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Communication and Linguistic Studies

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Code Switching in Tai dam classrooms in Nakon Pathom, Thailand

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Abstract

Tai Dam, an ethnic language of Vietnamese immigrants, is among the minority languages facing a decline in their use among the younger generation in Thailand. Efforts have been made to preserve the ethnic language through education programs. Based on an awareness that the proper use of students' first language serves useful pedagogical and social functions in multi-ethnic classrooms, the present case study thus examined: 1) the teacher's beliefs about Tai Dam teaching and learning, classroom language and codeswitching; 2) his classroom language use, code switching types and functions; and 3) his students' language use and functions. The observational and interview data, collected from one native teacher of Tai Dam and his students at two schools in Nakon Pathom, revealed: 1) the teacher's belief in teaching Tai Dam to preserve the language and culture through traditional methods, using Tai Dam as a sole classroom medium; 2) his small number of switches to Central Thai, most of which were inter-sentential switches used to present new information; and 3) his students' main use of Tai Dam for passive functions. Overall, the study shed some light to language teachers on appropriate codeswitching, and to policy makers in providing appropriate training to teachers of ethnic languages.

Keywords: Tai Dam, classroom interaction, codeswitching, pedagogic goals

Introduction

Thailand is a multidialectal and multicultural society. Central Thai was established as the official national language; yet the national language policy also recognizes other

languages, dialects and indigenous minorities. Tai Dam, spoken by the Tai Dam (Tai Song Dam) ethnic group, which migrated from Vietnam, is one of the minority languages which seem to be facing a decline in their use among the younger generation. Due to its lack of popularity, it is expected that there will be no Tai Dam native speakers in Thailand in fifty years times.

Efforts thus have been made to preserve Tai Dam through education programs at schools and local communities. Apart from being taught at cultural centers in communities, Tai Dam has also become a subject in a number of schools where a large number of students are from the ethnic background. Research into the teaching and use of Tai Dam in Thai schools is rare, and there is low recognition of teacher talk and classroom codeswitching, largely because Tai Dam is not widely spoken or taught in Thai schools, where Thai is the sole classroom medium for students from all ethnic backgrounds. Based on recent research in foreign language teaching, a number of benefits of classroom codeswitching when used with a learner-center approach have been revealed.

The present study thus presents a case study of teacher talk and codeswitching in Tai Dam classrooms at two schools in Nakon Pathom, where the language is taught as a compulsory foreign language. It aims to explore: 1) the teacher's beliefs about Tai Dam teaching and learning, classroom language and codeswitching; 2) his classroom language use, code switching types and functions; and 3) his students' language use and functions, as their language choice may be influenced by the teacher's switches and vice versa.

Background of the Study

From the vicinity of Muang Thaeng or present-day Dien Bien Phu in northwestern Vietnam, Tai Dam (the Black Tai, named for the color of their traditional clothing) first migrated to Petchaburi Province in Western Thailand in 1779 AD. Since then, the

communities of Tai Dam in Thailand have been widely scattered in neighboring provinces in the western region (Kanchanaburi and Rachaburi) and the central region (Nakon Pathom, Samut Sakhon, and Samut Songkhram) (Burusphat et al., 2012). Tai Dam families live in modern-style houses, but traditional Tai Dam thatch houses are still found in cultural/wisdom centers and museums. Most Tai Dam work in farming, but weaving is also considered their specialized occupation.

The renowned characteristics of Tai Dam are friendliness, hospitality, peacefulness, loyalty, and sense of humour. Their basic societal unit is very strong and close-knit. They believe in spirits and supernatural forces ("Phi"), guarding their lives and determining their destiny. The two most important ceremonies of Tai Dam that require great community collaboration are the Sen Huan ritual (worshiping ancestral spirits) and the funeral. Tai Dam kids and adults play various traditional games in their free time or festivals, con throwing being the most entertaining.

Tai Dam people have their own spoken and written language, *Tai Dam*, which belongs to the south-western branch of the Tai language family. According to Burusphat (1997), the phonology and grammar of this language is similar to the Central Thai phonology. Certain differences include, for example, the nasalization of the /j/ phoneme and the larger number of tones (6 tones). The scripts of Tai Dam were assumedly derived from "The Sukhothai Script" of 1283-1438 due to the expansion of the Sukhothai kingdom to many regions nearby, e.g. the Gulf of Tonkin and Laos.

The Thai schooling system is divided into three key stages: six years in primary school (Prathom 1 - 6), three years in lower secondary school (Matthayom 1 - 3), and three years in higher secondary school (Matthayom 4 - 6). The main language and culture influencing daily instructional tasks is Central Thai, the official language of the country. Other languages taught in Thai schools tend to be foreign languages (e.g. English, Chinese, Japanese, French and German) rather than languages of indigenous groups. School rituals

also tend to follow the norm of the central culture, for example, the *wai khru* ceremony at the start of the academic year, in which students present their teachers with flower garlands to pay respects and express their gratitude to their teachers.

Nakon Pathom is one of the provinces in the central region of Thailand where Tai Dam groups have formed strong communities and where great efforts have been made to maintain the language from becoming extinct. Nowadays Tai Dam is a school subject in six schools at different districts in Nakon Pathom, taught twice or two hours a week. This subject is considered the only subject which allows both Tai Dam and non-Tai Dam students exposure to both spoken and written Tai Dam.

Literature Review

This part will review some attempts to bring back ethnic languages through teaching in schools, and the development of classroom interaction research from its early days to the present trend, which recognizes contextual factors, pedagogical factors and the role of codeswitching.

