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Notes on the Use of Ethnic Minority Languages in Lao PDR Classrooms

Notes sur l'usage des langues des minorités ethniques dans les classes au Laos

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Résumés

English Français
The expansion of education in Lao PDR has improved school access, but disparities persist, particularly for ethnic minority children. Many struggle to learn in Lao, which is not their mother tongue, leading to lower attendance and higher dropout rates. While the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) has acknowledged these challenges, its policies on the use of ethnic minority languages in classrooms remain cautious and inconsistent. Teachers may use local languages orally to support instruction, but there is no formal bilingual education policy. This study finds that student-centered teaching methods can enhance learning outcomes for ethnic minority children, even in the absence of formal bilingual education. Case studies from Savannakhet and Huaphanh provinces demonstrate that interactive, engaging pedagogy helps mitigate language barriers. To ensure inclusive education, a multifaceted approach is needed, including improved Lao language instruction, greater flexibility in using minority languages, teacher training, and curriculum adaptation. Future research should assess the long-term effects of different instructional models on learning and social integration.

L'expansion de l'éducation au Laos a amélioré l'accès à l'école, mais des disparités persistent, en particulier pour les enfants issus des minorités ethniques. Beaucoup éprouvent des difficultés à apprendre en lao, qui n'est pas leur langue maternelle, ce qui entraîne une baisse de la fréquentation scolaire et un taux de décrochage plus élevé. Bien que le ministère de l'Éducation et des Sports ait reconnu ces défis, ses directives concernant l'utilisation des langues des minorités ethniques en classe restent prudentes. Les enseignants peuvent utiliser oralement les langues locales pour soutenir l'enseignement, mais aucune politique formelle d'éducation bilingue n'existe. Cette étude montre que des méthodes d'enseignement centrées sur l'élève peuvent améliorer les résultats d'apprentissage des enfants issus des minorités ethniques, même en l'absence d'une éducation bilingue formelle. Des études de cas menées dans les provinces de Savannakhet et de Huaphanh démontrent qu'une méthode interactive aide à atténuer les barrières linguistiques. Pour garantir une éducation inclusive, une approche multifacette est nécessaire, incluant une amélioration de l'enseignement du lao, une plus grande flexibilité dans l'utilisation des

langues minoritaires, la formation des enseignants et l’adaptation des programmes scolaires. Des recherches futures devraient évaluer les effets à long terme des différents modèles d'enseignement sur l'apprentissage.

Entrées d’index

Mots-clés : éducation, Laos, groupes ethniques, language, enseignement
Keywords: education, Laos, ethnic groups, language, teaching methods

Texte intégral

Introduction

1 From 1975, the education system set up by the new government of the Democratic Republic of Laos sought to make education accessible to as many people as possible. Despite the expansion of public schools in all regions of Laos, quality of education remains low and access to schooling is unequal. If the percentage of people who have never been to school decreased from 38% in 1995 to 13.1% in 2015 (Lao Statistics Bureau 2016), recent figures from the World Bank are worrying. Primary enrollment rates started to erode since 2017. Enrollments in other levels felt below benchmarks while dropout rates are inversely rising. This trend increased during COVID-19 pandemic and seems to be worsening with the present financial crisis in Lao PDR. Attempts to prevent dropout by automatic promotion in the upper grade are resulting in a lower focus on learning outcomes and quality teaching (The World Bank 2024: 29).

2 Thus, access to school is still strongly unequal between sexes. 17% of women have never attended school compared to only 8.9% of men (ibid.). However, differences in access to school between ethnic groups are the most striking. For instance, the 2015 Lao Statistics Bureau data shows that 5.7% of ethnic Lao had never been to school compared to nearly 50% of Akha and Lolo (Sino-Tibetan ethnolinguistic group).

3 With the expansion of schooling in all provinces of Laos, the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) is faced with the challenge of teaching the national curriculum to children from at least 49 officially recognised ethnic groups. The ethnic diversity in Laos is the result of a long history of people moving through the region and the country. In 2015, the groups belonging to the Lao-Tai ethnolinguistic family were estimated to account for 62.4% of the total population while the Mon-Khmer (or Austro-Asiatic) represent 23.7%, ahead of the Hmong-Iu Mien (9.7%) and the Sino-Tibetan (2.9%). Resettlement of mountain villages to lowland areas on one hand, and work migration on the other one has turned many schools into institutions where children from various ethnic groups interact by using several languages, including Lao, the national language.

