

Research Summary

"The Psychosocial factors and Thai language skills"

by

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The research objectives of this study were three fold. First, an intention was to study the developmental patterns of the Thai language skills in different types of Thai youths. Secondly, the study was aimed to investigate the importance of the Thai language abilities in the social-psychological development of the Thai adolescents. Finally, comparisons of the roles of the social and psychological factors in the development of the language abilities and morality were made.

In this field study, the sample consisted of 1,400 male and female students in Bangkok from Pratomsuksa 6th (grade 6th) to university's sophomores' class, whose ages ranged from 11 to 25 years. These students were asked to respond to a set of questionnaires when they were assembled in their own classroom. The questionnaire-booklets consisted of a test of Thai language skills (30 four-choice items), a measure of moral reasoning (10 six-choice items), a measure of future orientation trait (20 items) and measures of four types of child rearing practices, i.e., love oriented, reasoning oriented, control and psychological punishment, with the total of 30 items. Each item in the last two forms of ques-

tionnaire was accompanied by 11 point rating scale. The last questionnaire was designed to assess various background characteristics of the respondents.

Since most types of data in this study were assumed to be in interval scale, therefore the Parametric Statistics were used in the analyses. Three-way analyses of variance were used to analyze the effects of the background and child-rearing variables on the three psychological traits. Tests of linear and nonlinear trends were used to examine the patterns of the three psychological developments. In addition, the matrices of correlation coefficients were constructed and multiple regression analyses were performed.

Three out of the five hypotheses were supported from the data in this study. First, it was found that the relationships between the Thai language skills and the levels of education were mostly linear. There was a significant improvement in language skills from the lower level to the next level starting from Prathomsuksa 6 to Mathayomsuksa 5. However, the sophomores were not significantly better in language abilities than the students in the last year of highschool. The second hypothesis, which was also supported by the data in this study, predicts a stronger relationship among the four types of child-rearing practices and the language skills than the relationship between the socioeconomic level and the language skills. The same was true with the future orientation trait. However, moral reasoning was found to be significantly related to the four types of child-rearing practices only in the groups of males, and in the respondents from the lower and upper socioeconomic levels.

Further analyses showed that the control type of child-rearing practice was most significantly related to the development of language among the Thai youths. Reasoning-oriented and psychological punishment were next in importance. However, love-oriented and reasoning-oriented were closely related to the two moral traits.

Finally, consistent with the third hypothesis, it was found that the students who were high on both moral reasoning and future orientation traits were also more skillful in language than other types of students. This finding stressed the importance of the Thai language abilities in the development of morality.

The results from this study showed that the students in the non-compulsory education in Bangkok who were less competent in their language were female, the ones whose fathers were professionally employed, the ones whose mothers received high level of education and unemployed. Further investigation showed that the respondents who had such background characteristics also reported that they were highly controlled by their parents. Thus, it could be recommended that the parents should behave such that the children feel that they have not been tightly controlled by letting their children make their own decisions more often in their everyday life. The parents should assume a role of an advisor to their children more often than a dictator. In conclusion, in order for Thai children to have both high language skills and high morality simultaneously, the appropriate child-rearing practices are high love-oriented, high reasoning-oriented, psychological punishment and a rather strong control in lower and middle class families and moderate control in upper class families.