Ethnic Language Maintenance through Teaching in Schools

In many countries with ethnic minorities, it is generally expected that schools be an important channel for helping preserve endangered languages. Yet various studies have revealed that although the teaching of ethnic languages in schools is promoted, ethnic language teachers have not been adequately trained regarding appropriate teaching approaches and patterns of interaction.

In Fiji, for example, Shameem (2007) has observed that the education policy requires primary schools to teach ethnic languages in the first three years even though many schools

have not been able to put it into practice due a lack of linguistic resources and proper teacher training. Majzuba and Raisb (2011) have also found that lecturers and undergraduate students at a Malaysian university urge their government to urgently preserve *Bateq*, an ethnic language in danger of extinction with only about 1,500 native speakers, through formal curricular and co-curricular at both micro and macro levels.

Classroom Interaction, Contexts and Pedagogic Goals

Classroom interaction, contexts, and pedagogic goals are essential components in learner-centered approaches, which are geneally encouraged in the teaching of second or foreign languages. Tsui (2001, 120) defined classroom interaction as “the interaction between the teacher and learners, and among the learners in the classroom” and also provided the background of research in this area. L2 (a second language) classroom interaction research has been ongoing for more than a few decades due to a general agreement among researchers that there is a link between classroom talk and learning, i.e. knowledge construction or cognitive development (Mercer 1994; Mercer and Littleton 2007).

Recent researchers, however, have considered that it is not possible to find the “best” method of language teaching without looking at less observable influences on classroom interaction and learning, which are attitudes, attribution, beliefs, learning styles, motivation, and socio-cultural background. Yet differences among recent classroom interaction research have been revealed (Li and Walsh 2011). Some researchers seem to strongly advocate that conversations in language classrooms are comparable to conversations in everyday life, and therefore disapprove of classes where there is a high quantity of teacher talk. Nonetheless, there are many scholars that hold a different belief in that L2 classroom discourse has its own unique components, i.e. setting, participants and language use. This may be elaborated by Walsh (2002), who has maintained that the teacher plays major roles in controlling topics,

content, procedure, participants and turns of participation, interaction management, talking and modification of their talk. The role of learners, however, is mainly to take cues from their teacher.

Thus relationship among characteristics of classroom interaction, contexts and pedagogic purposes is another significant factor in recent classroom interaction research (Seedhouse 2004). Apart from the distinctive classroom features stated earlier, van Lier (2001, 92) has also put forward that the influence of contexts should not be underestimated: “In the social setting of the classroom, interaction among participants takes place against a backdrop of constraints and resources that are in some ways different, in some ways similar, to those that characterize other settings.” Nunan (1996) has also argued for the need to take into consideration the context in which classroom behaviour occurs, in the sense that we should not draw conclusions about teacher and student behavioral patterns without listening to their voices first. Borg (2006; 2009) has further advocated exploring “voices” of language teachers or teacher cognition, including teacher decision-making, knowledge, thought processes, beliefs, prior language learning, and pre-service/in-service teacher education. This is because what happens in language classrooms tends to reflect these teacher cognition elements.

There are two points of view concerning the context where classroom interactions take place. Some researchers claim the language classroom setting is comparable to the “real” world; thus they encourage the integration of “authentic” communication in the classroom while rejecting teacher-fronted or transmission-style teaching. The opposing view, nevertheless, distinguishes between bigger contexts (such as schools, cities and countries) and a smaller classroom context, considering that a classroom is a context with a ‘real’ language on its own (van Lier 1988).

Seedhouse (1996, 118) has also agreed with the latter view of classroom contexts, seeing them as “the interface between pedagogy and interaction”. Walsh (2006, 62) has used

the term *mode* for this type of context, and defined it as having “a clearly defined pedagogic goal and distinctive interaction features determined largely by a teacher’s use of language”. In short, this viewpoint believes that there is a local construction of classroom context by the participant through their interaction based on institutional goals and immediate pedagogic goals (ibid.). Based on this idea, it is acceptable that some teaching methods and activities, such as teacher-fronted and transmission-style grammar explanation, require more teacher talking than those that encourage active learner response (Walsh and Li 2011).

Codeswitching and Classroom Interaction

Codeswitching, as defined by Richards and Schmidt (2002), is “a mixing of two codes or languages, usually without a change of topic..... This is quite common in bilingual or multilingual communities and is often a mark of solidarity.... (It) can involve various levels of language, e.g., phonology, morphology, grammatical structures, or lexical items.” It occurs when a bilingual or multilingual speaker switches from one language to another in the same discourse or even in the same utterance (Mayers-Scotton 1997; O’Cain and Leibschner 2009). This speech behaviour has been a widely investigated topic in the area of bilingualism due to its varied patterns. Crystal (2006) concluded that speakers normally code-switch from the more influential language to their ethnic language for three main purposes: 1) to convey their deeper thoughts, especially when they are stressed or tired, and thus have less concentration; 2) to show solidarity among members of the same cultural group, as well as to prevent outsiders from getting involved with their group; and 3) to express the speaker’s emotion or attitude towards the listener, i.e. friendliness, annoyance, proximity, or irony.

Coulmas (2005, 112) has regarded codeswitching as a controllable strategy, also widespread in multilingual professional environments, such as international trade, the airline industry, and language classrooms, “A foreign language teacher uses the foreign language,

L2, in class, but occasionally provides some explanations in the students' native language, L1". This use of L2 in alternation with the learner's L1 has created controversies. Code switching in classroom conversation may also be in conflict with old-fashioned teaching methods, which put a considerable emphasis on explaining language rules in the learner's first language. This purist belief that codeswitching lowers the standard of the target language also makes teachers feel embarrassed to admit they codeswitch, even though they do so.