4 The MoES has therefore developed several strategies, particularly since the 1990s marked by the arrival of numerous NGOs and UN agencies, in order to include the needs of children with different native languages at school. The use of local languages in the classroom has often been discussed among education stakeholders interested in the improvement of education in ethnic context, but the actual possibility of using a local language by the teacher in the classroom remains unclear and ambiguous: although the MoES policies and measures have been cautious and largely unsupportive of bilingual education, using local languages orally to support the teaching of the national curricula is nevertheless tolerated.

5 In this paper, we examine MoES’s policies and position regarding the use of local languages in the classroom and its effectiveness in the learning process, based on literature review and ethnographic surveys carried out in several provinces of Laos since 2003.

Challenges in Teaching Lao Language to Children from Different Ethnic Groups

6 This section explores the language-related challenges that ethnic minority children face in Lao schools and their impact on educational outcomes. It examines how the national education system, while promoting Lao language as the medium of instruction, struggles to accommodate students who do not belong to Lao-Tai ethnolinguistic groups. It also considers the effectiveness of student-centered teaching approaches in improving learning outcomes, particularly in multilingual classrooms. Drawing on recent research and project evaluations, the analysis highlights the critical role of contextualized teaching methods in addressing disparities in education and fostering a more inclusive learning environment.

7 Since the expansion of the school system across Laos after 1975, the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) has faced significant challenges in delivering the (Lao language) national curriculum to children from the country's 49 officially recognized ethnic groups. Since the 1990s, the Lao government has implemented various strategies, often in collaboration with Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and UN agencies, to address these challenges and improve learning outcomes for ethnic minority students. If the presence of NGOs increasingly influences the educational policy of the Lao PDR's government, changes in teaching practices are slow. Certainly, the Lao government seeks to improve schooling in all regions as well as for all ethnic groups. Through schools, the State also attempts to promote a national culture by teaching the Lao language which is still little or poorly spoken by many among ethnic minority populations. This preoccupation was mentioned by a MoES representative during a conference in Phnom Penh in 1996:

> Part of the reason why general education and curriculum reform had not been successful with ethnic minority groups was because it had not specifically targeted the needs of these disadvantaged groups, particularly their language learning needs. (Souvanixay et al. 1996: 291.)

8 The teacher's speech fulfils an important function by imposing a standard Lao language which is little used by the majority of families belonging to the Mon-Khmer, Hmong-Iu Mien, and Tibeto-Burmans ethnolinguistic groups. The acquisition of the national language is profoundly influenced by the disposition to express oneself, acquired in the family, and has repercussions on academic success. Regular practice, including within a familial context, is crucial for the mastery of a language.

9 Nationally, children who do not belong to Lao-Tai ethnolinguistic groups are less likely to attend school and, when they do attend, more likely to drop out early. For example, in the academic year 2002-2003, over 75% of primary-aged Lao-Tai children were attending school, compared to less than 50% of Mon-Khmer and Hmong-Iu Mien children and only 33% of Sino-Tibet children (Save the Children Norway in Lao PDR 2008). In 2017, the attendance rate increased for all the ethnic groups and the gap between them and the Tai-Lao was diminishing (UNICEF 2020). However, Lao-Tai children were 94% to attend school against 83% of the Mon-Khmer, 88% of the Hmong-Iu Mien, and 87% of the Sino-Tibet children. If the gap is less important today between the different ethnolinguistic groups for primary school-aged children, a significant inequity is thus still observed, particularly in secondary education. Indeed, according to the same 2020 survey (ibid.), 71% of the Lao-Tai children were attending secondary school, against only 44% for the Mon-Khmer, 57% for the Hmong-Iu Mien, and 43% for the Sino-Tibet children.

10 The results of evaluating the level of reading and understanding of Lao language among students in Grade 1, 2, and 3 (the three first years of primary school), clearly show all the difficulties faced by the Ministry of Education and Sports and its teachers. A reading and comprehension test (Early Grade Reading Assessment) of the Lao language among Grade 2 students was used in 2016 by the LEARN (Lao Education Assess, Research and Networking) project in 36 schools in three districts of Luang Prabang Province (Northern Laos). Of the 459 students of Khmu (48%), Lao (32%) and Hmong (20%) origins, only 15% of the students were able to correctly read five words in a reading passage in thirty seconds. Many did not master

basic skills like identifying Lao letters and single-word recognition, especially Hmong and Khmu students.

