The Development of *Morbhasa* Innovations for Solving Problems in Thai Language Pronunciation

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Abstract – *This research is aimed to solve the problems of Thai pronunciation by studying the conditions, factors and settings of language therapist (Morbhasa) learning activities. The findings are that institutions are driven by different factors when setting learning activities and transmitting Morbhasa innovations. Morbhasa youth projects are aimed at developing leadership in students, particularly those students lacking adequate interpersonal skills. This is the biggest problem because the students have many other activities and burdens that make it difficult for project organizers to arrange schedules. The curriculum is inflexible in accommodating additional subjects, so the teachers have to implement activities after normal class time. They also lack budget, teaching materials, learning media and innovations for motivating students to attend the activities continuously. The teachers lack opportunities to develop their knowledge and understanding of implementation techniques and there is a lack of working staff and reinforcements. The research finds four methods of setting activities. Eight ways of transmitting the innovations were found: 1) by transmitting among friends; 2) by working together; 3) by working with a sense of beliefs and respect; 4) by creating a variety of activities; 5) by using a peer network; 6) by assignments from leaders; 7) by practicing the learning process; and 8) by integrating the seven strategies. The institutions should select appropriate ways for their own context, readiness and limitations. It is believed that the innovations of the language therapist Morbhasa should be widely transmitted in the educational circle to tackle critical problems of Thai language usage.*

Keywords – *Development, learning activities, Morbhasa, Thai language pronunciation, transmission.*

INTRODUCTION

The Thai Language has been influenced and changed by globalization. The younger generations are not proud to speak their own mother language, and unclearly pronounce their spoken Thai, by using foreign language vocal sounds, affecting the language tones. They use borrowed vocabulary and idioms with no reasons. People of all levels have these defects in listening, speaking, reading and writing. There is a crisis of Thai language usage. Even teachers and educators lack care in solving these problems. This means that Thai people lack the realization and interest to preserve the cultural identity of the nation. They neither see its value and importance nor feel proud to use their own language. These problems need an urgent resolution. Thus, the priority is to nurture the younger generations to affectively learn, speak, write and use the Thai language, for all people, as language owners, should be responsible to conserve it to a standardized level. The people entrusted with the restoration of the Thai language are *Morbhasa*, or language therapists. These professionals run clinics to try and improve the standards of Thai language use among youths throughout the country.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This research is aimed to solve the problems of Thai pronunciation by studying the conditions, factors

and settings of language therapist (Morbhasa) learning activities. The paper examines the problems of implementing Morbhasa techniques and resolutions of these problems.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

For this research, data were collected from 13 network institutions of the *Morbhasa* (Language Therapist) Project, where activities have been being implemented with distinctive results, from all regions of Thailand. The research population was composed of teachers conducting the project and the student leaders of projects in the network of institutions. The research sample was purposively chosen from a group of experts and practitioners with the strict criteria that they operated language clinics or practices for youths in Northeastern Thailand. A group of educators relating to the research was accidentally sampled. The tools used in the research were surveys, non-participant observations, document studies, structured interviews, non-structured interviews, focus group discussions and workshop memoirs. The data relating to learning activities and transmitting *Morbhasa* innovations were analyzed and synthesized, through discussion, evaluation and development by experts, educators, and related professional organizations. All data was validated by methodological triangulation. The expected results are definition of an ideal setting for learning activities and transmission of *Morbhasa* innovations to affectively tackle the problems of Thai pronunciation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

After a two-year study, it was found that the setting of *Morbhasa* learning activities in each of the 13 institutions is similar because the institutions retain the principles, concepts, theories, objectives, learning contents, learning processes, evaluation and learning media from the original *Morbhasa* Youth Project. They all perform their tasks in the form of extra-curricular activities and integrate them into the core curriculum. Less popular activities are those developing learners and additional subjects. It was found that transmission of *Morbhasa* innovations occurs in seven ways: inside institutions, outside institutions, among teachers, from teachers to learners, from project leaders, from students to other students or a combination of the aforementioned methods.

