Ceng uses the Lao words 'bun khun' [merit] twice in this discussion. This term refers to the Buddhist principle of good karma, according to which people accrue merit by doing good deeds and are then repaid for this merit in this life or the next. In the Lao context (and many others), it is a child’s duty to repay the merit of his/her parents. Because it is Buddhist, this principle is distinctively Lao, not Kmhmu. In fact no equivalent term exists in Kmhmu.
Participants' ideologies about language locate linguistic phenomena as part of, and evidence for, what they believe to be systematic behavioral, aesthetic, affective, and moral contrasts among the social groups indexed'. (Irvine and Gal, 2000: 37)

In the British context, Blackledge identifies an association in the political discourse between a lack of English language proficiency among South Asian migrants and 'social, cultural, or moral poverty' (Blackledge, 2004: 81).

In fact, the British have long associated the improvement of moral standards and thus general social development among South Asians with the learning of the English language, particularly through formal education. Benedict Anderson quotes from the 1834 'Minute on Education', produced by Thomas Babington Macaulay, the president of the Committee of Public Instruction in British Bengal. In Macaulay's words, the new, English education system he proposed would create 'a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinion, in morals and in intellect' (Anderson, 1983: 122, emphasis added).

Such a discourse is akin to the one Ceng articulates regarding the moral benefits of Lao language learning and of formal education. In his case it is uncertain whether this discourse is the remnant of colonial ideas on the value of the French language, transposed to Lao. However, it is certainly consistent with present-day official discourses on the link between Lao language, education, and social and moral development which were explored earlier in this thesis.

The analysis of Ceng's comments so far suggests that he places a high value on the role of Lao both in the classroom and in the wider community, while denigrating practices and characteristics which he identifies as Kmhmu. However, while Ceng does signal the importance of Lao in his classroom practice, and explicitly mentions in interviews the social (and personal) value of that language, these discourses are contradicted in his daily language
use both inside and outside the classroom. They are also contradicted in some of the comments Ceng makes later in the same interviews.

As was mentioned earlier, Ceng’s spouse is Kmhmu. His relatives are also all Kmhmu, as are most of his neighbours at the northern end of the district centre. Many of Ceng’s teaching colleagues in nearby villages are likewise Kmhmu, as are the Head and Deputy Head of the Nalae District Education Bureau (DEB) and many of the other staff there with whom Ceng interacts professionally. Of course the inhabitants of Ceng’s teaching village, with whom he interacts professionally and sometimes socially, are Kmhmu too. Despite his comments on the importance of Lao as the ‘common language’ and the language of development, Ceng only speaks Kmhmu with other Kmhmu people. This is a claim which he makes in interviews and which is supported by observation. As so many of the people he interacts with in his professional and personal life are Kmhmu, this means that Ceng speaks Kmhmu most of the time – even in interactions of an official nature such as meetings at the DEB.

This choice of code dependent on participants’ ingroup membership rather than settings or topics has been found in other contexts, for example Catalonia (Woolard, 1989) and Hungarian-speaking Austria (Gal, 1979). However, unlike the Austrian/Hungarian context investigated by Gal, this predominance of Kmhmu in Ceng’s regular interactions with others, whether they be of a personal or an official nature, is paralleled by the dominance of Kmhmu communication in his classroom. Ceng might signal the importance of Lao in the classroom and community by using it for particular words and phrases, or by paying lip-service to it when asked, but the reality of his communicative practice gives primacy to Kmhmu.

Furthermore, when Ceng reproduces discourses on the social role of Lao and on the socially and morally unacceptable behaviour of uneducated Kmhmu people, his tone is officious and his execution awkward (numbers in parentheses indicate length of pauses):
‘People who have knowledge and skills and have learned their lessons, they know how to speak correctly [express correct ideas]. They’re appropriate to – (3) as they say, appropriate to – (2) to the (3) (?). They’re appropriate to the views of – I mean appropriate to, to their work [viak].’

In the comment above, part of which was cited earlier in this section, Ceng pauses frequently, stumbles over words, repeats himself, and in the end settles for a word (‘viak’ = work) which is not appropriate to the register of his utterance and does not constitute an effective substitute for the word he was probably searching for, ‘policy’ [nanyoba:i], which is a common Lao collocation with ‘appropriate to’. In another example, Ceng makes use of several redundant word pairs and common collocations, which are underlined below:

‘How is [education] useful? In terms of usefulness, firstly if they serve the Party and the government, they serve the nation, serve the Party and the government. If we don’t do it [education] to serve the government, we’d stay at home, we wouldn’t know how to live and eat, how to speak and express things, know how to build and boost our family finances, or know how to show and teach our parents, brothers and sisters, know how to develop our own families. If we didn’t do the work of the Party and the government [i.e. education].’

Such word pairs are used in Lao as a marker of formal register and are a common feature of official speeches. Ceng’s excessive (and thus rather inelegant) use of them here gives an impression of formality and political correctness rather than genuineness.

This contrasts with the informal, fluent, and natural tone of comments on the value of Kinhmu culture and language made in conversation at the end of the same interview:
A: What do you think - with language mixing in Nalae, in another twenty years how will it be? The same as before, or will people mix more than before?

C: With mixing, in another twenty years it'll probably all be Lao words. The old people will die, and as they go most people will speak Lao.

A: Will that be a shame?

C: It sure will be a shame. It’ll be a waste of knowledge.

A: I might think it’s a shame, but a lot of people don’t think that. Some people would say it doesn’t matter, a language is a language and that’s that.

C: That’s right, some people think that way... I think it’s a shame. It’s our parents’ language, our customs. If we don’t promote them, then it’ll all be lost. We’ll mix with this and mix with that, and upland Lao [Kmhmu] customs, especially singing and speaking and dancing, if our children don’t use them, our customs will disappear.

The difference in style between these examples suggests that Ceng’s articulation of Lao-centric discourses may be more a mouthing of ideas which are external to him than a candid expression of his deeper personal beliefs. Perhaps Ceng is one of those educated Kmhmu he is referring to when he says that Lao education teaches people to ‘express correct ideas’.

Or perhaps Ceng’s discourses on language are as multiple and ambivalent as his own identities: he is at once a teacher, and as such represents the Lao State’s development project, and a member of a minority culture who values his cultural and linguistic heritage. This should not surprise us: the multiplicity of identities lived by minority group members has been well noted in the literature. Woolard (1989), for example,
explores the ways in which Catalan people negotiate dual identities according to the contradictory definitions provided by the local socio-political order and the Spanish State, while Hornberger suggests that:

[Identity is always multiple and overlapping so that one may feel oneself to be Peruvian..., Quechua..., woman (or man), and peasant farmer (or teacher or student) simultaneously. (Hornberger, 2000: 195)]

Similarly, Kroskrity argues that the example of the Tewa in Arizona:

provides evidence of the inadequacy of the reification of the individual that seems to be foundational to a Barthian notion of ethnic boundary maintenance and that

Barthian imagery seems excessively brittle and inappropriate in its emphasis on a single, continuously ascribed ethnic identity. A model based on a repertoire of identities better fits the pattern of intranidividual variation...

(Kroskrity, 2000a: 340)

With reference to the Lao context, Pholsena explains how the ethnic minority individuals she worked with:

locate themselves in both cultural spheres, ethnic and non-ethnic Lao...

[They are exhibiting a dual ethnicity, the Majority’s and the Minority’s.

(Pholsena, 2006: 197 - 198)]

The shift toward understanding identity as multiple is essential to our understanding of the apparently contradictory discourses articulated by Ceng, and is explained succinctly by Canagarajah:
There is an evolving consensus in orientating to selfhood as multiple, conflictual, negotiated, and evolving. We have traveled far from the assumptions up to the 1980s, when the self was treated as static, unitary, discrete, and given. The following assumptions...are now widely shared in the field of applied linguistics:

- that the self is shaped considerably by language and discourses;
- that the self is composed of multiple subjectivities, deriving from the heterogeneous codes, registers, and discourses that are found in society;
- that these subjectivities enjoy unequal status and power, deriving from differential positioning in socio-economic terms;
- that, because of these inequalities, there is conflict within and between subjects;
- that, in order to find coherence and empowerment, the subject has to negotiate these competing identities and subject positions in relation to the changing discursive and material contexts. (Canagarajah, 2004a: 267)

Ceng's use of Kmhmu in the community and classroom should not only be understood in terms of his own (multiple) values and orientations (although of course these were not developed in isolation either), but by pressure to conform to values held by many others in the Kmhmu community. When answering a question on whether he speaks Lao or Kmhmu in his teaching village, Ceng says:

Most of the time I only speak Kmhmu... I don't use [Lao]. If I use Lao, they'll say I'm stuck-up [uat], that I'm someone who's stuck-up, meaning I've forgotten my roots [ei:m sa:t’]...

76 This expression has a broader meaning than the English translation given here. 'Li:m' means 'forget' and the word 'sa:t’' is listed in Kerr's 1972 Lao-English Dictionary as having the
This is not to suggest that Ceng’s own ideas on the use of Lao among Kmhmu people are so different. In fact he expresses a similar idea himself when asked about his use of Lao and Kmhmu in the classroom:

Most of the time, if they’re Kmhmu too then speaking Lao doesn’t seem right [bo: khi:].

