The Dai project and Yu Nankai: a study in successful supplemental teacher training for MTB-MLE in Xishuangbanna, China

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In China, the pathway to teacher qualification is standardized. Future teachers must first graduate from an accredited teacher training institution. However, institutions do not provide training in MTB-MLE.

In the Dai Han Bilingual Education Project, project teachers are chosen by the Education Department or by the project school. Additional training in MLE is then provided by the project staff. All incoming project teachers can read and write Dai minimally, but often need to first raise their fluency levels before they can be effective in teaching children to read and write Dai. The supplemental MLE training provided by project staff challenges incoming project teachers to venture beyond the limits of their previous training: they are taught to embrace creativity and they are invited to participate in writing curriculum. Other essential training for project teachers includes MLE principles, theory, and goals; classroom management; and personal development.

This paper examines the training and development journey of Yu Nankai, an original project teacher who now serves as training supervisor in the expansion phase of the project. In the beginning, Yu Nankai’s fluency in written Dai was low, and she lacked confidence as a teacher. Years later, her classroom is among the first chosen to demonstrate exemplary MLE instruction. Yu Nankai’s enthusiasm, creativity, and passion for children are the foundation of her ever-growing skills in MLE. Furthermore, her journey shows that with preservice training and on-the-job feedback and guidance, teachers from the formal system can become highly qualified and effective MLE instructors.