Table 1. Patterns of setting *Morbhasa* learning activities in institutions

Pattern of activities for developing learners	Pattern of extra-curricular activities	Pattern of additional subjects in the curriculum	Pattern of integration into eight core subjects
Morbhasa (language therapy) clubs Language therapy clinics in institutions Training and developing therapists Hour-long workshops for tackling pronunciation problems, one period a week Non-credit evaluation	*Morbhasa* camps Training curriculum for five bases of learning Training courses for developing language therapists Therapy clinics inside and outside institutions Tackling pronunciation problems after normal classes Mobile therapy activities A variety of activities tackling the problems using *Morbhasa* techniques No evaluation	Creation of a curriculum for additional subjects Recruitment of personnel for *Morbhasa* clinics Organisation of place and materials for clinics Implementation of the curriculum Operation of activities Supervision and evaluation using the curriculum Subject evaluation according to the criteria of each institution	Thai language Mathematics Science Social studies, religion and culture Health studies and physical education Arts Vocation and technology Foreign languages

Factors to consider when setting Morbhasa learning activities

The research was carefully conducted on the basis that Thai youth should be leaders in tackling the problems of Thai language usage by giving them trust, praise, acceptance, encouragement and by creating confidence with self-conscious techniques and skills of language therapists. The youth are guardians of the Thai language.

The basic concepts used as the framework in developing the learning activities of *Morbhasa* are cooperative learning, problem solving, language learning and peer tutoring. Four theories are used as the basis of setting *Mobhasa* learning activities: 1) Learning theory; 2) Administrative theory; 3) Diffusion of culture; 4) Diffusion theory of innovation. Included as the basis of this research are Bloom's, Maslow's, Thorndike's and Skinner's theories. Bloom believed effective teaching depends on the teachers developing the students to change their behaviors in intelligence, physique and mentality.[1] Maslow thought that human beings have the same basic needs: physical needs, safety, love, acceptance, praise, and the need to develop their potential.[2] Thorndike's theory related to the roles of readiness, practice and result. When learners are ready to learn, they have high attention, are willing to

learn, practice and get positive results.[3] Skinner believed human behaviors depend on conditions of response. The intensity of expressing behavior depends on reinforcement and individual differences.[4] Also included as the basis of this research is the administrative theory of POSDCoRB: Planning, Organizing, Staffing, Directing, Coordinating, Reporting and Budgeting[5]

In the present era of globalization, cultural diffusion occurs all the time and causes inaccuracies in Thai pronunciation. Some aspects of the trend (those not affecting the value and identity of the Thai language) could be accepted in the learning activities of *Morbhasa*. However, it is important to prevent inappropriate cultural trends for the national cultural virtue of Thailand to be conserved and protected. Innovations are the most prominent causes of social and cultural changes. Accepting innovations depends on individuals, social systems, communicative systems, innovations and time. If individuals accept them, the innovation will disperse into the society. If not, they will not be able to diffuse.[6]

Morbhasa Clinics

The objectives of *Morbhasa* clinics (**Figure 1**) are to set learning activities for the network of institutions to tackle the problems of the Thai language usage, to strengthen teachers' and learners' realization of the importance of the Thai language, to develop youth skills as leaders in tackling the problems and to praise and encourage good users of the Thai language. These learning activities are set for *Morbhasa* in the network of institutions.

Figure 1. *Morbhasa* (Language Therapist) Clinic

The learning content is limited to units dedicated to realizing problems, believing in correction, persevering in practice, commitment of leadership and doing

researches. The learning process used in the network of institutions starts from registration, followed by self-assessment, diagnosis, treatment, advice, prescription and ends at issuing certificates.[7] The project and the five-unit learning activities are separately evaluated at the end of each academic year. The learning process is designed in four methods: activities for developing learners, extra-curricular activities, additional subjects and integration in core subjects. It was found that these four methods are managed differently, depending on the readiness and limitations of each institution (Figure 2).
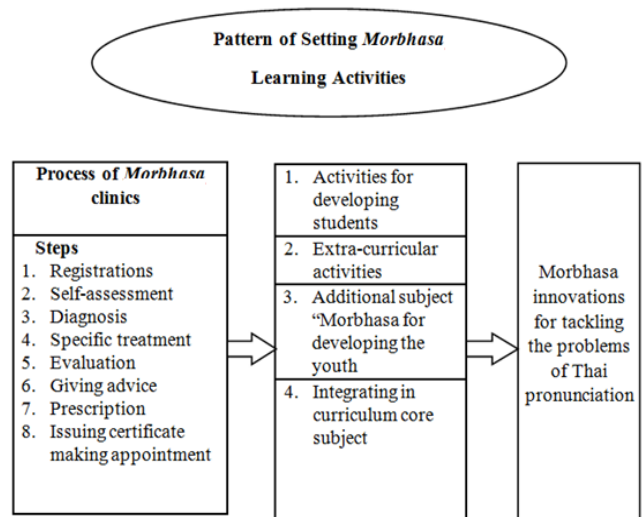