However, recent research has revealed that teacher code switching can serve useful functions in classroom interaction, based on pedagogic goals of particular moments of teaching and learning (Adendorff 1996; O'Cain and Leibscher 2009; Cook 2010). Bowers (1980) proposed seven pedagogical and social functions of teacher codeswitching: 1) *present* – to present information or ideas relevant to the learning task; 2) *elicit* – to produce a verbal response from another speaker or speakers; 3) *direct* – to encourage students' non-verbal activity related to the learning task; 4) *organize* – to structure the learning task or environment; 5) *evaluate* – to assess students' response; 6) *sociate* – to establish or maintain social relationships to facilitate the learning task; and 7) *respond* – to react to students' utterances.

Eldridge (1996, 305-307) proposed that students, in response to their teacher, may also codeswitch for the following reasons: 1) *equivalence* – using a native equivalent due to a lack of knowledge of the target language; 2) *floor-holding* – using a native language to fill gaps during communication; 3) *reiteration* – to reinforce, emphasize, or clarify messages not previously understood; and 4) *conflict control* – to transfer precise meaning and avoid misunderstanding.

Codeswitching episodes may be categorized into three types, based on Sankoff and Poplack (1981): *tag-switching* (the switching of a tag phrase or a word); *intra-sentential switching* (switching within a sentence); and *inter-sentential switching* (switching between sentences). Various social and academic objectives of both language teachers and learners

can be achieved through codeswitching (Adendorff 1996). Thus, codeswitching may be considered as a kind of “contextualization cue” (Gumperz 1982, 119), or a signal the speaker chooses to perform important functions, as well as a way to give a “meta-message” (Tennen, 1985, 204) about the speaker’s intention and the relationship between the speaker and the listener. O’Cain and Leibscher (2009, 142) discovered that classroom codeswitching helps “support learning through scaffolding or the promotion of inter-subjectivity”, which then promotes learners to be able to code switch like bilingual speakers do.

The Present Study

The Setting and Participants

The present study was carried out at two primary schools in Nakon Pathom in the central region of Thailand, where attempts had been made by schools, local communities and ethnolinguists to preserve Tai Dam by including the language as a compulsory foreign language course. The participants in the present study consisted of one teacher and approximately 60 students. The selection of the participant teacher was based on availability and easy accessibility. Only one male Tai Dam teacher, aged over 70, was willing to participate due to a shortage of Tai Dam native teachers, causing the teacher to be in charge of teaching the language at different schools. His students from the two observed classes (each consisting of roughly 30 students) also participated in yielding data on students’ talk.

The Research Questions

The present study intended to answer the following research questions, relevant to the research aims presented in the introductory part:

- 1) What are the teacher's beliefs about Tai Dam teaching and learning with an emphasis on the classroom language and code-switching?
- 2) What are the teacher's classroom language use, code switching types and code switching functions in his talk?
- 3) What are the students' classroom language use and functions?

Data Collection

Two qualitative methods were employed in this small-scale study:

Video-recordings of Classes

During the first semester in June 2012, two video-recorded non-participant observations of the teacher's one-hour class were made to obtain data on the classroom discourse, with the focus on the classroom language use, codeswitching types in both teacher and students' talk, and the key functions of their switches in relation to contexts and pedagogic purposes. The lessons recorded were basic Tai Dam for Primary Year 6 students, including easy Tai Dam poetry and Tai Dam scripts. The number of students per class was nearly 30; yet the two multi-ethnic classes observed differed in terms of the number of students from Tai Dam families in that the number was higher in the first school.

Individual Interview

A semi-structured interview with the teacher was conducted after the second observed class. The interview lasted approximately 30 minutes, covering the following issues: 1) the role of the language in Thailand; 2) the teaching and learning of Tai Dam at

both school settings; and 3) different aspects about the teaching and learning, highlighting classroom codeswitching.

Data analysis

The data collected underwent word-for-word transcription, and were content-analysed based on two steps of coding. The purpose of the first step was to identify sections for the main themes; i.e. the teacher's beliefs about different aspects of language teaching and learning, the reasons for his beliefs, and other constraining factors, the classroom language use, the various patterns of classroom codeswitching, the different functions of the teacher and students' switches. For the second step of coding, the researcher re-read the transcripts of the observed classes and the interview to extract concepts of the main themes and corresponding quotations. After coding, the interview results and the observational results were presented and discussed.

Findings

The findings comprise three main parts: 1) the Tai Dam teacher's beliefs about language teaching and learning, including classroom language use and codeswitching; 2) his classroom language use and codeswitching from his two classes, his switches between Tai Dam and Thai in terms of their type and function; and 3) students' classroom language use and functions.

The Teacher's Beliefs

The teachers' beliefs about the teaching and learning of Tai Dam will be discussed in terms of the role of the Tai Dam language in Tai Dam communities, particularly in Nakhon Pathom, the purpose of teaching and learning the language, good teaching methods, and the classroom language use and codeswitching. These will be followed by the teacher's reasons for his expressed beliefs and any constraining factors.

The role of the Tai Dam language in Tai Dam communities

The teacher was aware that Tai Dam had become less essential for work and daily life. Not only did younger members in Tai Dam communities not want to learn the language themselves, but their parents also wanted their children to grow up speaking Central Thai:

Now they don't want the language. They wonder why they should learn it, as it can't be used for work. They don't see the importance of their ancestors' language. Once I chatted with little Tai Dam kids in Tai Dam, their parents got angry. They didn't want their kids to know their grandparents' language, as it's not modern...I offered to teach the language to them at weekends. They just had to form groups of ten or twenty, and I would go to teach them. But they said they were too busy working

The purpose of teaching and learning Tai Dam

The teacher himself started learning his ethnic language after he had obtained his higher secondary school certificate. His aim was not to use the language for communication, but for conducting important ceremonies in traditionally correct ways, particularly the Sen Huan ritual: "My father wanted me to learn the language related to the Sen Huan ritual. As an educated person, I didn't think it was my job, and there were those responsible for it. We discussed the reason; he said others might not do it the right way. We could do it right once we knew the language."