11 This language barrier has several consequences related to the schooling of these children. One of these consequences is the lack of motivation and interest with the national curricula. Children may not be interested in pursuing their schooling at the secondary level. A World Bank report (2016) indicates that 41% of the 10-14 years old surveyed stopped school because they were not interested. The interviews by Phetchanpheng (2023a) conducted with 23 out-of-school Hmong girls in Huaphanh confirm this trend. Many of them mentioned that they did not like school, and particularly because of the language barrier. There are other reasons that may explain this lack of interest in secondary education. The quality of education is undeniably a factor motivating or discouraging students from attending and complete education. Teaching practices are often described by international observers as predominantly teacher-centred, like stated in a report on education in Laos prepared by The World Bank and the MoES in 2007 that emphasises on the passivity of pupils in the classroom.

12 Indeed, one of the most important new approaches introduced by development projects is the "student-centred" approach. Although it was initiated in the 1990s with the opening of the country to global donors and markets, its implementation is taking time. In 1994, the Ministry of Education stated:

> Teachers must be managers and facilitators of learning. Research has emphasized that students learn by doing and teachers must plan practical student-oriented activities so that learning takes place. (MOE and TDC 1994: 2.)

13 Many NGOs supported these strategies in remote and ethnic areas. However, several author's observations of different education projects in area populated by ethnic minorities indicate that a majority of teachers continue to struggle in adopting a student-centred approach in their lessons. A recent study conducted by Phetchanpheng (2023a) shows that teachers do not demonstrate a "discovery-based teaching" which is a highly interactive teaching methodology in which student knowledge is built and guided through investigation, discovery and problem solving. A student-centred approach is not bound to a particular methodology but represents a flexible approach to teaching that is responsive to learners' needs and preferences. This approach may appear as difficult for teachers because of their professional habits such as to follow the directives of the teachers' guidelines without any adaptation to the classroom context. One common goal of these education projects is to transform the traditional teaching model in which the lessons are dominated by the teacher while students are assigned more passive roles through listening and following directions. Teachers are generally not enough supported by pedagogical advisors and project team in preparing lessons that integrate a "discovery-based teaching" approach including activities focused on learning at stake in the lesson.[1]

14 The case study we present shows how an adapted teaching method is crucial for transmitting the knowledge at stake, even without using the mother tongue. In 2023, Phetchanpheng (2023b) conducted a project evaluation in Thapanghtong District (Savannakhet Province) for an NGO and the MoES to see how the project contributed to the enhancement of the learning outcomes for primary school children from Katang communities (Mon-Khmer ethnolinguistic group). The goal of the project was to improve reading/learning outcomes of girls and boys in grades 1-3 in target schools. In this case study, half of the 12 teachers surveyed were Katang while the others were Lao or Phutai (Lao-Tai ethnolinguistic group). Lao language is typically not mastered in the Katang communities in Thapangthong District (Savannakhet Province). Ethnic students and caregivers do not speak Lao regularly in their community, especially at home. The main space for speaking Lao language is the school. But some Katang teachers still use the local language as a "classroom language" while all the learning materials are in Lao, a point which was raised several times by some members of the Village Education Development Committee (VEDC):

> Children do not understand the Lao language. When they do not understand the lessons, the teachers have to use Katang language to explain. (VEDC member at Nonsomboun school.)

15 Despite this language barrier, the results of the reading assessment do not show an underperformance of Katang students. In this particular case, the number of readers with

comprehension was even higher among the Katang students than among Lao students at the project endline. The critical difference here appears to be the use of a more student-centered approach, entailing games and the involvement of students in the lessons, as opposed to the classic teacher-centered approach predominant in non-intervention schools. For example, a teacher in Kengsangkhu school (non-intervention school located near an intervention school) explained how he usually teaches reading to his grade 3 students:

> First, I write the lesson on the blackboard. Then I read the text and the students repeat after me. I ask students to go read the text at the blackboard. At the end of the lesson, I ask questions about the text. (Teacher at Kengsangkhu school.)