Negative attitudes to the use of the dominant language when speaking with other members of a minority group have been noted elsewhere. For example, referring to Parisian youths Doran notes the following:

'While acknowledging the need to use *le français soutenu* (elevated French) in more formal settings (such as job interviews and administrative encounters), the minority youths in the study accused friends who used too much of this upper-class language of *se la raconter bourge* (putting on bourgeois airs), an expression which connoted acting inauthentically, that is, trying to be something one was not. (Doran, 2004: 315)

The negative valuing of Kmhmu assimilation to Lao cultural and linguistic norms was observed among Kmhmu people in Nalae on several occasions. In one case, a high-ranking local Kmhmu official held a Buddhist ceremony at his home despite the fact that he and other Kmhmu people in Nalae have never practiced Buddhism. Others in the district centre were heard to say that it was pretentious and that he was ‘trying to act like a Lao person’ [ja:k het khi: khon l:ao]. On another occasion, in a conversation between two Kmhmu sisters-in-law, both local professionals, and myself, one of them said that Kmhmu parents out in the villages were lax in looking after their children, not like ‘us lowland Lao’ [lao

following meanings, among others: ‘nation, country, race, group, tribe, pedigree, incarnation, caste, species’. It thus denotes one’s group affiliation as well as one’s personal circumstances as having been born in this particular incarnation.
lum hao]. Her sister-in-law laughed, and later told me that the other woman likes to fancy herself a lowland Lao, but she’s ‘Kmhmu like the rest of us, born and bred up in the mountains!’ [Lao ko: pen kmhmu ni: le. Bao ko:t mi:ang no:n ko: ju: phu: ju: do:il]77.

The most important issue raised by Ceng’s comments and by these examples is that despite (or perhaps because of) the fact that Lao is the common national language and a marker of social advancement, there is strong pressure when interacting with other Kmhmu people to visibly maintain one’s Kmhmu identity. At times this pressure is resisted by those who choose to adopt a Lao-icized identity as a means of social advancement, but this generally results in negative reactions and can be detrimental to relationships. The way in which Ceng reconciles his recognition of Lao as the common language on the one hand with the pressure to signal his shared Kmhmu identity on the other is by marking highly significant classroom practices as Lao and paying lip-service to the social importance of Lao, while carrying out the majority of communication in the classroom and the community in Kmhmu.

8.5 Conclusion

Throughout this chapter, it has become clear that Ceng establishes a link between the Lao language and the classroom while simultaneously using the students’ mother tongue for the majority of classroom interaction both on and off stage, for interpersonal, management, metalinguistic and content teaching purposes. Like the language practices described in the previous case studies, Ceng’s practices constitute only a partial reproduction of official discourses on the centrality of Lao, the secondary role of minority languages, the naturalness of Lao dominance, and the role of Lao as the language of national development. They also lead us to question the State’s official representations of its own agency as compared to the passive receptivity of ethnic minority peoples. While minority teachers may openly voice government discourses on language and development, or may signal the importance of Lao.

77 These comments were made to me in Lao as this was my usual medium of communication with people in the district centre due to my higher proficiency in Lao than in Kmhmu.
in institutionalised education, they are making language choices in the classroom and community which testify to their own agency to be creative within the structures that constrain them. This agency will be explored in greater depth in the following chapter.
9 Conclusion

9.1 Looking back on official discourses

The aim of the first part of the research presented here was to identify and explore official discourses on ethnic minority cultures, languages and education in Laos. The term 'official discourses' is used here to refer to the discourses articulated in policy and planning documents, in commentaries by their primary producers and consumers at the ministerial level, and in the professional actions of those producers and consumers. This is consistent with contemporary views of language policy and planning which see the locus of planning as residing in formal documents (policy as text), in the accompanying discussions and debates (policy as discourse); and in the behaviour and activities of significant individuals and institutions (policy as performance) (Lo Bianco, 2008).

In order to carry out this exploratory project, a variety of key documents including the Lao constitution, the education law, and Party decrees and recommendations were examined alongside interviews with key Ministry of Education staff. Observations undertaken during several periods of residency in Lao PDR supplied the ‘policy as performance’ perspective. This process afforded insight into official discourses in the wider sense of the term ‘discourse’; that is, not only as text but as social practice (Fairclough, 1995).

From this process, several discourses emerged as dominant in the official domain. These included:

- The discourse of interethnic solidarity and equality: this public discourse was identified as prevalent from the time of the Communist revolution.
- The discourse of 'selective diversity': this is concurrent with the above discourse. Ethnic diversity is celebrated only as far as minority beliefs and practices conform to ethnic Lao standards of worth.
• The discourse of Lao as the language of culture and development as compared to minority languages as secondary and instrumental.

• The discourse of the State as agent and ethnic minorities as recipients of change, improvement and development.

• The discourse of the naturalness of Lao cultural and linguistic domination over ethnic minorities.

• The discourse of ethnic diversity as a problem.

The research thus identified a tension in official discourses between multiethnicity as a national asset on the one hand and ethnic Lao centrality and eventual predominance as natural and desirable on the other.

Tensions in language policy have been theorised in terms of an inherent tendency for policy to include overt and covert dimensions (Schiffman, 2006). According to this analysis, language policy includes the overt and explicit statements made in officially recognized texts and the de jure, top-down decisions which accompany them, as well as the covert, 'implicit, unwritten...de facto, grass-roots and unofficial ideas and assumptions, which can influence the outcomes of policy making just as emphatically and definitively as the more explicit decisions' (Schiffman, 2006: 112). In the Lao case, however, this dichotomous analysis may be overly simplistic.

Firstly, there is the problem of identifying policies as exclusively overt or covert. In the written policy texts we find both the discourse of interethnic equality and the discourse of ethnic Lao centrality stated overtly, although the discourse of Lao centrality is also articulated covertly in the texts. The constitution and Party decrees explicitly state the equal status of ethnic groups and the Party documents call for bilingual education, which might lead us to assume that interethnic equality is the overt policy orientation (although the call for bilingual education is not necessarily due to an orientation to interethnic equality). However, the Education Law stipulates the central role of Lao and the Lao Front for
National Construction text explicitly describes the backwardness of minority cultural practices. This might suggest that the overt policy orientation is toward Lao linguistic and cultural centrality. To further complicate this, while the Constitution states the equality of all ethnic groups (interethnic equality = overt), it does not allow for their languages to be used in institutional contexts (Lao centrality = overt).

A second and related problem with the overt-covert analysis is that it links overt policies with the State apparatus (‘de jure’, ‘written’) and covert ones with individuals or organizations involved in their implementation (‘de facto’, ‘unwritten’). However, as we have seen, if we are to apply the overt-covert distinction we must recognize both elements even at the top levels of official policy making (and for that matter at the grass-roots level of classroom teaching too).

The tension between interethnic equality and ethnic Lao centrality in the Lao government’s public discourse is perhaps better conceived of in terms of the conflicting goals of the nation state: on the one hand, inclusion of diverse elements and on the other, the construction of a unified national identity. This has been explained with reference to the Lao case as the tension between the process of ‘reifying diversity’ on the one hand, by which ethnicity is promoted but controlled within the national paradigm, and the process of ‘homogenising’ on the other, by which ethnic difference is suppressed (Pholsena, 2002: 194). Other analyses of the Lao context identify a tension between civic nationalism on the one hand, which includes members of all ethnicities as citizens ‘regardless of ethnic affiliation’, and ethnic nationalism on the other, which constructs a national identity built on the grand mythical past of the majority ethnic group (Evans, 1999a: 181-182).

With specific reference to language planning, such tensions have been described in the South American Andean context as the paradox between ‘assimilation and pluralism’ (Hornberger, 2000), and in the American context as the tension between ‘unum and pluribus’ (drawing on the language of the American State itself) (Lo Bianco 2001 in
Hornberger, 2003b: 333). Such descriptions are based on the recognition that differing and conflicting agendas in language policy are not only the result of disparities between the aims of different stakeholders, but of disparity in the aims of the State itself.

In the tension between these conflicting official discourses in Laos, it seems that ethnic Lao cultural and linguistic centrality prevail in language policy and more generally, now more than ever. It was made clear in chapter four that discourses of 'selective diversity', of Lao as the language of national development, and of the state as agent are articulated implicitly even in texts which explicitly articulate a discourse of interethnic equality and solidarity. It was also demonstrated that the policy which serves as the working document for language-in-education planning, the Education Law, aims to reproduce the centrality and dominance of the Lao language.

With reference to Lao government discourses more generally, others have explained the origin of the discourse of interethnic equality as a means of garnering ethnic minority support for the Communist revolution (Pholsena, 2002: 193) and argued that with the increased stability of the state, the Lao government has responded less to the demands of ethnic minorities (Evans, 2002: 212) and proliferated a cultural-nationalism centered on the Lao ethnic group (Evans, 1999a). These analyses are consistent with the analyses presented here.

The analysis of policy documents presented in this thesis thus resonates with other analyses of state discourses in the Lao context and with some analyses of policy tensions elsewhere. However, this is the first study to have examined the Lao policy documents to such a level of detail, the first to have focused on ethnic minority language and education in Laos, and the first to have considered the Lao policy from the perspective of the education officials engaged in writing and implementing it.
The next questions to address are how the various discourses in Lao language policy are translated on the ground and what the relationship is between official policy and local practice.

9.2 Looking back on classroom language: policy and practice

The aim of the second part of the research presented here was to examine language practices in ethnic minority classrooms and to determine whether and how they reproduced, adapted, or contested the official discourses already identified. This was done by observing, recording, transcribing and analyzing lessons in three primary school classrooms in a predominantly Kmhmu district, and interviewing each classroom teacher. In addition to this, ethnographic observation of the local community and several other classrooms in the district was carried out.

