

## On-site Education of Practical Languages for Area Studies

### Report in 2012

—Lao, National University of Laos, Lao P.D.R. (14 Jul. 2012 - 6 Oct. 2012)—

Year of Enrollment: 2012

Graduate School of Asian and African Areas Studies

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#### On My research theme and/or Language Training

My research interest is to understand the social change in Lao P.D. R. (Laos) by focusing on ethnic minority women who migrate to a big city in order to proceed with their education. Women of ethnic minority groups have been a people who are relatively disadvantaged in terms of receiving education in Laos, due to their language barrier and some social backgrounds, such as traditional preferences for girls to stay home to support their family than going to school. However, there are some ethnic minority girls who migrate into a big city such as Vientiane to receive higher education. I would like to conduct fieldwork to find answers for my research questions such as: What background allowed them to continue their education? How do the people of their communities (in the village and in the city) perceive them? How do they perceive themselves? Are there any impacts on their villages?

In order to answer the above questions, I will focus on young minority women in a local Non-profit Organization (NPO) in Vientiane, which was established by an ethnic minority woman in 2010. Its goal is to empower ethnic minority women so that they can free themselves from poverty and can improve their social status. I would like to conduct some case studies focusing on the participants of the NPO from the other provinces, by volunteering in the NPO and visiting their hometown with them.

Since I need to know Lao language for my research, I studied Lao in the National University of Laos this summer. I finished two Lao textbooks for foreign students which covered the basics, such as alphabets and pronunciations, to easy daily conversations. The most difficult part was pronunciations and tones, which I could not master completely. However, the teacher was very helpful, so I could ask questions anytime. In addition, I could do a homestay during my stay in Laos, and this opportunity allowed me to practice the language in real-life situation.

Overall, this training program provided me a meaningful time for my study. My Lao language skill has improved, so that now I can read, write, listen and speak easy Lao. Also, a volunteer opportunity I had in the above NPO allowed me to build a basic network for my research next year. Furthermore, the opportunity of visiting some villages with a Hmong-American teacher from America gave me chances to observe and learn how to conduct field study. For the further study, I still need to improve my Lao skill in order to conduct survey without any inconvenience, so I will continue studying and practicing the language.



[Picture 1] Lao language class



[Picture 2] Dinner at a Hmong village



[Picture 3] English class at the NPO



[Picture 4] Products of the Economic Empowerment project of the NPO (iPad case with Hmong embroidery)