Figure 2. Diagram to illustrate pattern of setting Morbhasa learning activities

Problems and methods to tackle the problems

This research found problems in five categories: man power, budget, materials, management and reinforcements, which includes a lack of skilled personnel. The student language therapists had many other engagements that affected their time management. Besides, the teachers concerned had to put the *Morbhasa* project aside from teaching periods and were forced to arrange them after normal classes. Moreover, the project also lacked financial support, working materials, public relations and attractive innovations to build up a positive attitude for students to continually participate in the activities. The teachers had fewer opportunities to improve their knowledge to manipulate the project and also lacked teamwork and encouragement for their tasks. As suggestions for solutions to the problems, the researchers synthesized

the patterns of the learning process and the methods of transmitting *Morbhasa* innovations for the institutions to implement in the future.

From discussions with knowledgeable educators and practitioners it was concluded that the institutions should engage *Morbhasa* activities in their curriculum with additional subjects in the scope of the Thai language content, providing learners with suitable time and credits, creating learning plans and organizing sufficient materials. Moreover, the institutions should set up *Morbhasa* clinics with an appealing atmosphere, adequate working staff and systematic organization and supervision. The staff should coordinate with other teachers for purposes of tracking and should tackle problems continuously and seriously.

Development of learning activity management and efficient transmission of Morbhasa innovations

There should be social activities during learning activities to aid student development and interested students should be provided with opportunities to attend the activities. Extra-curricular activities of this kind should also be provided in a variety of ways, suitable to the knowledge and ability of age groups. These can be applied to the schools' operating plans with the consultation of a committee. The administrators should set a policy stipulating that all students must pass a reading-skill assessment and receive certification from the language clinic in order to motivate them to develop their skills in oral reading. Reinforcement and praise for the teachers and students should also be openly expressed.

Besides, learning activities should be integrated in other related subjects. The students should administer their own activities and the teachers only support and supervise. Transmitting and expanding the activities should be practiced annually so that senior students can transmit their knowledge and experiences to the juniors. The language clinic should be equipped with modern materials and innovations so it can be perceived as a place of learning and a model for the students of other institutions. However, the most important factors in tackling the problems successfully are strong will, determination, sacrifice and teachers devoted to developing student learning.

This investigation found that the learning system is organized in four categories: 1) engaging learning activities for developing students; 2) arranging learning activities as extra-curricular programs; 3) arranging activities as additional subjects in the school curriculum; and 4) integrating learning activities in core curriculum subjects.

Expert advice was sought to develop the transmission process and the outcome was a set of eight strategies used as means to transmit Morbhasa innovations (Figure 3): transmitting among peers, working together, working with a sense of belief and respect, creating a variety of activities, using peer networks, completing assignments from leaders, practicing with learning activities and integrating all seven strategies.
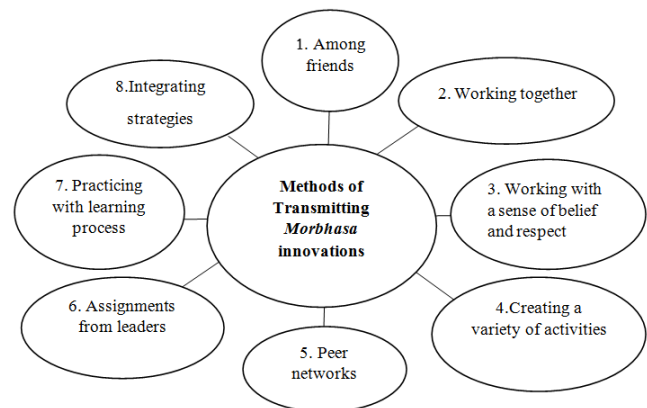