Thus when it came to teaching the language to Tai Dam school students, the teacher did not intend to teach communication skills: “Actually, teaching conversations is also possible. But this is not my aim. I’m doing it for the sake of Tai Dam rituals, which fewer people learn about. There are those who learn Tai Dam via Central Thai’s alphabet, causing their pronunciation to be incorrect.”

Methods of teaching the Tai Dam language

In regards to good language teaching, the teacher was not in favour of communicative methods due to two factors: the beginner’s level of the students and his purpose of teaching the language to preserve Tai Dam rituals (previously stated). Teacher-fronted teaching of pronouncing the Tai Dam consonants and vowels, followed by vocabulary practice, were predominant in his classes:

I think the way I’m doing it is the fastest way for students to master the language. First, I let them see the consonants and the vowels, and then show them how to form words. There is another book of Tai Dam vocabulary for them to use later, or after they know how to form words. For conversation practice, they don’t do it now, as they still can’t read. They’re just beginners.

Classroom talk and codeswitching

The teacher supported the use of both Central Thai (L1) and Tai Dam (L2), but the amount of L1 and L2 should vary depending on learner levels. He supported the use of as much L2 as possible for advanced learners, while codeswitching was required for the beginner-level classes:

Half of the students in this class are Tai Dam. There are some Thai kids in this class; they understand Tai Dam quite well, but may still find it difficult if it is the only classroom medium. So I use Central Thai for translation...But at another school, where I’m responsible for teaching Tai Dam to three classes, both Tai Dam and non-Tai Dam students won’t get it if it’s used as a classroom language. They say they have no experience using the language. Their parents never taught it to them.

The teacher supported the alternation between Tai Dam and Central Thai for different purposes. Central Thai was used for explaining or reviewing grammar rules to students: “When students look blank, I have to switch to Central Thai language, both spoken and written. It serves as a link to make students better understand what they are learning. When they get more advanced next semester, I will use Tai Dam characters.”

Reasons for the beliefs related to codeswitching

The teacher identified factors which he thought were likely to be linked with his beliefs in codeswitching. He indicated that his belief in teaching and learning Tai Dam to preserve the traditions had come from his father, who was a Tai Dam folk singer. He believed in using as much Tai Dam as possible when teaching the language, as his parents and older relatives spoke only Tai Dam at home: “All my beliefs are from my father, a folk singer and master of ceremonies, who wanted me to know the language. Most folk song composers spoke no Thai. My father and my mother spoke only Tai Dam.”

Constraining factors

The teacher said in some poor areas of Vietnam, Tai Dam teachers had no salary. Villagers gave them food in exchange for the language. Being Tai Dam teachers in Vietnam was therefore considered miserable. In contrast the teacher enjoyed doing the job in Thailand, not because it was well-paid, but money was not a big deal for him: “As long as the students show that they know the language, I was happy to continue teaching. Money is not the matter in this case.”

The Teachers' Classroom Language Use and Codeswitching

This part will reveal findings concerning the classroom talk of both the teacher and his students, including the number of their Central Thai and Tai Dam utterances, types and functions of their codeswitching.

The classroom talk

The two lessons observed differed greatly in terms of length of teacher talk, but not in terms of classroom language use. The transcripts of both lessons revealed a greater number of teacher utterances (61.02% and 66.15%) than that of student utterances (38.98% and 33.85%), as well as extensive use of Tai Dam in the teacher's talk (87.56% in the first lesson and 72.62% in the second lesson) with little use of Central Thai, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1 The classroom talk

Lesson	No of utterances	Teacher utterances		Student utterances		Teacher utterances in Central Thai		Teacher utterances in Tai Dam	
		No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
1	531	324	61.02	207	38.98	40	12.34	284	87.56
2	127	84	66.15	43	33.85	23	27.38	61	72.62

Regarding code-switching in the teacher's talk, four types of code-switching were evident, including: 1) *tag-switching* (the switching of a tag phrase or a word); 2) *intra-sentential switching* (switching within a sentence); 3) *inter-sentential switching* (switching between sentences); and long turns (entire stretches in the first language), based on Sankoff and Poplack (1981).

Types of codeswitching in the teacher's talk

Table 2 Types of code-switching in the teachers talk and the number of occurrences

Tag-switching				Intra-sentential switching				Inter-sentential switching				Long turns				Total			
Lesson 1		Lesson 2		Lesson 1		Lesson 2		Lesson 1		Lesson 2		Lesson 1		Lesson 2		Lesson 1		Lesson 2	
No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
16	43.24	3	18.75	5	13.51	4	25	16	43.24	6	37.5	0	0	3	18.75	37	100	16	100

As shown in Table 2, inter-sentential switching outweighed the other types of codeswitching in both lessons, accounting for 43.24 % and 37.5 %. The following extracts are examples of the teacher's inter-sentential switches. (Central Thai expressions are in square brackets and italicized.)