A common sense assumption and one made by many Ministry of Education officials is that official discourses are reproduced — especially by lowland Lao teachers — on the ground. This would seem to make sense partly due to most of those teachers’ own identification with the majority culture, but also due to the practical constraints placed on them by a Lao language curriculum, Lao language materials, and lack of training in bilingual teaching methods. However, this research has demonstrated for the first time in the Lao context that while teachers do reproduce the official discourses through particular classroom language practices, this reproduction is never total and in some cases is eclipsed by strong adaptations and contestations.

9.2.1 Classroom case study one

In the first case study, Saisana was seen to reproduce the official discourses through much of her classroom language practice. However, this reproduction was accompanied by an acquiescence to her students’ use of the mother tongue grounded in Saisana’s belief in the naturalness of minority language maintenance. Her students’ uses of Kmhmu contrasted sharply with the roles and values attached to minority languages at the national level.
The discourse of Lao ethnic and linguistic centrality is expressed implicitly in Saisana’s teaching and explicitly in her interview comments. It is articulated in Saisana’s use of Lao for the great majority of classroom communication, her use of Lao for ‘on-stage’ interactions and Kmhmu for ‘backstage’ ones, her rejection of Kmhmu responses to content teaching questions, and her relegation of Kmhmu to an interpersonal and marginal role in the classroom. It is expressed in interview comments where Saisana refers to Lao as the official language (literally the ‘central language’ phaas kaang in Lao), the language which should be spoken with the teacher, and the language of wider communication in the community. The last of these comments is especially significant in that it does not reflect the reality of intercultural communication in Nalae, which in fact occurs in both Kmhmu and Lao, but an ideal.

In contrast to this, Lao is not maintained as the central language of classroom communication by the students. The students in Saisana’s class speak Kmhmu amongst themselves at all times and with the teacher at most times. Kmhmu is not simply a marker of interpersonal solidarity among students or between students and teacher, but is used by students both for the ‘on-stage’ (content teaching and learning) and ‘backstage’ (managerial and interpersonal) work of the classroom. Rather than associating Kmhmu with the in-group village community and Lao with the school as institution, students use Kmhmu both to support and assist their peers and at times to impose the institutional norms of the school on them. Nor is Kmhmu only used for reasons of low Lao language proficiency. It is used at times when a student would be equally able to use Lao and it would be more convenient to do so. The students in this classroom accord Kmhmu a more central role than Lao, at times quite purposefully, in contestation of the teacher’s preferences and in contradiction to the official policy.

Despite her preference for Lao as the language of the classroom, Saisana acquiesces to the students’ almost exclusive use of Kmhmu and characterizes mother tongue persistence in the
classroom and community as natural. It is in this regard that her language practice (policy as performance) departs from the official discourses (policy as text, and to some degree policy as discourse). Saisana does not scold or impose punishments for the use of Kmhmu with her or between students, although scolding and punishment for other reasons form a part of her regular teaching repertoire. Nor does she refuse absolutely to respond to Kmhmu utterances by the students. Although she maintains Lao as the central language in her own classroom communication (with very occasional diversions into Kmhmu), she resigns herself to the students' maintenance of Kmhmu as their central language.

While officials in the Ministry of Education claim that minority languages are merely secondary and instrumental in education and diminish in importance after the first year of schooling, Saisana recognizes that for the students in her class, Kmhmu is of primary importance as a language of engagement with the curriculum. Where the minority and education policies cast the State as the agent in the development of minority peoples, Saisana allows minority students themselves to have some agency in choosing at least the language of their process of integration into the Lao State. Finally, while education officials explain the naturalness of minority languages' decline and eventual death in the struggle for national development, Saisana describes the naturalness of minority peoples' choice to speak their own language, even in the primary institution of social and economic development: the school. As she says: 'it's still their language, you see'.

9.2.2 Classroom case study two

Like Saisana, Khamsuk reproduces a discourse of Lao centrality in the classroom to some degree. In his case, this is done through the use of Lao for lesson and activity frames, thereby giving tasks the appearance of having been completed in Lao; the reformulation of Kmhmu utterances into Lao in order to mark them as final and official; and the use of Lao for school discourse related items and routine classroom language, thus associating classroom specific topics and behaviors with the Lao language.
However, in contrast to policy discourses on the centrality of Lao and the secondary, instrumental role of Kmhmu, and in contrast to Saisana’s particular adaptation of those discourses, Khamsuk accords a crucial role to the Kmhmu language in the classroom and beyond. He uses Kmhmu not only for the interpersonal reasons which have been identified in much of the literature, and not only for occasional interpersonal or management purposes like Saisana, but for key content teaching such as the explanation and elaboration of curriculum content. In doing this, Khamsuk is not only allowing Kmhmu to take a central role in the parallel classroom discourse of his students, as does Saisana, but to be central in his own classroom discourse. In fact, the vast majority of communication in this classroom— including teacher talk—is carried out in Kmhmu, rendering Kmhmu the real language of most teaching and learning here and Lao a rarely achieved ideal.

As this comment suggests, it is not Khamsuk’s ideals which are so different from the policy discourses or for that matter from Saisana’s. All of them recognize Lao as the ideal language of classroom communication. Rather, it is the pragmatic and open attitude that accompanies Khamsuk’s ideals which distinguishes him from the others discussed above. While policy makers and teachers such as Saisana accede to mother tongue use only as an occasional and temporary measure in the very first stages of schooling, adhering strongly to their belief in the centrality of Lao, Khamsuk maintains a Lao language presence in the classroom while simultaneously recognizing Kmhmu use as a strong and persistent need into the middle and upper primary grades.

Khamsuk’s pragmatic approach is perhaps grounded in an openness to cultural and linguistic diversity which also contrasts with the policy discourses and with Saisana’s beliefs and practices. Where policy makers represent ethnic and linguistic diversity as a problem which will eventually die out, and where Saisana recognizes the persistence of ethnic minority languages as a natural process but her own role only as witness, Khamsuk actively participates in the maintenance of ethnic and linguistic diversity in Nalae. He does this by
engaging in Kmhmu livelihood practices and social activities and by speaking Kmhmu with his neighbors and friends. Perhaps more significantly, he does so by speaking Kmhmu with his students despite ideological pressure to do otherwise.

9.2.3 Classroom case study three

The third classroom teacher considered here, Ceng, maintains a Lao language presence in the classroom which marks that language as linked specifically with the institutional teaching and learning context. He does this by using Lao for the most routine of classroom language and for items which are particular to school discourse, and by carrying out some explicit Lao language teaching. Such practices are unsurprising in relation to the literature, which notes the usually central role of the L2 and ‘annotative’ or social role of the L1, and in relation to the practices of the other teachers included in this study, and seem to amount to a reproduction of the official discourses on the centrality of the Lao language in education.

However, Ceng’s use of Lao is minimal: he allocates an even more significant role to Kmhmu than Saisana and Khamsuk do. Communication in this classroom is carried out almost exclusively in Kmhmu by both teacher and students, even during Lao language lessons; Kmhmu is used for content teaching, classroom management, and metalinguistic work as well as for establishing interpersonal solidarity; and the mother tongue is used even when comprehension of the Lao equivalent is probable.

The language practices observed here can be described as signaling Lao status while maintaining Kmhmu dominance. These practices may be the product of Ceng’s attempts to balance adherence to official discourses of Lao centrality in education on the one hand and his particular teaching circumstances on the other. This is not unlike the other two teachers presented in this study: all three teachers must seek to reconcile a belief in the importance of Lao in the classroom with the greater pedagogical efficacy of using Kmhmu with the students. However, unlike the other two teachers, Ceng must also reconcile adherence to
official discourses with issues around his identity as a Kmhmu person. These include the greater naturalness of using Kmhmu with other native Kmhmu speakers, and the tendency for Kmhmu people to negatively sanction use of Lao amongst themselves as a form of pretension.

Also unlike the other two teachers, Ceng is in a position to act as cultural and linguistic mediator for his students due to his inside knowledge and his personal experience of education as a minority group member. These conditions may provide Ceng with a greater motivation to contradict policy dictates on the language of education in comparison to Saisana and Khamsuk.

Another area in which Ceng appears to negotiate a path between official discourses and local ones is on the topic of language, education and development. It was seen in chapter four that official policies and their makers identify Lao as the language of national development, refer to minority customs or traditions as 'backwards' and 'restrictive', and understand minority languages to be destined for extinction. Ceng’s use of Lao in the classroom signals his association between the Lao language and institutionalized education, and his interview comments draw a direct link between language, education, and social and economic development. His interview comments also explicitly state the backwardness and moral reprehensibility of Kmhmu people who have not participated in institutionalized education. In this regard, Ceng appears to reproduce official discourses on language, culture and development in toto.

However, it was also seen that while Ceng does mark the significance of Lao in the classroom, the language can hardly be considered central to his teaching practice.

Furthermore, it was noted that Ceng’s expression when commenting on the backwardness of Kmhmu people was hesitant and faltering: it appeared to be a careful but rather unsuccessful impersonation of official voices. In contrast, he spoke fluently and candidly on the importance of maintaining Kmhmu language and culture in future generations. Furthermore,
Ceng’s actual language use in the classroom and community are consistent with his comments on the importance of Kmhmu maintenance. Here again, despite his apparent articulation of official discourses, a deeper reading of Ceng’s comments and observation of his behavior indicates that overall he contradicts rather than reproduces those discourses.