Figure 3. Diagram to illustrate the eight methods for transmitting Morbhasa innovations

These transmission methods will help lessen the problems and bring more support and efficiency to the *Morbhasa* clinics. It can be said that strong will and determination to tackle the obstacles of the clinic directly affect the success of learning activities and transmission. Even with obstacles and operational problems, the teachers are still able to implement the projects efficiently and nurture youth therapists to willingly share the same ideology and expand the network. Another factor affecting the success of *Morbhasa* projects is the support from institution administrators. If they have the vision and will to conserve and transmit this innovation in order to tackle the problems seriously, there will be success and practitioners will have more motivation to accomplish their tasks to their full potential.

Another factor to consider is winning the hearts of the youth leaders. If young people realize the significance of Thai language misuse, especially in pronunciation, and have the consciousness to be responsible for their mother language, they will be proud to be *Morbhasa* youth leaders and guardians of

the language. The success and sustainability of the transmission depends on the following four factors: the character of the innovations, the character of key personnel, the strength of the network and inspiration. The *Morbhasa* project has been sustainably transmitted 'bottom-up' and accepted by practitioners for 16 years. The leaders of the initiative, who work hard with sacrifice, commitment, high attention, perseverance and their own human qualities, clearly are the keys to sustainable transmission and acceptance.

Figure 4. Morbhasa Clinic services in tackling Thai pronunciation problems

The success of expanding and transmitting the innovations depends on the strength of the network and the leaders, whose vision ideology and commitment to practice stays in the common interest.[8] Inspiration is also an important factor for the success of *Morbhasa* innovations (Figure 4), which are still being operated in all levels of educational institutions, even with problems and obstacles. Everyone involved persists on the same ideology: "Love the King, mind the Thai language, correct misuse". This motto keeps them focused on the heart of the Royal Thai Kingdom and inspires them to commit and fight against all obstacles in order to campaign, conserve, maintain and transmit the Thai language as a heritage for younger generations. His Majesty King Bhumibhol addressed the Thai people on 19th July 1959, telling them to realize and stay conscious of their responsibility as owners of the language and to protect the national language. Thailand has its own language for its own use, which is great. It's a valuable heritage for us all to conserve. It was a primary concern then and remains so now.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

From the results documented above, it is evident that *Morbhasa* learning activities and the methods of transmitting *Morbhasa* innovations are effective and appropriate for tackling the problems of Thai language pronunciation. All commissioners have the same faith to protect, conserve and transmit the Thai language as the nation's treasure. So *Morbhasa* innovations should be spread and transmitted widely in the educational field to help tackle the critical problems of Thai language usage: in dissemination strategies, as a derived method, as a culture and by developing students and youth as the real leaders in tackling the problems of Thai language usage.

Suggestions

Institutions implementing *Morbhasa* projects for developing students should support the Thai language content group to manage the activities in various ways so that students are provided with options suitable to their interests. The project should be engaged in the curriculum, as an additional subject and efficiently managed for sustainable success. For more motivation in pronunciation skill, record booklets for correcting and improving the skill of each student should be produced as self-assessment. The students should be periodically evaluated by *Morbhasa* language clinics until they pass evaluation and receive certificates.

At a political level, the Ministry of Education, with the cooperation of the Ministry of Culture, should issue a national agenda to campaign and conserve the Thai language, stressing maintenance of the standard of the language and its correct usage by arranging training courses for Thai language teachers from all over the country so that they understand and are able to

implement learning activities and innovations in educational institutions of all levels.

At a practical level, teachers should collate information about student reading problems, analyze and design their teaching materials to tackle pronunciation problems using different methods. The materials should be specifically designed for each problem and appropriately used according to the level of the students' ability. Electronic materials should also be designed for students' self-study, to practice and develop their oral reading skills on any occasion. Thai language teachers should integrate *Morbhasa* teaching techniques, exercises and materials in their teaching activities and arrange a variety of extra-curricular activities to realize their roles and duties to conserve and protect the Thai language as their heritage.

This investigation only chose a small purposively selected sample of language therapists in Northeastern Thailand. In order for a more thorough picture of language use and restoration to be created, further study is required to analyze Morbhasa and their clinics in other regions of Thailand.

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