1 (Inter-sentential switching, Lesson 1):

T: อออ่างเขียนจี้ เขียนเลขศูนย์ เออ ออ เออเขียนจี้ เออเขียนเลขศูนย์ละ เออ [มาหมดแล้วใช่ไหมพวกเรา อ้าวทำ
ความเคารพครูก่อน เสียงดังๆหน่อยเพื่อนจะได้ยิน เอาใหม่]

(Translation: This is how to write Aow-ang. This is the way of writing Number 0. Yes, it's like Number 0. [*Are you all here? Now pay respect to me first. Say it loudly (talking to one student), so your friends will be able to hear you. Do it again.*])

2 (Inter-sentential switching, Lesson 2):

T: อ่านอันที่สองแล้วทำจี้หน้าตั้งมา เอ๊ะเสียงโตะเขาทำจี้โดนนั้น [ข้างหลังรู้เรื่องหรือเปล่าที่ครูพูด รู้เรื่องนะ]

(Translation: Read the second column, and point your finger at each of the characters you're reading. Point at each character you pronounce. [*Students at the back of the class, do you understand what I said? You got it?*])

The teacher apparently made more tag switches (43.24 %) than intra-sentential switches (13.51%) in the first lesson, but opposite findings were revealed for the second lesson (25% intra-sentential switches vs. 18.75% tag switches).

3 (Tag switching, Lesson 1):

T: สอ งอ หง่า เขียนจี้ [ไม่สวย] สอ งอ หง่า เขียน สอ หู เห่มนั้นจั้น จะก่อน เออะ เออ

(Translation: This way of writing ho ngo nghum is [*not beautiful*]. Start with writing ho hu beautifully first. Yes, that's it.)

4 (Tag switching, Lesson 2):

T: ก้อก้าเป็นโต [เสียงสูง] เป็นโต [เสียงสูง] อะโตนี้ เป็นโต [เสียงสูง]

(Translation: Ko Khum is [*high-tone*.] This (consonant) is [*high-tone*.] It's [*high-tone*.])

5 (Intra-sentential switching, Lesson 1):

T: โคนิฟังเท่าดี สอ เสือ [พูดซี] สอเสืง แล้วโคนิโปป้า เออ โปปลานะ [อ้าวตานี้ อ้าวอ้าวอ่านตามครู]

(Translation: Listen carefully to this one, so sia. [*Say it*], so sia, and then this one is po pla, po pla, [*so now repeat after me*.])

6 (Intra-sentential switching, Lesson 2):

T: ลูกเฝ้าอันฐูปอปูมาเห็น ลูกเฝ้า [แปลว่าอะไร]

(Translation: The daughter-in-law (lupao in Tai Dam) committed adultery. Her father-in-law saw it. Lupao, [*what does the word mean?*])

Long turns were rare; only three appeared in the second lesson, the following excerpt is one of the long turns in teacher's talk.

7 (Long turn 3, Lesson 2):

T: อวค้อไป จ้อจี้ จี้ะ จัง จา จี จือ จู เจ แจ โจ เจอะ จอ จอง เจอ เจ็ย เจือ จัว จัล โจ เจ้า จั้น จ้า
จั้น [ก็แสดงว่าออกเสียงอย่างนี้ ตามในลักษณะของตัวพยัญชนะมันเป็นเสียงต่ำก็เสียงต่ำ เสียงสูงก็เสียงสูง
เข้าใจ เข้าใจนะ ถ้าเป็นออ อ่างก็จะเป็น อ๊ะ อัง อาเพราะมันเสียงสูง ถ้าเป็นออเฮม อออ่าง ก็ อ๊ะ อัง อ้า คือเสียง

มันสูงกว่ากันนะ เอาอย่างนี้ ในเวลาที่เรายังเหลืออยู่นี้ ให้เขียนลงมาเป็นคอลัมน์ เขาเรียกอย่างนั้น ให้เขียนลงมา อย่างนี้ จากข้างบนลงมาข้างล่าง ตั้งแต่ กอ ไก่ ถึง ออเอม หน้าละคอลัมน์ เราจะเรียนกันแค่ 3 สัปดาห์ แล้วจะขึ้น การอ่านภาษาไทยคำเล่มที่ 1 อันนี้เรียนกัน 3 สัปดาห์ เล่มนี้แล้วก็ต้องส่งหมดอย่างนี้ แล้วก็ต้องเขียนหมดอย่างนี้ ด้วย แล้วเขียนไปอ่านไป อย่างนี้ที่อ่านว่า กะ กัง กา กิ กือ นะ เอนั่นแหละถูกแล้วให้เขียนมาคอลัมน์นี้]

(Translation: And next, Jo Jii Ja Jung Jaa Ji Jue Ju Jae Jo Joh Joe Jong Jer Jia Juae Jua Jun Jai Jao Jun Jum Jup. [So they are pronounced like this, according to the characteristics of the consonants. If they are low-tone, make them low; if they are high-tone, make them high, Do you understand? Got it? Aow-ang is high. For Aow-aim, it becomes higher. The sound is higher. Let's do this. In the remaining time, write in columns like this, from top to bottom, from Ko Kai to Aow-aim. One column per page. We're doing this for three weeks, and then we'll start the first book of Tai Dam reading. We're studying this book for three weeks. You need to finish all your writing tasks and hand it in to me. Complete all the writing exercises. Read and you write. This is Ka Kang Ka Kee Kue. Yes, that's right. Write in columns like this.])

Functions of codeswitching in the teacher's Talk

As for key functions of codeswitching in the teacher's talk, six out of seven functions as suggested by Bowers (1980) emerged; 1) to present; 2) to elicit; 3) to direct; 4) to organize; 5) to evaluate; and 6) to sociate. The other function, to respond, was not evident.