16 In 2023, two different approaches for teaching reading to Grade 3 students in Katang communities of Savannakhet were analyzed by Phetchanpheng. He compared a Lao lesson in a classroom in Kengsangkhu school in which the teacher was not trained by the project on the student-centered approach with a Lao lesson taught by a teacher trained on a student-centered approach in Natangkang school. The students were all from the Katang ethnic group. The teacher at Natangkang school had 7 years of experience and she was trained 6 times by the project, including with classroom supervision. The teacher at Kengsangkhu school had 32 years of experience and he was recently trained on the new Lao language curricula by the District of Education and Sports Bureau in 2022.

17 Eight Grade 3 students at Natangkang school focused on lesson 20 “Steaming rice” from the Government Lao Language new curriculum. The lesson starts with a discussion about the necessary objects for steaming rice. Seven students at Kengsangkhu school studied lesson 18 about the great stupa in Vientiane (*vat phra that luang*).[2] There was no discussion led by the teacher with the students about the That Luang stupa (e.g. where it is located or what it represents for them or for the Lao citizens) at the beginning of the lesson. While the lesson observed in Natangkang school (intervention school) is punctuated by several activities focused on reading skills, the lesson observed in Kengsangkhu school (non-intervention school) was largely dominated by copying the lesson and repetiting the text read by the teacher. Overall, this observation shows that the use of the mother tongue is not the only key to support teaching among ethnic minorities and should be completed by student-centered activities making the students actors of their own learning, as opposed to passive recipients, and thereby contributing to stimulate their interest in schooling and education, despite the linguistic and cultural gap.

18 A research conducted by Ansell et al. (2020) in rural communities of Northern Laos shows that rural children’s lifestyles are more distant from the content of the curriculum than their urban peers (ibid.). Often limited to their initial training in their capacity to perform their duty, teachers don’t give students an active role in their own learning and don’t put the subject matter in a concrete context to which rural students can easily relate (Ansell et al. 2020; Phetchanpheng 2015, 2016). For instance, pictures in the students’ manuals are mainly Lao-centred and provide very little space for ethnic minority cultures. Most of the pictures that students can see in their manuals are referring to Lao traditions, culture and symbols. Illustrations in the textbooks remained almost the same between 1997 and 2009, and the lessons are largely focusing on the Lao culture. The disconnect between the content of these textbooks and the daily cultural reality of ethnic minorities constitutes an additional barrier to pedagogical developments, encouraging rote learning rather than discussion around familiar subjects.

19 A 2024 study by Phetchanpheng in Huameuang District, Huaphanh Province, assessed the capacity of 146 Grade 2 students to read and understand Lao language (Phetchanpheng 2024). It was found that the Khmu students achieved the highest score (26.2%) in reading comprehension, followed by the Lao students (23.3%), and the Phong[3] students (10%). Hmong students had more difficulties to read and understand the same text with a score inferior to 2%.

20 If the comparatively good results of Lao students to read and understand a text can easily be explained by the fact that Lao language is their mother tongue, how can we explain the high results of the Khmu compared to other ethnic minorities? Why do Khmu and Phong students performed better than Hmong students in Huamueang district? This study argues that Khmu and Phong students live in an environment in which there would have a higher exposure to Lao language. The attitude of Hmong, Khmu and Phong people regarding the use of Lao language as a second language in their community also appears to be different. In the area surveyed, Hmong

people have less interaction with Lao people. The Hmong villages of the district are isolated. Only 1 out of 58 (1.7%) Hmong students reported speaking Lao language at home against 17.6% of the Phong students. Bilingualism at home seems to be higher in Phong communities due to more interaction with Lao people and culture. Indeed, in the villages inhabited by both Lao and Phong families, intermarriages between Phong and Lao are common (Schliesinger 2003).

21 The same situation is observed for the Khmu students who seem to have more opportunities to interact with Lao people. Khmu people tend to be more exposed to Lao language due to the location of their villages along the road. Lao language is more often used at home among Khmu students than Hmong students: 14.5% of them mentioned using Lao and Khmu languages at home.

22 This pattern of language use among Khmu and Hmong students reflects broader dynamics of multilingualism in upland communities, where exposure to dominant languages varies and influences linguistic practices at home. Badenoch (2024) discusses the role of multilingualism in the lives of upland communities, highlighting both its challenges and its importance for social bonding and identity. Interestingly, he emphasizes that while linguistic diversity supports the survival of minority languages, pressures on "small" language populations are increasing. The future of endangered languages in northern Laos depends on maintaining a dynamic multilingual environment, which can foster their resilience despite broader trends of language loss.