It may be that while Ceng explicitly articulates government discourses on the central role of Lao in education and more widely in social development, the reality of Kmhmu dominance for practical and interpersonal reasons leaves these ideologies for the most part unrealised through his practice. Alternatively, perhaps Ceng is divided between his identity as teacher on the one hand and minority group member on the other, and this double identity is reflected in his double articulation of discourses, although ultimately it is his social ties as a Kmhmu man which predominate. Certainly the multiple nature of identity has been recognized in the literature. Chick, for example, writes that

‘Each individual and each group has identities that are diverse, provisional, often overlapping and even contradictory because, through their discourse, interlocutors... position themselves and one another (and/or the groups they belong to) as participants in a wide range of different and not necessarily compatible story lines.’ (Chick, 2002: 463)

Whatever the motivation, Ceng cannot be said to fully, or even substantially reproduce official discourses in his teaching practice. We can’t call Lao ‘central’ in his case when it is barely present in the classroom, and we can’t call it ‘natural’ as for Ceng it’s the opposite of natural.

The three case studies summarised above constitute the first detailed examination of ethnic minority classroom language practices in the Lao PDR. They demonstrate that while teachers’ and students’ practices may be consistent with official assumptions to some degree, in fact this consistency is often minimal. They also demonstrate that the classroom language practices examined here do not only contradict assumptions (and requirements)
within the Lao Ministry of Education, but contradict some of the evidence from other multilingual classroom contexts around the world. This serves to caution us against making our own assumptions about the nature of language use in similar but unfamiliar contexts and suggests that we adopt more dynamic understanding of language-in-education policy and planning which considers classroom practice closely.

9.3 Theorizing the policy-practice relationship

9.3.1 Rethinking policy

The discussion of policy in this thesis has used the term to refer to official documents and measures originating with government agencies. Certainly it is these forces which create the situation in which teachers and students work on a daily basis: the content of classroom study, the language of the curriculum and materials, the training (or lack of training) of the teacher, the number of students in the class, and so on. However, the details of how content is taught and in what language, and in places such as Nalae, even whether and when content is taught and whether and when that is done in the national language, are matters ultimately decided by each teacher.

For this reason, we can expand our notion of policy to include those decisions made by teachers in response to directives coming from the top down and to the particular circumstances of their practice. The significance of teacher decision making has been noted in the literature (c.f. Cummins, 1986) and has led some researchers to use the term ‘teacher policymaking’ (e.g. Skilton-Sylvestor, 2003). Elsewhere, the idea has been expressed in terms of policy ‘enactment’ (Davis, 1994) and policy ‘performance’ (Lo Bianco, 2008). These conceptualizations all provide an effective means for recognizing at once the significance of teacher decision making and the agency of teachers in shaping their classroom practice.

A feature of teacher policymaking is that, as we have seen, it frequently conflicts with and contests official policy. Canagarajah writes:
There is considerable policy formulation and institutionalization of linguistic practices at the other end of the policy spectrum — that is, local communities and contexts. In interpersonal and classroom relationships, marginalized subjects are resisting established policies, constructing alternative practices that exist parallel to the dominant policies and, sometimes, initiating changes that transform unequal relationships... (Canagarajah, 2006: 154)

This policy formulation and institutionalization constitutes what Hornberger has called ‘language planning from the bottom up’ (Hornberger 1996 in ibid), whereby approaches to multilingual education are determined by those engaged in the education process themselves.

9.3.2 Official policy and teacher policy: Conceptualizing the divide

The disparity between official policy and teacher policy can be understood in terms of what Blommaert, following Silverstein (1998), describes as the difference between ‘linguistic communities’ and ‘speech communities’ (Blommaert, 2006: 243). A linguistic community is that community produced by and reproducing the normative discourses of the State. That is, it is a community of members claiming a linguistic commonality such as the speaking of English as the national language. A speech community, on the other hand, is a community of members who use an actual form of speech whether it is consistent with the hegemonic discourses of the State or not.

It should be noted here that the term ‘speech community’ is not being used in its traditional sense to conjure the image of a singular unit, bounded and situated in a particular geographical location. This notion has been criticized in the literature for oversimplifying the complex ways in which linguistic practices travel across loci and speakers, especially in an age of globalization (c.f. Rampton, 1999b, Hill, 1999). It is used rather to refer to groups who share, to some degree, local practices — call them overlapping communities, or unbounded communities, aggregations of speakers, or even linguistic cultures — in contrast
to the ideal national linguistic community produced in official discourse and reproduced by the majority with whom it resonates.

In the Lao case, the Party recognizes the presence of 49 languages in the country, and any Lao person would acknowledge the ethnolinguistic diversity of the population—it is the stuff of many a joke. The Lao linguistic community as created by the State and reproduced by the majority ethnic group within that State is then multilingual (though less multilingual than it is in reality, with well over 100 languages).

However, in this linguistic community Lao figures as the dominant language, the medium of communication in official contexts, and the lingua franca for communication between members of diverse ethnic groups. Membership of this community must thus be very limited. As we have seen, in parts of the country Lao is not dominant at all. In fact, the ‘minority’ language may be the mother tongue of the majority of people. It may also be spoken in official contexts such as government offices and schools, and may serve as the lingua franca between ethnic groups. Many speakers in such places do not participate in the linguistic community as regulated by the State but form speech communities with practices unaccounted for in official discourses and at least partially unregulated by them, although of course the orientations and affiliations of individuals in such places are varied, multiple and complex.

The existence of such ‘speech communities’ despite the Lao government’s attempts at cultural and linguistic integration of the population has implications for our understanding of the agency of local actors within the structures of the State. Such agency was unaccounted for in the theories of Bourdieu, which gained widespread popularity in the social sciences from the 1980s. Bourdieu’s theory of symbolic domination (Bourdieu, 1977a, 1977b, 1991) addressed the way in which minority cultures and languages are devalued in favor of the majority. According to Bourdieu, this devaluing is grounded in the economic dominance of one culture/language but becomes generalized to a symbolic hierarchy in which the
economically dominant culture/language is represented as inherently superior. This symbolic order is naturalised through the institutions of the state, most particularly the school, then reproduced by minority people themselves, who thereby participate in their own symbolic domination.

Critical analyses such as Bourdieu’s have been described as ‘pessimistic, deterministic and reproductive’, casting people as ‘trapped’ in particular configurations of power (Pennycook, 1999). In contrast to the representation of minority peoples as powerless to challenge the subjugation of their cultures and languages, instead participating in this subjugation themselves, more recent literature has emphasized the tendency of minority individuals and groups to creatively resist and adapt the discourses of the majority. In his introduction to a 1999 volume on linguistic styling, Rampton describes the papers as ‘looking...at the intricate ways in which people use language to index social group affiliations in situations where the acceptability and legitimacy of their doing so is open to question’ (Rampton, 1999b). In an earlier collection, Martin-Jones and Heller devote one issue to ‘the reproduction of hegemonic relations’ and another to ‘the analysis of ways in which participants contest the legitimacy of discursive practices, and hence the prevailing symbolic order’ (Martin-Jones and Heller, 1996: 4-5). In an overview of language policy research based on the critical theories of Bourdieu among others, Tollefson describes how ‘despite language policies favoring dominant groups, oppressed ethnolinguistic groups may exercise resistance by creating and sustaining alternative social hierarchies in which “non-standard” languages are crucial’ (Tollefson, 2006: 48).

The shift away from structure and toward agency has been especially strong in the field of code switching research, with even relatively early work challenging the theories of Bourdieu. In an overview of code switching studies, Woolard (1985) demonstrated that minority languages and cultures may be positively valued in contrast to dominant discourses not only when the rules of the ‘linguistic marketplace’ are suspended (to use Bourdieu’s
wording), but in alternate marketplaces, as a means of expressing solidarity and reaffirming minority identities. This view has been echoed in the work of Heller (1994, , 1995b), who describes the ‘interstices’ which provide a space for resistance in bilingual schools; of Lin (Lin, 1999), who describes the ‘transformation of social worlds’ in non-mother tongue medium classrooms; and of Hornberger (2000), who describes minority language students and teachers as ‘bricoleurs’, transforming stigmatized social identities, to give but a few examples.

The present study adds to the body of code switching literature which challenges the hegemony of Bourdieu’s theories. It provides another example of the creative ways in which members of minority groups transform and resist dominant discourses on the value of their languages, this time from a previously unstudied context: Kmhmu schools in Laos.

However, the conclusions from this study go beyond those of the work mentioned above. As was noted in the three case studies presented here, most previous studies have demonstrated the value of minority languages in the ‘alternate marketplace’ of interpersonal solidarity. The use of minority languages has also been described as ‘surreptitious’ (Canagarajah, 2006: 160), occurring in ‘unofficial and off-task contexts’ (ibid), in ‘hidden interstices’ and ‘marginalised’ spaces (Martin-Jones and Heller, 1996: 7-8), on ‘contrasting dimensions’ (Woolard, 1985) and for ‘back-stage’ purposes (Arthur, 1996).

This study presents non-standard speech practices which contest official discourses not only for interpersonal reasons and in marginal spaces but openly in the ‘standard marketplace’ of official on-stage curriculum teaching and learning in the classroom. It has demonstrated that while minority languages may be useful in ‘strengthening bonds of collective identity (Luykx in Hornberger, 2000: 192), this is not the only - or even the primary - rationale for their use in some educational contexts. The research presented here is thus significant in broadening our conceptualizations of the possibilities of minority language use in contestation of the discourses of the State. It suggests that we should continue to examine
language practices both for their own sake and as a means of gaining a fuller understanding of the nature of structure and agency.