Table 3 Functions of codeswitching in the teacher's talk based on Bowers (1980)

Function	Number	
	Lesson 1	Lesson 2
Present	23	5
Elicit	7	3
Direct	0	5
Organise	5	0
Evaluate	4	5
Sociate	0	3
Respond	0	0
Total	39	21

Table 3 presents the different functions of the teacher's switches and the number of occurrences. The findings revealed that the teacher switched from Tai Dam to Central Thai (the native language of the majority of the students) mainly to present or clarify the new language, which occurred 23 times in the first lesson and 5 times in the second lesson. Codeswitching to elicit student responses (10 times in total) occurred slightly more often than codeswitching to evaluate student performances (9 times in total). The teacher sometimes switched from Tai Dam to Central Thai in order to organize learning activities (5 times only in the first lesson), and to direct the students to do tasks (5 times only in the second lesson). He also switched to Central Thai to sociate (particularly to praise students) a few times. It should be noted that some of his utterances contained more than one function, e.g. to sociate and to evaluate at the same time, causing the number of his switches (39 and 21) to be higher than that the total number of switches (37 and 16) in Table 2. Examples of the teacher's switches for these different functions are presented in Table 4.

Table 4 Examples of speech categories based on Bowers (1980)

Category	Example
Present	- ก้อกันเป็นโต [เสียงสูง] เป็นโต [เสียงสูง] อะโตนี้ เป็นโต [เสียงสูง] (Tag switching) (Translation: Ko Khum is [high-tone.] This (consonant) is [high-tone.] It's [high-tone.]) - เสียงลูเป้า [นะไม่ใช่เสียงนะ] (Intra-sentential switching)

	(Translation: Suaeng Lupao, [<i>and it's not Siang.</i>]) • กว๊ามเซ่งแกน [เขียนถูกไหม กอไก่อว แหวน ไม้ตรี สระอา มอมีอมมัว กอไก่อว แหวน ไม้ตรี สระอา มอ มี กว๊าม สระเออ เขียนถูกหรือเปล่า] (Inter-sentential switching) (Translation: Khawm serng kaen. [<i>Can you spell it? Ko-kai, wo-waen, a high-tone marker, aa (vowel), mo-maa, khawm. Do you know how to write the 'er' vowel?</i>]) • อวค้อไป จ้อจี้ จี้ะ จัง จา จี จือ จู เจ แจ โจ เจาะ จอ จอง เจอ เจีย เจือ จัว จัล โจ เจา จัน จ้า จีบ [ก็แสดงว่าออกเสียงแบบนี้ ตามในลักษณะของตัวพยัญชนะมันที่เป็นเสียงต่ำก็เสียงต่ำ เสียงสูงก็เสียงสูง เข้าใจ เข้าใจนะ ถ้าเป็นออ อ่างก็จะ เป็น อี้ะ อั้ง อา เพราะมันเสียงสูง ถ้าเป็นออเอม อออ่าง ก็ อี้ะ อั้ง อ้า คือเสียงมันสูงกว่ากันนะ เอาอย่างนี้ ในเวลาที่เราขังเหลืออยู่ นี้ ให้เขียนลงมาเป็นคอลัมน์ เขาเรียกอย่างนั้น ให้เขียนลงมาอย่างนี้ จากข้างบนลงมาข้างล่าง ตั้งแต่ กอไก่อ ถึง ออเอม หน้ละ คอลัมน์ เราจะเรียนกันแค่ 3 สัปดาห์ แล้วจะขึ้นการอ่านภาษาไทยคำเล่นที่ 1 อันนี้เรียนกัน 3 สัปดาห์ เล่นนี้แล้วก็ต้องส่งหมด อย่างนี้ แล้วก็ต้องเขียนหมดอย่างนี้ด้วย แล้วเขียนไปอ่านไป อย่างนี้ก็อ่านว่า ทะ ถัง กา ก็ ถือ นะ เออนั้นแหละถูกแล้วให้เขียน มาคอลัมน์นี้] (Long turn) (Translation: And next, Jo Jii Ja Jung Jaa Ji Jue Ju Jae Jo Joh, Joe, Jong, Jer, Jia, Juae, Jua, Jun, Jai, Jao, Jun, Jum, Jup. [<i>So they are pronounced like this, according to the characteristics of the consonants. If they are low-tone, make them low; if they are high-tone, make them high, Do you understand? Got it? Aow-ang is high. For Aow-aim, it becomes higher. The sound is higher. Let's do this. In the remaining time, write in columns like this, from top to bottom, from Ko Kai to Aow-aim. One column per page. We're doing this for three weeks, and then we'll start the first book of Tai Dam reading. We're studying this book for three weeks. You need to finish all your writing tasks and hand it in to me. Complete all the writing exercises. Read and you write. This is Ka Kang Ka Kee Kue. Yes, that's right. Write in columns like this.</i>])
Elicit	• ลูกพี่อ้นจูปอจูมาเห็น ลูกป้า [แปลว่าอะไร] (Intra-sentential switching) (Translation: The daughter-in-law (lu pao in Tai Dam) committed adultery. Her father-in-law saw it. [<i>What does the word lu pao mean?</i>]) • อ่านอันที่สองแล้วเห่าจิ้น่าดังมัว เอ๊ะเสียงโตเตาเห่าจิ้นั่น [ข้างหลังรู้เรื่องหรือเปล่าที่ครูพูด รู้เรื่องนะ] (Inter-sentential switching) (Translation: Read the second column, and point your finger at each of the characters you're reading. Point at each character you pronounce. [<i>Students at the back of the class, do you understand what I said? You got it?</i>])
Direct	• อวมล่ เริ่มตัน กี้ะ กั้ง กา ก็ ถือ จู เก แก โก เก๊ะ กอ ถอด เกอ เกีย เกือก กัว กัลไก เกา ถัน กำ กั๊น [เปิดหน้าค้อไป] (Inter-sentential switching) (Translation: OK, start. Ko Kung Ka Kii Kue Ku Ke Kae, Ko Koh Ko Kod Ker Kia Kuaek Kua Kunkai Kao Kan Kum Kub. [<i>Turn to the next page.</i>]) • อวสมุดขึ้นมัว สมุดขึ้นมา อวสมุดขึ้นมัว [คุย คุย อวลงมือ ตามเลข เขียนเร็วๆ นะ แหมส้ารองไว้เยอะจังนะเข้าพักรุข ไม้ซี (เสียงหัวเราะ) เขียนวันที่แล้วก็เขียน เสร็จแล้วขีดเส้นกันให้เรียบร้อย ตัวไหนที่อ่านไม่ชัดถามไฉนนะ โห เมื่อเริ่มต้นกันเองเองเหรหือ ท้นเขาเหรหือ เขาไปถึงไหนแล้ว ยังลบเป็นแถบอีก เราเขียนท้นเสร็จหรือเปล่า หนังสือเล่มนั้น ที่มาใหม่อะ มาใหม่คนหนึ่งอะ โน้น เหรหือ เขียนท้นเสร็จหรือเปล่า เขียนได้หรือเปล่าวะ เขียนไฉนนะ เออ เอาเขียนไฉนก็ได้ เอา เดี่ยวค้อย้ากัน] (Long turn) (Translation: Put your book on your desk. [<i>Chatting again. Start writing what I've written on the blackboard quickly. Nattavut, you have so many spare ones. (Laugh) Write the date and draw a long straight line below it. Ask me if you can't see any of</i>])

