

**Julia**  
Final Report

**Volunteer English Teacher at Baan Mae Suk School**  
July – September 2013

I have been teaching at Baan Mae Suk School for three months and I have to say that it has been a very valuable experience for me. I am an Austrian countryside girl, who lived in Singapore and Shanghai for the past years. Nevertheless I had some experience living and working in Asia, these three months have again been totally different.

I enjoyed my time teaching the students in Baan Mae Suk School because it encouraged me to be as creative as possible. Many students are from the Karen tribe and therefore a bit shyer than Thai kids. So I put a lot of effort into creating games for them so they would speak out quicker. We also played these games during their free time in the afternoons or during the weekends.

As I did not speak a single word in Thai when I arrived at the school, the local English teacher, KruChaiyut, helped me during my regular classes Mondays - Fridays. While he mainly taught grammar, I concentrated during my lessons on teaching small conversations. For students between 10 – 12 years (Prathom 4-6) we talked about school and daily life whereas for the elder kids between 13 – 16 years (Mathayom 1-3) we covered dialogues about sports, shopping and giving directions.

For one hour per week also the little ones (Prathom 1-3) enjoyed learning English. Starting from scratch, they learned the first letters of the alphabet by singing songs, dancing and doing movements along with the songs and watching cartoons to make them remember it easier from one week to the other.

But not only the students have been picking up in English, also some of the other teachers took the opportunity of me being there to brush up their skills again.

Besides the routines at school I enjoyed as well living at the school, observing the daily life of the students who have to take

care of themselves from a very early age and I was also integrated in the villagers' life very quickly. Several times I have been invited for dinner at their home where we spent many hours eating and chatting. Well, I was not chatting so much as the conversations were mainly in Thai (the English level in general is quite low), nevertheless I had a great time every single evening. Not speaking the same language was after all not a big problem because non-verbal communication let me feel much more part of their group than it would maybe have, if I did speak Thai.

Still, I am not leaving Thailand without any knowledge of Thai language. The students had great fun teaching me as well some common words. It was great to see the kids' positively surprised faces when I used a new word someone had taught me and I think that especially in the beginning it really helped to break the ice a little faster.

Has it ever been challenging? Yes, of course. Teaching children for the first time (without a common language), completely changing my daily routines and going back to basic standards of living has been difficult sometimes. But despite these moments - or maybe because of these moments I can value the many good days even more.

For me personally I can add that living at Baan Mae Suk School has given me again the ability to see the beauty in simple things like gaining the kids' trust, see them laughing or being in the nature and quietly relax while listening to the monks' chanting at the nearby temple.

Knowing that I will take a lot with from Bann Mae Suk, I can just hope that the students will also remember me as well as the conversations we had. Maybe they even continue to find chances to practice English in real life outside school.