Another issue highlighted by this study which has implications for theories of language and the State is the diversity of linguistic practice even among teachers within similar contexts and with similar conditions. Although each of the case study classrooms presented here was different in several regards and the study was not intended to be comparative in a controlled sense, the classrooms had much in common. They were all in the same geographical area, with speakers of the same languages, students of the same or similar ages and backgrounds, teachers of roughly equal training and experience, and for two of the teachers roughly equal minority language proficiency. In two cases the classrooms were even of the same appearance and of equal distance and accessibility from the district centre. Yet teachers’ practices ranged from almost no use of the mother tongue to almost exclusive use of the mother tongue.

Such diversity is noted in the work of Skilton-Sylvester (2003) on ESL classrooms in America. She explains that differences across institutions are allowed by America’s ‘loosely coupled’ (Tollefson, 1984) policy context, where there is no single policy enforced by a central authority, but various language policy-making institutions at different levels, with various orientations to minority languages and bilingual education. Martin-Jones and Heller (1996) also discuss ‘loosely coupled’ structures, here taking the concept from Giddens (1984). They explain that where ‘there may be multiple centers and sources of power and prestige, and a variety of loosely connected structures and processes’ there is more ‘room for practices of resistance’ (1996: 7), and where structures are more highly coherent, there is less.

However in other studies, code switching researchers have found significant variety in the practices of teachers even within the same institutions and even when those institutions are governed by strongly prescriptive and coherent policies. For example, Zentella found
differences in the amount and type of L1 use in officially bilingual classrooms in the USA where the school policy stipulated clearly the manner and extent of English and Spanish use (1981: 328), and Lin (Lin, 1999), found considerable differences in L1 use across Hong Kong classrooms where State and school policies unambiguously favored exclusive use of the L2.

The present study has found strikingly different degrees of mother tongue use, and thus of resistance to or pragmatic adaptation of official discourses, even where the context is one of coherent and strongly articulated policies originating with one central authority. Although there are contradictions between the explicit statements of different policy documents at the highest level of government, it is only one of those documents – the Education Law – which is used as a working policy document to inform language-in-education planning.

Furthermore, the teachers in this study were only familiar with one government policy directive: the strong and explicit statement of the status of Lao as the only medium of education. It was this policy which was promulgated and reinforced by the provincial and district education authorities, which have no legal power to work independently of the central, national level government. In fact, it might be difficult to find a system more centralized and tightly controlled than the Lao one and national, provincial and local structures more tightly integrated than in this Communist model.

It thus seems reasonable to suggest that it is not the degree of coherence or laxness of State structures including language policy that allows room for resistance, or for diversity in the ways in which minority language speakers resist dominant discourses. Rather, it appears that no matter how consistent the policy appears to teachers and how integrated policy-making and implementation agencies are, when the policy is strongly out of step with the needs of teachers and students in schools it will be resisted or adapted to some degree. However, the nature of that resistance or adaptation will take different forms as teachers are guided by
their own understandings and preferences rather than by an appropriate policy directive or by training in the effective use of the mother tongue.

9.4 Language-in-education planning in Laos: Looking back, looking forward

The present study does not only make a contribution to language policy and code switching research, and to discussions of language and the State more broadly. It is also the first academic study which can make informed recommendations on language-in-education planning in Laos. Whereas in the past Lao language-planners and educators could only rely on studies of similar contexts around the world (from which the present context has now been shown to differ) or on assumptions about the responses of Lao teachers to the Lao language-in-education policies (assumptions which in the Lao ministries and the Lao development literature were untrue), we now have a detailed picture of classroom language use in an upland, ethnic minority district of Laos in relation to the official policies.

Perhaps the issue to have arisen from this research which has the most direct implications for language policy-makers in Laos is the enormous mismatch between the official policy and what occurs in classrooms on the ground in this context. The mismatch between policy and practice is a common situation in countries around the world, and is described in Blommaert’s theory of linguistic community and speech community discussed above. It is certainly due at least in part to the ideal of the monolingual state which arose in 19th century Europe as part of nationalistic claims to independence and from there was transplanted in colonial (then post-colonial) settings (c.f. Lo Bianco, 2005).

Even in the European context of two centuries ago, monolingualism was generally not a social reality within the national boundaries in which it was promoted. However, in colonial and post-colonial contexts it tended to be even further from reality, as the borders of colonial states had been drawn according to the politics of colonization rather than along ethnic lines. Of course, this was further complicated by the fact that the monolingualism
being imposed in (post) colonial contexts was often in a foreign (colonial) language. Now, in an age of globalization and mass-migration, ethnic diversity within states is even greater and the monolingual ideal even further from reality.

The ideal does persist, however, not least in the Lao PDR. Despite the Lao government’s rhetoric of multietnicity, it is evident in official discourses on diversity as a problem and in official policies which favor the Lao language only. The persistence of this ideal at official levels leads to a situation in which the policies and plans issuing from those levels are inappropriate to the (often positively valued) multilingualism on the ground. This creates the classic policy-practice mismatch, which has taken various forms in the language planning literature as the difference between policy as intended, enacted, and experienced (Davis, 1994); policy as text versus policy as discourse (Ball, 2006); and policy as text, discourse and performance (Lo Bianco, 2008). Although each theory represents the problem a little differently, they all capture the tensions and contradictions between what happens at official levels and what happens in communication on the ground.

Lao Ministry of Education officials recognize the language policy/language practice divide in their country, but explain it as an inevitable and slight divergence between the documents (here meaning the Education Law) and the situation in classrooms, and one which is easily overcome by teachers. One official in the Ministry explained that policy is necessarily ‘general’ (vao luam luam) while practice is based on the ‘real situation’ or the ‘real conditions’ (sap ha:p tua ching, ngia:n khai tua ching). Several officials referred to teachers’ use of the mother tongue ‘only for explanation’ (mi: te: ka:n attiba:i han), ‘just for some lessons and some content’ (mi: te: ba:ng bot hian, ba:ng ni:a nai), and only in the first grade or first grades (presumably one and two). Officials claim that it is up to the teacher to decide how to use the mother tongue (though always with the fair assumption that this will only be oral). One high-up official said: ‘It’s just according to necessity and appropriateness in the – it just has to be up to the teacher. We don’t advise [on that]’ (Mi: te: ta:m khuam tongka:n
These comments indicate the degree to which Lao education officials minimize the significance and extent of the gap between policy and practice, and the difficulty of teachers in turning the policy into a practice which suits the needs of the students. That is, the comments indicate a degree of recognition among officials that there is a difference between policy as intended, and policy as enacted and experienced (Davis, 1994), although probably not in those terms. Yet what officials do not recognize is the extremity of this difference and the degree of difficulty which it causes for teachers and students.

Language policy and planning in Laos, and indeed in many other countries around the world including in the West, takes an approach consistent with what has been called 'the first phase' of language policy and planning scholarship in the West, from the early 1960s to the early 1970s (Ricento, 2000). This included an emphasis on national unification, modernization and efficiency (Rubin 1971 in Ricento 2000: 199) and an abstraction of language away from its sociohistorical and ecological context (Ricento, 2000: 200).

Over the past three decades, language policy and planning scholarship in the West has shifted away from such ideas, moving through a critique of the assumptions of linguistics and development, to linguistic human rights and ecological approaches which emphasize the need to recognize and foster diversity (e.g. Hornberger, 2000, 2003b, Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson, 1994, Skutnabb-Kangas, 2006). Skutnabb-Kangas has argued for social multilingualism not only for ethical reasons, but for the advantage of the society (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2006) and Hornberger has suggested the need to recognize the tension between 'relativity and uniformity, between pluralism and assimilation' in order to reach the goal of a 'truly intercultural education' (Hornberger, 2000: 194).

Yet Lao policy makers and their counterparts throughout the world remain fixed to varying degrees within the paradigms of the early scholarship. Even the countries from which most of the current theorists come have yet to embrace their ideas fully. For example, although
they have both introduced bilingual education programs in the past, America still struggles with its bilingual education policy (see Lo Bianco, 2004) and from 2009 Australia will further minimise the role of indigenous languages in government schools in the Northern Territory, the region with the highest proportion of students with an Aboriginal mother tongue. Closer to Laos' borders, although the government of Cambodia has drafted legislation which would allow bilingual education for ethnic minority students in the first years of schooling, the Thai legislation allows the teaching of minority languages as subjects of study, and the governments of both countries allow donor-sponsored bilingual education programs, these governments do not fund bilingual education programs themselves (Kosonen, 2005). Laos remains even further from ecological and linguistic human rights approaches. As has been demonstrated, Lao language planners are not concerned with ecological balances but with cultural and linguistic hierarchies, and they are not aiming to provide even an apparently intercultural education, let alone a true one.

It is clear that in order for classroom teaching and learning in Laos to be more effective, Lao language planners should adapt the policy to be more in-step with recent theories: sensitive to linguistic human rights and to the linguistic ecology of Laos. However, it seems fair to assume that it would be with difficulty that Laos could move from its current approach, grounded as it is in a Structuralist, positivist and ethno-nationalist paradigm, to one of those currently promoted in the literature. Although recent documents mention bilingual education\textsuperscript{78}, ministry officials explain this away as 'oral' bilingualism, maintaining the dominance of the Lao language, at least in the official policy.