	<i>the characters clearly. Hey, (talking to one student), why did you start writing so late? The others have gone very far. And you have erased so much of what you write. And you (talking to another student), will you be able to finish it in time. I mean that book. You, the newcomer. The new student, will you finish it? Do you know how to write it? OK, go on if you can. I'll give you more explanation later.))</i>
Organise	• หลอหลัว ว้อ จ้อจี้ [นี่ไม่ได้หรอก พวกเราเขียนอย่างนี้คงไม่ได้แน่ เพราะว่าวันนี้จะเป็นวันเรียนคาบสุดท้าย สำหรับหนังสือเล่มนี้นะ ต้องทำเสร็จทุกคนนะ โห นี่เมื่อไหร่มันจะเสร็จเนี่ย ยังเหลืออีกตั้งเยอะแยะ] (Intra-sentential switching) (Translation: For the word lo lua wo jo ji, [you can't write it this way. You can't definitely write it like this, as this is the last day we're using this book. You all need to finish it. Oh, when will you finish it? There's a lot left.]) • อออ่างเขียนจี้ เขียนเลขศูนย์ เออ ออ เอมเขียนจี้ เออเขียนเลขศูนย์นี้ละ [เออมาหมดแล้วใช้ใหม่พวกเรา อ้าวทำความเคารพครูก่อน เสียสิ่งๆน้อยๆเพื่อนจะได้ยิน เอาใหม่] (Inter-sentential switching) (Translation: This is how to write Aow-ang. This is the way of writing Number 0. Yes, it's like Number 0. [Are you all here? Now pay respect to me first. Say it loudly (talking to one student), so your friends will be able to hear you. Do it again.])
Evaluate	• สอ งอ หง่า เขียนจี้ [ไม่สวย] สอ งอ หง่า เขียน สอ หู เหม่มันจิ้นจะก่อน เออะ เออ (Tag switching) (Translation: This way of writing ho ngo nghum is [not beautiful]. Start with writing ho hu beautifully first. Yes, that's it.) • แต่ละโคเล็ย เต็งเม็ค เต็ง สามสิบเก้าโต นันละ โคลาเขียนบ่สนัด นันตามกู จิเก๊ะเห่า บ่เข้าใจเขียนนะ [นี่เราคงล่อๆอ่านเลขละมั้งนี้ นี่เพิ่งได้ 3-4 บรรทัดแค่นั้นเอง ต้องขยันนะ มาเรียนภาษาไทยคำนี้ ก็เก็ยไม่ได้นะ] (Inter-sentential switching) (Translation: Let's go through them, one by one. Let's make phonemes from all the 39 consonants. Tell me if you are unclear with any of them. I'll tell you how to write them. [You still have a lot to do then (talking to one student). You've done 3-4 lines only. You must work hard, learning Tai Dam. Don't be lazy.])
Sociate	• อว อ้านโศโหม ... [อ้าว ปรบมือให้ตัวเอง ใช้ได้ ใช้ได้ อ้าวคานี้ ยังจี้ เออก็อวันนี้] เซ้นอันนั้นวาเป็นโศโหมสือโศคำ (Inter-sentential switching) (Translation: Now read the vowels... [Give yourself a big hand. Good job, good job. Now, today.] They call these Tai Dam characters.)

The Students' Talk

Table 5 The students' classroom language use

Number of Student utterances		Student utterances in Central Thai				Student utterances in Tai Dam			
Lesson 1	Lesson 2	Lesson 1		Lesson 2		Lesson 1		Lesson 2	
		No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
207	43	15	7.25	10	23.26	192	92.75	33	76.74

The transcripts of the two lessons observed revealed a greater number of Tai Dam utterances than that of Central Thai (92.75% in the first lesson and 76.74% in the second lesson, as shown in Table 5. Nevertheless, the main function of their talk in Tai Dam was only to repeat after the teacher (97.40% in Lesson 1 and 48.48% in Lesson 2), followed by to respond to the teacher's commands (2.60% and 39.39%). Students rarely used the language to sociate or ask a question, apparent in the second lesson only. (See Table 6 for the functions of student utterances in Tai Dam.)