Language instruction policies

23 In this section, we discuss the MoES' policies and position regarding the use of minority languages themselves in the classroom. While Lao remains the official language of education in Laos, the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) allows some informal use of minority languages in classrooms, particularly to support students who are not yet proficient in Lao. Despite historical policy ambiguities and the lack of active promotion of bilingual education, teachers and education officials recognize the necessity of using local languages to facilitate learning. However, national education strategies and development plans primarily focus on improving Lao language instruction rather than implementing bilingual education, highlighting a gap between policy recommendations and classroom practices.

24 Facing the challenges discussed above, the MoES adopts an overall flexible attitude regarding the use of minority languages in the classroom. The use of minority languages has often been discussed among the stakeholders interested in the improvement of education in areas populated by ethnic minorities, including educators, MoES officials, development projects workers and scholars. The policy, however, remains ambiguous. Despite MoES policies and measures being rather cautious and unsupportive of bilingual education, the oral use of these languages in teaching is still tolerated.

25 Lao language was officially adopted as the language of education by the Royal Lao Government in 1962, under the National Educational Reform Act (RLG 1962, cited in Chamberlain 1978: 267) and the Education Law of 2007 reiterates that Lao is the language of education. However, the education decree of 1962 also mentioned that "wherever possible, ethnic minorities will receive their first instruction in their own language parallel to the national language."[4]

26 In practice today, the MoES permits some flexibility in using minority languages in the classroom, but the government has not actively promoted minority language education. According to our interviews with MoES officials and the Head of the Department of Lao Language for Ethnic Groups, which were conducted at the Research Institute of Education Sciences in 2024, the oral use of minority language remains allowed but as long as it is informal and exceptional, when the students do not understand the instructions in the national language:

> The children who do not speak Lao at home are allowed to use their mother tongues at school. It is necessary for children who do not learn Lao language at kindergarten. Teachers have the possibility to alternate Lao language and ethnic languages in order to facilitate the communication and classroom instructions such as "look at the board," "listen to me." After that, they have to switch to Lao language.[5]

27 The informal use of local languages with students who are not yet familiar with Lao is also confirmed by teacher interviews:

> Sometimes we use Hmong language to support our explanations. We focus on the weak learners and arrange additional lessons for them every Wednesday afternoon.[6]

28 In fact, although the Lao language remains the main language in the classroom, code-switching between Lao language and local languages is frequently observed in schools situated in ethnic communities, to varying degrees. The observations of Cincotta-Segi (2011) about language choices in the classroom with Khmu students in Nalae District (Luang Namtha Province) indicate a relatively frequent use of Khmu language. This was confirmed by a more recent survey conducted by Phetchanpheng in 2024, with 26 teachers in Houamueang District. Indeed, out of the 26 teachers, 16 reported that they sometimes use students' mother tongues when teaching:

> We are all Khmu teachers. When we teach Lao language to Grade 1 or Grade 2 Khmu students, we teach about 30% of the curricula in Khmu language and about 70% in Lao language. If not, our students don't understand the lesson.[7]

29 In recent decades, national education strategies and development plans have included a strong focus on inclusive education, especially for children from ethnic groups, but only one policy document calls for the need to use local languages for ethnic children's schooling. The Education for All (EFA) National Plan of Action (2003-2015) stipulates the need to place emphasis not only on the deployment of female teachers, but also of teachers with minority language skills. This document clearly indicates the need for bilingual practices in education: "Introduce bilingual teaching processes, especially for the first grades of primary schooling" (Lao PDR Ministry of Education 2005: 40). However, in practice, bilingual education has never been implemented in schools and no education project has supported this recommendation. The deployment of teachers speaking minority languages remains a challenge, notably because of the teacher affectation policy of the MoES, which entails an assignment to a different school every three years:

> In each district, teachers have to move to another school every three years. That's why we encourage teachers who are outsiders to learn local languages with local teachers or villagers. Teachers have to learn local languages for communicating with their students.[8]

30 In many schools, even teachers who do not share the same ethnic and linguistic background as their students indeed have no choice but to use the local language for teaching. Assigned in a Hmong village several years ago, a Phong teacher in Houamueang District (Huaphanh Province) explained that he had a lot of difficulties to communicate with his Hmong students in the past. To help his students, he had no other choices than to learn Hmong language with them.