The present research cannot suggest what would need to happen in order for Laos to move away from its current orientation toward an ecological approach which values cultures and

\textsuperscript{78} The Education for All: National Plan of Action, quoting the National Growth and Poverty Eradication Strategy (NGPES), and the National Socio-Economic Development Plan 2006–2010. It is significant to note that NGPES and the Development Plan are not issued by the Ministry of Education but by higher level committees.
languages equally in education and allows not only for minority language maintenance for
the sake of diversity, but for improved educational attainments among minority children.
Ricento and Hornberger (1996) note that change is most likely to occur from the bottom up.
However, this may be a difficult proposition in a Socialist country such as Laos, where
official policy-making and education administration more generally are so centralized at the
ministerial level. Certainly top-down change is also important in influencing language
practice in communities and classrooms, but at present this seems even less likely than
bottom-up initiatives. There are, however, some steps in the development of language-in-
education policy and planning which seem viable recommendations in the current Lao
context.

Medium of instruction

The disadvantages of L2 education for minority children are well-documented (see for
example Tollefson and Tsui, 2004). The present research demonstrates that the current Lao
policy, which recognizes only Lao as the official medium of instruction but allows for some
secondary and supportive oral input in L1, leads to two main responses. Teachers either use
mostly the L2 as the law dictates and thus rely on 'safe talk' practices where students are
not engaging with material. Alternatively, teachers use the L1, thus allowing for more
understanding of and engagement with curriculum content, but as the students are not
learning in the language in which they'll be tested or study further they're likely to be
disadvantaged in the longer term.

There is obviously a rationale there for transitional bilingual education at least, but as
bilingual education is strongly resisted in the ministry at present, this is not a viable
recommendation. Rather, it seems more strategic to argue for stronger official support for
the oral use of minority languages in classrooms. At present, Ministry of Education officials
state in conversation that L1 use is allowed as a support for teaching in Lao. References to
bilingual education in the Education for All document (Lao Ministry of Education, 2005) are
also taken by ministry staff to refer to oral use of the L1. However, the oral use of the mother tongue is not codified in policy and planning documents which reach the lower levels of education administration (e.g. the Education Law or other documents disseminated by the MoE).

The status of minority languages as acceptable media of spoken communication in the classroom should be codified, with recognition of the degree of oral L1 use which is required (i.e. not only minimal amounts in the first year) and of the purposes for which it can be used (i.e. not only the translation of individual words or phrases). Documents should then be disseminated to provincial and district education authorities with accompanying seminars to discuss their implications (the standard procedure when new documents are issued). Beginning or end of year education administration meetings are an ideal opportunity to do this.

Recruitment and deployment of teachers

The case of Khamsuk described above shows that minority teachers are not the only ones who can integrate socially into minority communities and use minority languages with the students. In fact, other researchers have observed that foreign teachers usually learn the language of their students (Chick, 2002: 468). However, minority teachers do seem more able to relate to students’ cultural background and act as mediators between the world of the village and the world of the curriculum, as was demonstrated in the case of Ceng.

Also, proficiency in the students L1 among non-minority teachers may be more likely in places such as Nalae, where two ethnic groups have coexisted for centuries and the minority language is spoken to some degree by everyone, or in the case of foreign teachers with no ideological orientation against the minority language and culture. In districts with much more recent histories of migration and greater ethnic diversity, or in cases where teachers from outside may hold negative views of the minority language, outside teacher proficiency
in the local language may not be as common, although research would need to be carried out in order to determine whether this is indeed the case. At present, it seems judicious to suggest that the Lao government increase efforts to train and deploy willing ethnic minority teachers in their own geographical areas.

Teacher training

The director of the Department of Teacher Training in the Ministry of Education at the time of this research stated that there is now a greater focus on ethnic minority teacher recruitment and training, but the structural changes which would facilitate this, such as the (re)establishment of teacher training programs with lower entry levels, the (re)establishment of teacher training institutions in remote provinces, or the introduction of distance and community-based learning programs, have not been made. On the contrary, the emphasis on the standardization of programs and the centralization of institutions which began in the early 1990s appears to continue today. This may need to change if the Ministry is committed to increasing the number of trained ethnic minority teachers in schools.

The relevance of teacher training could also be increased by including units on the effective oral use of the mother tongue. At present, not only is spoken (as opposed to spoken and written) bilingual education not officially supported in the working policy documents, it is not supported in teacher training institutions by giving trainees a grounding in relevant methods. The Lao-Australia Basic Education Project, which ran from 1999 to 2005, implemented teacher training in the use of the Concentrated Language Encounters (CLE) model, first developed in indigenous education in Australia and from there taken up in Thailand. The director of the Department of Teacher Training has stated that training in CLE will be included in general teacher training programs, however, it is unclear as yet whether and when this will happen. Furthermore, while the CLE model does facilitate the use of the mother tongue, it does not in itself specify exactly how to do this at the micro level of communication. Thus teacher training programs would not only need to include
training in CLE, but provide additional guidance on mother tongue interaction at the micro level.

In order for this to be successful, however, training would also need to address negative attitudes to the use of the mother tongue and to code switching, although these issues may be more significant for lowland Lao trainees than for their ethnic minority classmates.

Ideally, teacher training programs in multilingual contexts should also build awareness of the role of language in the production and reproduction of identities and relations of power (Adendorff, 1993), although given the orientations of education officials and trainers, the viability of such an endeavor in the Lao context is questionable.

9.5 **Future research directions**

Although the research presented here has gone some way toward describing the language policy and practice of ethnic minority primary school education in Laos, has contributed to academic discussions on the nature of language, power and the State, and has led to a number of recommendations for language planners in Laos, it is only a beginning. Further research in the area is much needed.

This could begin with case studies of classrooms in other parts of Laos in order to determine to what degree the classroom language practices described here are common to other parts of the country. Such case studies could be carried out in different regions, among different ethnic groups, and in the mixed-ethnicity classrooms which are becoming more common with internal migration. Building on this, researchers could compare school performance in different curriculum areas between classes with teachers who do and don't use the mother tongue.

Following on from the recommendations regarding teacher training, research could be carried out into whether and how training teachers in the use of the mother tongue affects
their classroom language use and the performance of the students. Such topics could be particularly well suited to the action research model.

Looking at the issues from another angle: researchers note the importance of teacher language use in the socialization of students (e.g. Martin, 1996, Ferguson, 2003). If this is the case, the diversity in teacher approaches to language in Laos is creating students with different patterns of socialization. Longitudinal studies of students with different classroom experiences of language use could be carried out in order to explore how those students' attitudes to and uses of their languages may differ in the longer term.

Finally, research might monitor official attitudes to bilingual education in Laos as well as examining interest in bilingual education among minority people themselves in order to determine whether and how this possibility could be pursued in the future.
References


PROSCHAN, F. (1997) "We are all Kmhmu, just the same": ethnonyms, ethnic identities, and ethnic groups. *American Ethnologist*, 24, 91-113.


352


## Appendix 1: Classroom observation codes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Speech behaviors (teacher)</th>
<th>Speech behaviors (students)</th>
<th>Languages</th>
<th>Grades</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>Elicit content</td>
<td>Reply (own)</td>
<td>Lao</td>
<td>L 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All students</td>
<td>Ss</td>
<td>Elicit volunteer</td>
<td>Reply (from text)</td>
<td>Kmhmu</td>
<td>K 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some students</td>
<td>Sm</td>
<td>Reply</td>
<td>Read aloud</td>
<td>Indeterminate</td>
<td>L/K 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One student</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>Repeat</td>
<td>Request help</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Confirm</td>
<td>Request explanation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Introduce</td>
<td>Repeat after teacher</td>
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<td>Instruct</td>
<td>Recite</td>
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<td>Explain</td>
<td>Report progress</td>
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<td>Read aloud</td>
<td>Report problem</td>
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<td>Translate</td>
<td>Check understanding</td>
<td>Ch u</td>
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<td>Elicit translation</td>
<td>Volunteer information</td>
<td>Vol</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Check understanding</td>
<td>Help classmate</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Check progress</td>
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<td>Correct</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Give feedback</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Participants</td>
<td>Speech behaviors (teacher)</td>
<td>Speech behaviors (students)</td>
<td>Languages</td>
<td>Grades</td>
</tr>
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<td>Elicit feedback</td>
<td>El f</td>
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<td>Call attention</td>
<td>Cat</td>
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<td>Scold</td>
<td>Sc</td>
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<td>Orate</td>
<td>Or</td>
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<td>Joke</td>
<td>J</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Help student</td>
<td>H</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 2: Sample lesson analysis table

Ceng 1/11/05, 8.00am

Grade 1: Lao; Grade 2: Mathematics

Key:
- non-bold = Lao
- bold = Kmhmu
- underlined = indeterminate language
- green = word-by-word gloss
- red = translation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>[writes] kho: ning. Chong te;m sai pi;m khien. Point one. Must draw put book write First point. Draw it into your notebooks. Chong te;m sai pi;m khien le:w khien chamnuan te;m ta;m lamdap. [p] Must draw put book write then write amount add follow order</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>R al/wr</td>
<td>Cont</td>
<td>2:cl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
|   | Draw it into your notebooks then write the amount following the listed order.  
(?) [points out letter b]  
G!"?  
This  
This one? |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|
| T | Eh ça’h naï a? [= ca’ gi in Hadchone dialect]  
Do way this INTERROG  
Like this?  
[fixes letter] | K | Joke | Int | 2:in |
| T | Khien un blia ne, ho :ng po : ning ne.  
Write IMPER nice EMPH class grade one EMPH  
Write it nicely, grade one.  
Gen un brieng khien nè.  
STOP IMPER they write EMPH  
Don’t let them write for you.  
Bo gu khien hèêm té dé’.  
They like write younger sibling take EMPH  
They like to write for their brothers and sisters.  
Têeng dé’ me’ dé’ té un blia.  
Do take one take self IMPER nice  
Do it nicely on your own.  
Un chaay da ti’ me’ ti’ té.  
IMPER able by hand one hand self  
You have be able to do it by yourself.  
Bic pe hliem.  
Pen NEG come out  
My pen isn’t working.  
Pe hliem?  
NEG come out?  
It isn’t working? | K | Inst | Mgt | 1:cl |
| S T | Pe hlien go khien da tô’ té.  
NEG come out then write at table self  
If it’s not coming out then write at your own table.  
Ô un bik té bo gu khien, khien tô’, bik i de’ voh an ëëë.  
I give pen self 2PRS.PL like write, write table, pen 1PRS.SG broken many CLAS EMPH | K | joke | Int | 1:cl |
When I give you my pen, you always write on the table. Lots of my pens have been broken you know.