Functions of student utterances

Table 6 Functions of student utterances in Tai Dam

Function	Lesson 1		Lesson 2		Example
	No	%	No	%	
Repeat	187	97.40	16	48.48	T: ลูกเขยขโมยลูกเขยมาเห็น SS: ลูกเขยขโมยลูกเขยมาเห็น (Translation: The daughter-in-law committed adultery.)
Respond	5	2.60	13	39.39	T: อว อานโตไหม (Translation: Please read the vowels aloud.) SS: ม่ายชะ ม่ายชา ม่ายสา ม่ายสี ม่ายสือ ม่ายซู ม่ายเส ม่ายเส ม่าย โส ม่ายเสาะ ม่ายสอ ม่ายสอบ ม่ายเสอ ม่ายเสิช ม่ายเสื่อ ม่ายสัว ม่ายสัล ม่ายโส ม่ายเสา ม่ายสัน ม่ายส้า ม่ายสับ (Students read the vowels aloud.)
Sociate	0	0	3	9.09	SS: เด่งเมิดดินขึ้น (Translation: Everybody rise!)
Question	0	0	1	3.03	T: [ตัวไหนที่อ่านไม่ชัด ถามไฉนนะ] (Translation: Ask me if there is anything unclear.) SS: ลูกเขย (Translation: Lu pao?)

As the students were mainly passive in their language use, there was no clear evidence of codeswitching. They mostly responded to the teacher's initiation. Their utterances in Central Thai were also mainly to respond to the teacher's commands (53.33%

and 70%). The other functions (to sociate, to repeat after the teacher, and to ask a question) were infrequent.

Table 7 Functions of student utterances in Central Thai

Function	Lesson 1		Lesson 2		Example
	No	%	No	%	
Respond	8	53.33	7	70	T: ลูกเขยจู้ปอไปมาเห็น ลูกเขย [แปลว่าอะไร] (Translation: The daughter-in-law (lu pao in Tai Dam) committed adultery. Her father-in-law saw it. [<i>What does the word lu pao mean?</i>]) SS: [ลูกสะใภ้] (Translation: [<i>Daughter-in-law.</i>])
Sociate	5	33.33	1	10	SS: [อาจารย์ครับ โอวัลตินครับ] (Translation: [<i>Teacher, Ovaltine for you.</i>])
Repeat	2	13.33	1	10	T: อ้าว นั่งลง เอาใจ ฟัง หนังสือเล่มเหลืองเนี่ย เอามาส่งกัน จูกัน ก็จะได้ะปี่ ก็จะได้ะกู แล้วบ่แล้วบ่เป็นอัน (Translation: OK, sit down. Then listen. The book, the yellow book. Everyone must submit it on this desk, the teacher's desk. If you have finished the task, that's all right.) SS: [ไม่เป็นไร] (Translation: [<i>That's all right.</i>])
Question	0	0	1	10	T: [เออนั้นแหละถูกแล้วให้เขียนมากอลัมน์นี้] (Translation: [<i>That's right. Write it in this column.</i>]) SS: [คอลัมน์เดียวใช้เปล่า คอลัมน์เดียว] (Translation: [<i>One column, isn't it? One column?]</i>)

Discussion and conclusion

In sum, to answer Research Question 1, the findings showed that the teacher in the present study did not believe in teaching Tai Dam for communication. His purpose of learning it and teaching it was to help preserve Tai Dam traditions. He believed in the traditional teaching method of his father (his own Tai Dam teacher), stressing the form of the language rather than the function. He advocated the use of Tai Dam as a classroom medium,

corresponding with his own experience in learning it with his father. Nevertheless he did not mind switching into Central Thai if necessary. It is therefore can be concluded along the same lines as Seedhouse (2004) that due to the rather traditional context of Tai Dam classrooms, the participant teacher had more conservative pedagogic goals, compared to teachers of popular modern languages.

With regards to Research Question 2, the non-participant observational findings revealed that the teacher usually conducted Tai Dam classes in the target language (Tai Dam) and in mixed code, as strongly recommended by classroom interaction scholars (Braine 2010; Cook 2010; Cook 2011; Levine 2011). The two lessons, which took place in two schools, showed significant differences in terms of the amount of teacher talk; yet the classroom language use, codeswitching types and codeswitching functions were highly similar. The teacher mainly spoke Tai Dam in class and switched to Central Thai for pedagogical and social purposes, i.e. presenting, eliciting, evaluating, organising, directing, and sociating (Bowers 1980). The teacher did not codeswitch “to respond” to students, most likely because the teaching method used, which is largely teacher-centered, determined that the teacher should be the one asking questions, initiating dialogues and controlling classroom activities. Had the teacher been trained to use more learner-centered methods, the function “to respond” to student initiations could have been observed. Overall, findings from the interview data and the observational data were consistent, and the teacher’s codeswitching corresponded with recent findings of O’Cain and Leibscher (2009).

Concerning the students’ language use (Research Question 3), their use of the target language was predominant; yet, it served only passive functions: to repeat after the teacher, to respond to his commands, to ask a question and to sociate. Their use of Central Thai, which was much less frequent, also served very similar functions, which differed from the findings of Eldridge (1996).

It can be concluded that schools near the settlements of the Tai Dam ethnic group in Thailand are used as a tool for preserving the Tai Dam language. Yet, similar to the findings of Shameem (2007) and Majzuba and Raisb (2011), Tai Dam teachers in Thailand have not been provided with proper resources and teacher training. The present study thus is hoped to shed some light to policy makers in supporting the teaching and learning of Tai Dam or other endangered ethnic languages and providing appropriate training and resources to teachers of ethnic languages. In the mean time, the proper use of students' first language together with a learner-centered approach to serve useful pedagogical and social functions in multi-ethnic classrooms should be encouraged.

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