31 Recommendations from two recent Education Sector Development Plan (ESDP) documents from the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES 2015 and 2020) suggest a greater focus on the transition of learners from other ethnic groups to the Lao language but no clear mention is made about bilingual education or the use of local language in the teaching-learning process. These documents mainly recommend improving the teaching methods and contents for better supporting children from ethnic minorities. The ESDP 2016-2020 includes a strong focus on school participation for all children and strengthening literacy development in primary school. The MoES strategy aims to improve Lao language teaching and promote reading skills.[9] The ESDP 2021-2025 is slightly more specific, and mentions that a key priority is to ensure that all primary graduates, including those who do not use Lao as the mother tongue, are literate and numerate. This document also recognises that:

> [The] pedagogy for teaching Lao as a second language for ethnic children is inadequate, and the learning resources to improve the transition of ethnic minority learners to the Lao language are not widely available or used. (MoES 2020: 85.)

32 To address these issues, the MoES includes several strategies such as increasing the time allocated to tasks in the classroom and revising the primary school curriculum, ensuring the contents are appropriate and inclusive. This includes the need to promote and support new

methodologies of teaching Lao language so that students can read and write grammatically correct sentences.

Conclusion

33 This paper highlights the persistent challenges in teaching Lao language to ethnic minority children and the impact of language barriers on their educational outcomes. Despite efforts by the Ministry of Education and Sports and various development partners, many students who do not belong to Lao-Tai ethnolinguistic groups continue to struggle with learning in a language that is not their mother tongue. The data shows that ethnic minority children, particularly those from isolated communities, face lower school attendance and higher dropout rates, especially at the secondary level. While government policies acknowledge the need for language support, practical implementation remains inconsistent, and teachers often lack the necessary training and resources.

34 The reluctance from the authorities to be more proactive in terms of supporting ambitious policies of including ethnic minority languages in schooling might be partly explained by a perception of the national language being itself increasingly challenged by comparatively more influential languages and cultures, including Thai, Chinese, and English (Meyers 2019). While the accuracy of this view is debatable, such underlying perception would indeed contribute to explain a priority given to schooling as a tool to spread the national language, rather than an education system fully embracing the country's language diversity—a prospect which typically comes with significant challenges in many ethnically-diverse nations.

35 As far as access to education is concerned, however, this article has demonstrated that a well-adapted pedagogical approach can mitigate some of the challenges for ethnic minorities. While exposure to Lao language in the community and at home plays a crucial role in shaping students' language acquisition and academic success, the case studies in Savannakhet and Huaphanh provinces illustrate that student-centered teaching methods can enhance learning outcomes for ethnic minority children, even without formal bilingual education. By making lessons more engaging, interactive, and relevant to students' daily lives, teachers can foster greater motivation and participation in learning.

36 The findings, however, also suggest that addressing the language barrier in education requires a multifaceted approach. While improving teaching methods and Lao language instruction is essential, policies should also support greater flexibility in the use of minority languages in the classroom, particularly in early grades. Capacity-building for teachers and curriculum adaptation are necessary to create an inclusive learning environment that values linguistic and cultural diversity. Future research should explore the long-term impact of different instructional models on ethnic minority students' learning trajectories and social integration. Ultimately, a more contextualized and responsive approach to language instruction is key to reducing educational disparities and ensuring equitable learning opportunities for all children in Laos.

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Note de fin

1 Knowledge is always seen as a power of acting in a specific situation. When learning a new knowldege, the learner become able to do something that he was previously unable to do (in a specific situation, within a given institution).

2 It is generally regarded as the most important national monument in Laos as well as a national symbol.

3 Phong is a small ethnic group (Mon-Khmer ethnolinguistic group) mainly living between Huaphanh and Xieng Khuang provinces.

4 Kingdom of Laos, Royal Decree No. 238, July 30, 1962, cited in Noonan (2014: 4).

5 Interview with the Head of the Department of Lao Language for Ethnic Groups at the Research Institute of Education Sciences – MoES, 11/04/2024.

6 Group of teachers at Nagnone school in Hmong village, Sopbao District, Huaphanh Province.

7 Khmu teachers from Homthong school.

8 Interview with the Head of the Department of Lao Language for Ethnic Groups, Research Institute of Education Sciences, 11/04/2024.

9 Under Strategy 2: “Enhance learning and teaching quality for primary education.”

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