**Khien go khien cia ộ, té yoh hraac hraac tò hni.**

Write then write paper EMPH self go scratch scratch table this

If you’re going to write, then write on some paper. Don’t scratch away at the table.

**Grang ọ, tô. Ge pe le maak khamphaai.** [p]

**Hard EMPH table. 3PRS.SG NEG good ballpoint**

The table’s hard, you know. It’s not good for the ballpoint.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>7.12</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>Khien ye khien ye.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>S</td>
<td>Pe hlien, bik.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>T</td>
<td>Pe hlien go khien. (Pe) un bo dé’ bik té. Bo ci hraac hraac ge. 7.12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Khien pe hlien ki. Khien gi ke’.** [p]
**Write NEG come out here. Write this like such.**
It doesn’t come out if you write like this. Write like this.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>T</th>
<th>K</th>
<th>Com</th>
<th>Int</th>
<th>1:cl</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eey, gsēh ah. [package on desk falls] EXCL fall meat</td>
<td>Inst</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oh, my meat’s fallen! Ah ɓa gi.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Com</td>
<td></td>
<td>1:in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>meat 1PRS.SG, 3PRS.SG.F this</td>
<td></td>
<td>Com</td>
<td></td>
<td>1:cl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That’s my meat, girl.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hien nangsw, la’ bwan gmuul vēêt ah be. Study letters soon can money but meat eat</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If you study, soon you’ll make enough money to buy meat to eat.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Ee. Khien un blia ne. EXCL write PURP nice EMPH**
Right, write so it’s nice.
Gooy khien gooy té un ge blia, gen un brieng khien em.
Slow write slow take PURP 3PRS.SG nice stop IMPER 3PRS.PL write EMPH
Write nice and slowly so it’s nice. Don’t let them write it.
Un blia.
PURP nice
Make it nice.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S</th>
<th>K</th>
<th>Inst</th>
<th>Mgt</th>
<th>1:cl</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bik pe hlien</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pen NEG come out</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My pen isn’t working.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Gme’ pe hlien, gme’ pe hlien, yi: m pō’ yo’ sa.**
Which one NEG come out, which one NEG come out, borrow with friend MODAL
Which one isn’t working? Which one isn’t working? Borrow one from your friend then.

**Bik i’ meh bik khien cia, pe meh bik khien s’oong hmwan bo.**
Pen 1PRS.SG be pen write paper, NEG be pen write wood same 2PRS.PL
My pen’s a pen for writing on paper, not a pen for writing on wood like yours.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>T</th>
<th>K</th>
<th>Joke</th>
<th>Int</th>
<th>1:cl</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Doe :, athiba :i, doe :, ho :ng po : sa :ng doe :. EMPH explain EMPH class grade two EMPH</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’m going to explain, OK, second class.</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vuthi: ke; hni, ke; ca’ gi.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technique solve this, solve way this.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>T</th>
<th>K/L</th>
<th>Frame</th>
<th>Cont</th>
<th>2:cl</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Doe :, athiba :i, doe :, ho :ng po : sa :ng doe :. EMPH explain EMPH class grade two EMPH</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’m going to explain, OK, second class.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vuthi: ke; hni, ke; ca’ gi.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technique solve this, solve way this.</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 9:00 | This is the way to solve the problem.  
    Yeêng, yeêng da ki em.  
    Look, look at here EMPH  
    Look, look here.  
    Gi ke' hni, gi meh léék hmeh, gi ke' hni?  
    This like such here, this be number what, this like such here  
    This one here, what number is it, this one here?  
    Gi meh léék hmeh ro' gi ge ci root gav sip hôk?  
    This be number what put 3PRS.SG, FUT reach ninety six  
    What number would you put here for it to go up to ninety six?  
    Gi meh hmeh, gi meh hmeh ching ci meh gav sip hôk?  
    This be what, this be what so FUT be ninety six  
    What's this, what's this so it will be ninety six?  
    Baat hni gi ci meh hmeh, gi ci meh hmeh, gi ci meh hmeh, ching ci root nwng looy ha?  
    Moment this this FUT be what, this FUT be what, this FUT be what, so FUT reach one hundred five  
    Now what would this one be, what would this one be, what would this one be so it would go up to a hundred and five?  
    Gi ci meh léék hmeh, gi ci meh léék hmeh, ci meh léék hmeh?  
    This FUT be number what, this FUT be number what, FUT be number what  
    What number would this be, what number would this be, what number would this be?  
    Gme' gme' ci root nwng looy sip soong?  
    Which one which one FUT reach one hundred twelve  
    Which one would it be so it will go up to a hundred and twelve?  
    Me:n ti?  
    Be TAG  
    That's it, isn't it?  
    Ca' gni' too. Juur ro' ki.  
    Way this continue. Go down add here.  
    You keep going like that. You go down [the list] and put it in here. | | C att. |
| | | Exp |
| | | Exp |
| | | Rt exp |
| | | Exp |
| | | Exp |
| | | Ch |
| | | Inst |
| | | |
| T | [p] (ham ge gi) (méên a?) [changing drawing]  
    how about 3PRS.SG this be INTEROG  
    How about this one? Is it right? | K | Ch | Mgt | 2:cl |
<p>| T | Ee, téêng ca' gi no. | K | Inst | Cont | 2:cl |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>12.25</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>Ao, Jee, yoh khien yêêng.</th>
<th>K</th>
<th>Inst</th>
<th>Mgt</th>
<th>2:in</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>T</td>
<td>EXCL NAME go write look</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Inst</td>
<td>Mgt</td>
<td>2:in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>T</td>
<td>OK. Jee go write it and let’s see.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>T</td>
<td>Nê, gi ke’ hni meh kav sip hôk, gi ke’ hni meh hmeh?</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>El cont</td>
<td>Cont</td>
<td>2:in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>T</td>
<td>EXCL this like such here be ninety six, this like such here be what</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>T</td>
<td>There, this one here is ninety six, so what’s this one here?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>T</td>
<td>Meh hmeh hni? [s writes] Be what here</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>T</td>
<td>What’s this one?</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>T</td>
<td>Hôôc ti? Finish TAG</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>T</td>
<td>You’re finished, aren’t you?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>T</td>
<td>Ee. Neeng s’me, w, yê’. Yes. Know true TAG 2PRS.SG.M</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Com</td>
<td>Int</td>
<td>2:in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>T</td>
<td>Yes, you really know, don’t you?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>T</td>
<td>Ao, think a? EXCL correct INTEROG</td>
<td>K/L</td>
<td>El f</td>
<td>Cont</td>
<td>2:cl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ss</td>
<td>Alright, is it right?</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Thi;k</strong></td>
<td><strong>Correct</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>It's right.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tốp meu sôm soei.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clap hand congratulate.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Give a round of applause.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>T</th>
<th>Ao, me’ ci yoh ke: gni’?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>EXCL who FUT go solve this one</strong></td>
<td><strong>So, who’s going to go out and solve this one?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Me’ ci yoh?</td>
<td><strong>Who FUT go</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who’ll go?</td>
<td><strong>Tieng, ti’?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAME, TAG</td>
<td><strong>Tieng, right?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ao, Tieng yoh sa.</td>
<td><strong>EXCL, NAME go MODAL</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OK, let’s have Tieng go.</td>
<td><em>[s goes out]</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ao, yoh mé.</td>
<td><strong>EXCL go EMPH</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Go on.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>T</th>
<th>Gi meh gav sip hôk, gi meh hmeh, gi?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>This be ninety six this be what this</strong></td>
<td><strong>This is ninety six. What’s this one?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gam too meh hmeh?</td>
<td><strong>3PRS.SG.IMPERS continue be what</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What’s the one after it?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>T</th>
<th>Hốóc khien a?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Finish write INTEROG</strong></td>
<td><strong>Have you finished writing?</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>T</th>
<th>Ee, saav cét.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Yes, twenty seven</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| T | Yes, twenty seven.  
Meh hmeh, gni'?  
Be what this one  
What's this one?  
Kav sip péét, kav sip kav?  
Ninety eight ninety nine  
Ninety eight, ninety nine?  
Hôóc ca meh hmeh?  
Finish FUT be what  
After that what will it be?  
Aô, thi:k box: ti:m lâmadap le:k?  
EXCL correct INTEROG follow order number  
OK, is it right, following the order of the numbers?  
Think ls:w nx?  
Correct finish TAG  
It's right, isn't it? |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>El cont</td>
<td>F</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| T | Ao, tô: pai meh me' ci yoh?  
EXCL continue go be who FUT go  
OK, who's going to go next?  
ô ci yoh  
IPRS.SG, FUT go  
I'll go.  
ô ci yoh kn’hni  
IPRS.SG, FUT go behind  
I'll go after that.  
Un cmsgn yoh sa.  
IMPER girl go MODAL  
Let's have a girl go. |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>El vol</td>
<td>Mgt</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| T | ‘Vii, eh ca’ me’? [= eh ca’ me’, Hadchone dialect]  
EXCL do way which  
Oh, how are we doing this? |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>Joke</td>
<td>Int</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| T | Yoh sa.  
Go MODAL  
Go on. |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>Inst</td>
<td>Mgt</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Ao, na:ng Si: pai.
EXCL miss NAME go
OK, Miss Sii go.
Yoh mè, yoh mè.
**Go EMPH go EMPH**
Go on, go on.
Ee, Cit, Cit, Cit. [student goes out]
**Yes, NAME NAME NAME**
OK, Cit, Cit, Cit.

T Ss
Think bo:?  
**Correct INTEROG**
Is that right?
   
Yes

T Ss
Me’ ci yoh?
**Who FUT go**
Who’ll go?
   
ö, ö.
**1PRS.SG 1PRS.SG**
Me, me.

T Ss
Ao, (?) (name)
**EXCL, NAME**
OK, (student’s name)
[student goes out]
Pe neeng go khien mông tô.
**NEG know then write one CLAS.**
If you don’t know it, then just write one of them.

T [advises student at board]
Ro’ gi na.
**Put here EXCL**
Put it in here.
(?) Yèèng.
**Look**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Let’s see.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ao, thiek bo?:</td>
<td>EXCL correct INTEROG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is it right?</td>
<td>Thiek</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correct</td>
<td>It’s right.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>T</th>
<th>Ao, me’ ci yoh khien?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>EXCL who FUT go write</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OK, who’s going to go and write it?</td>
<td>Ø</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IPRS.SG</td>
<td>Me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neeng a?</td>
<td>Know INTEROG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you know it?</td>
<td>Ee, yoh yoh.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes go go</td>
<td>OK, go, go.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Me’ pe da’ yoh go yoh.</td>
<td>Who NEG yet go then go</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whoever hasn’t gone yet, go.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>T</th>
<th>Nwng looy sip soong. To: pai meh nwng looy hmeh?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One hundred twelve.</td>
<td>Continue go be one hundred what</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One hundred and twelve. Next is a hundred and what?</td>
<td>Saav saam?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twenty three</td>
<td>Sao saam thiek bo?:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twenty three?</td>
<td>Twenty three correct INTEROG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is twenty three right?</td>
<td>Thiek</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correct</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>It's right.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>T</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.00</td>
<td>T</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>T</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>T</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>T</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>T</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>T</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.15</td>
<td>T</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>T</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>T</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>T</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>T</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.15</td>
<td>T</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>Ao, hōoč, phakphone ba:ti: na. EXCL finish rest moment this EMPH OK, if you’re finished then have your break now.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 3: Latin orthography for Lao

Consonants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter(s) used in this orthography</th>
<th>Lao letter</th>
<th>International Phonetic Alphabet symbol</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>k</td>
<td>រ</td>
<td>[k]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kh</td>
<td>ក/ខ</td>
<td>[kʰ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ng</td>
<td>ງ</td>
<td>[ŋ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ch</td>
<td>chè</td>
<td>[ʃ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>s</td>
<td>ស/ស</td>
<td>[s]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ny</td>
<td>យ</td>
<td>[ɲ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d</td>
<td>ដ</td>
<td>[d]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t</td>
<td>ց</td>
<td>[t]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>th</td>
<td>թ/⽼</td>
<td>[tʰ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>⿴</td>
<td>[n]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p</td>
<td>ป</td>
<td>[p]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ph</td>
<td>⾃/⾃</td>
<td>[pʰ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter(s) used in this orthography</td>
<td>Lao letter</td>
<td>International Phonetic Alphabet symbol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f</td>
<td>ɛ̄/ɛ̄</td>
<td>[f]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m</td>
<td>ɯ</td>
<td>[m]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>y</td>
<td>ǝ̄</td>
<td>[j]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>l</td>
<td>ǝ̄</td>
<td>[j]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v</td>
<td>ǝ̄</td>
<td>[w]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h</td>
<td>m/ŋ</td>
<td>[h]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NB: Lao tones are not distinguished in this orthography, thus different Lao letters representing the same sounds in different tones are given only one corresponding Latin letter (e.g. ǝ̄/ǝ̄ = kʰ).
## Vowels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter used in this orthography (short/long)</th>
<th>Lao letter (short/long)</th>
<th>International Phonetic Alphabet symbol</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a/a:</td>
<td>x Ϝ / x η</td>
<td>[a]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i/i:</td>
<td>x y / x y</td>
<td>[i]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i/i:</td>
<td>x y / x y</td>
<td>[ui]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>u/u:</td>
<td>x y / x y</td>
<td>[u]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e/e:</td>
<td>x Ϝ / x x</td>
<td>[e]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e/e:</td>
<td>x Ϝ / x x</td>
<td>[e]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o/o:</td>
<td>x Ϝ / x x</td>
<td>[o]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o/o:</td>
<td>x Ϝ / x x</td>
<td>[o]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>æ/æ:</td>
<td>x Ϝ / x x</td>
<td>[æ]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NB: The ‘x’ in the ‘Lao letter’ column above represents the initial consonant of the syllable to which the vowel belongs. Lao vowels cannot be written without this consonant in place. In the case of empty onset syllables in Lao, the ‘silent’ consonant Ø is used in this position.
### Diphthongs / Triphthongs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letters used in this orthography</th>
<th>Lao letter</th>
<th>International Phonetic Alphabet transcription (short vowel only)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ia/i:a</td>
<td>ɤə / ɤə</td>
<td>[ia]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(in medial position between two consonants)</td>
<td>x j x e / x j x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ia/i:a</td>
<td>ɤə / ɤə</td>
<td>[ia]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ua</td>
<td>ɤ ə</td>
<td>[ua]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ai/a:i</td>
<td>ɤ ə / ɤ / ɤ ə</td>
<td>[ai]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ao/a:o</td>
<td>ɤ ə / ɤ ə</td>
<td>[ao]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eo/ eo</td>
<td>ɤ ə / ɤ ə</td>
<td>[eo]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ui</td>
<td>ɤ ə / ɤ ə</td>
<td>[ui]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>oei/œi:i</td>
<td>ɤ ə / ɤ ə</td>
<td>[oi]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iao/i:ao</td>
<td>ɤ ə / ɤ ə</td>
<td>[ia]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iai</td>
<td>ɤ ə / ɤ ə</td>
<td>[uai]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>uai</td>
<td>ɤ ə / ɤ ə</td>
<td>[uai]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Appendix 4: Latin orthography for Kmhmu

#### Consonants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter(s) used in this orthography (from Simana, Sayavong and Preisig 1994)</th>
<th>International Phonetic Alphabet symbol</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>p</td>
<td>[p] (high tone)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t</td>
<td>[t] (high tone)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c</td>
<td>[tʃ] (high tone)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k</td>
<td>[k] (high tone)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b</td>
<td>[p] (low tone)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d</td>
<td>[t] (low tone)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>j</td>
<td>[tʃ] (low tone)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g</td>
<td>[k] (low tone)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hm</td>
<td>[m] (high tone)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hn</td>
<td>[n] (high tone)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ñ</td>
<td>[n] (low tone)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter(s) used in this orthography (from Simana, Sayavong and Preisig 1994)</td>
<td>International Phonetic Alphabet symbol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ng</td>
<td>[ŋ] (low tone)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hr</td>
<td>[r] (high tone)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hv</td>
<td>[v] (high tone)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘m</td>
<td>[ʔm] (high tone)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘n</td>
<td>[ʔd] (high tone)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘y</td>
<td>[ʔy]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NB: The IPA symbols given here represent the phonemes as found in the Western dialects of Kmhmu (those of the research site). As aspiration in the Eastern dialects is replaced by a tone system in the Western dialects, distinctions between aspirated and non-aspirated phonemes have become distinctions between the same sound produced in high and low tones. Several IPA symbols thus appear twice above, where phonemes have a high tone and a low tone variant. This is noted in brackets.
### Vowels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter used in this orthography (from Simana, Sayavong and Preisig 1994)</th>
<th>International Phonetic Alphabet symbol</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>i</td>
<td>[i]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>w</td>
<td>[u]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>u</td>
<td>[u]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>é</td>
<td>[e]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e</td>
<td>[e]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ō</td>
<td>[o]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>è</td>
<td>[e]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ê</td>
<td>[e]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ë</td>
<td>[a]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o</td>
<td>[o]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>[a]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NB: Long vowels/long diphthongs are indicated in this orthography by reduplication (e.g. short = a; long = aa).
Diphthongs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letters used in this orthography (from Simana, Sayavong and Preisig 1994)</th>
<th>International Phonetic Alphabet transcription</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>av</td>
<td>[ao]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ay</td>
<td>[ai]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>öy</td>
<td>[ol]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>èv *</td>
<td>[eo]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Not included in the Simana et al orthography but used in the thesis to transcribe Lao words with this diphthong borrowed into Kmhmu.