



**LANGUAGE VITALITY OF A THAI IMMIGRANT
SPEECH COMMUNITY, KING COUNTY,
WA, USA**

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ABSTRACT

In the United States of America, Washington State's Thai immigrant community is of sociolinguistic interest for what it may show of the social network Thais may choose to maintain abroad, as well as for the example they are of how immigrant communities preserve their languages while there. The research question in this instance also incorporates an interest in the attitudes and core values which have formulated the current state of language vitality in this community.

Methodology used in this community was built on a combination of Social Network Analysis, Participant Observation, and the supporting tools of a Sentence Repetition Test and Recorded Conversations Analysis. Specific tools were questionnaires, interviews, a pre-recorded set of Thai sentences and ethnographic field notes.

This sociolinguistic research appears to indicate the endangerment of the Thai language within this community. The actors within the community's social network have limited Thai relationships. There is indication of it being a centralized network where information is limited to pathways via hubs, making it a weaker network system. Questionnaires and Sentence Repetition Test results show that although immigrants desire their children to learn Thai, practically Thai is not being passed on. Sentence Repetition Tests point to a low proficiency level in Thais born in the USA with no extended stays in Thailand. Recorded Conversation Analysis were only of an immigrant demographic born in Thailand. These did not demonstrate the profuse code-switching observed on individual-interview bases of second and third generation Thai-Americans. There is no evidence of a diglossic situation being present (confirmed by analysis through Gonzo and Saltarelli's evolutionary stages of emigrant languages) in this Thai speech community. Finally, Participant Observation reveals the reality of very little elder-to-child Thai speech, placing the speech community between a level 6 and 7 on Fishman's Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale.

ชื่อเรื่อง:	การมีอยู่ของภาษาในชุมชนคนไทยในเมืองคิงเคาน์ตี รัฐวอชิงตัน ประเทศสหรัฐอเมริกา
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บทคัดย่อ

ชุมชนคนไทยในรัฐวอชิงตัน ประเทศสหรัฐอเมริกา เป็นชุมชนที่น่าสนใจศึกษาทางภาษาศาสตร์สังคม เนื่องจากอาจจะแสดงให้เห็นถึงการทำนุบำรุงเครือข่ายสังคมไทยในต่างประเทศ และเป็นตัวอย่างในการแสดงให้เห็นกลวิธีการอนุรักษ์ภาษาอีกด้วย คำถามวิจัยในการศึกษานี้ยังรวมถึงการศึกษาทัศนคติและคุณค่าหลัก ซึ่งทำให้เกิดสภาวะปัจจุบันของการมีอยู่ของภาษาไทยในชุมชนที่เลือกมาศึกษา

ระเบียบวิธีวิจัยที่ใช้ในการศึกษาชุมชนดังกล่าวได้พัฒนาจากแนวทางการวิเคราะห์เครือข่ายสังคม (Social Network Analysis) ร่วมกับการสังเกตผู้แสดงบทบาท (Participant Observation) รวมทั้งใช้กลวิธีการทดสอบซ้ำประโยค (Sentence Repetition Test) และการวิเคราะห์บทสนทนา (Conversation Analysis) เพิ่มเติม นอกจากนี้เครื่องมือที่ใช้ได้แก่แบบสอบถาม การสัมภาษณ์ ประโยคภาษาไทยที่บันทึกไว้ล่วงหน้า และการจัดบันทึกทางชาติพันธุ์วรรณนา

จากการศึกษาทางภาษาศาสตร์สังคม แสดงให้เห็นถึงภาวะใกล้สูญของภาษาไทยภายในชุมชนที่เลือกมาศึกษานี้ โดยพบว่า ผู้บอกภาษาในเครือข่ายสังคมของชุมชนมีความสัมพันธ์แบบไทยอย่างจำกัด มีการบ่งชี้ชัดเจนว่าชุมชนดังกล่าวเป็นชุมชนแบบรวมศูนย์ กล่าวคือ ข้อมูลข่าวสารจะถูกส่งผ่านเครือข่ายผ่านศูนย์กลางอย่างจำกัด ส่งผลให้ชุมชนเกิดความอ่อนแอแบบสอบถามและการทดสอบซ้ำประโยค แสดงให้เห็นว่าแม้คนไทยในชุมชนดังกล่าวจะต้องการให้

บุตรหลานได้เรียนภาษาไทย แต่ในทางปฏิบัติ ภาษาไทยกลับไม่ได้รับการถ่ายทอดแต่อย่างใด นอกจากนี้จากการทดสอบซ้ำประโยคยังแสดงให้เห็นถึงสมิททิภาพระดับต่ำของการใช้ภาษาไทยของคนไทยที่เกิดในประเทศสหรัฐอเมริกา และไม่เคยใช้ชีวิตอยู่ในประเทศไทย การวิเคราะห์บทสนทนาซึ่งใช้กับกลุ่มคนไทยที่เกิดในประเทศไทยกลับไม่ได้แสดงให้เห็นถึงพฤติกรรมการสลับภาษา (Code-Switching) ของคนไทย-อเมริกันในรุ่นอายุที่สองและสาม นอกจากนี้ ในชุมชนไทยที่ศึกษานี้ ผู้วิจัยยังไม่พบหลักฐานที่แสดงถึงสถานการณ์ทวิภาษาณ์ (Diglossic Situation) (ยืนยันได้จาก การวิเคราะห์ โดยใช้กระบวนการวิวัฒนาการของภาษาของผู้อพยพของกอนโซ (Gonzo) และซอลทาเรลลี (Saltarelli)) และท้ายที่สุด ผลจากการสังเกตผู้แสดงบทบาท แสดงให้เห็นถึงการใ้ภาษาไทยของผู้สูงอายุกับลูกหลานไม่บ่อยครั้งนัก จึงทำให้ชุมชนไทยนี้น่าจะอยู่ในลำดับระหว่าง 6 และ 7 ในสเกลลำดับขั้นระหว่างรุ่นอายุของพีชแมน

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND SYMBOLS

CS	Classification Scale
GIDS	Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale
HL	Heritage Language
LWC	Language of Wider Communication
PO	Participant Observation
RCA	Recorded Conversation Analysis
RPE	Reported Proficiency Evaluation
RSQ	Restaurant Survey Questionnaire
SNA	Social Network Analysis
SRT	Sentence Repetition Tests
VSQ	Vitality Survey Questionnaire

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GLOSSARY

Bilingualism is the ability to function to some degree in a second language.

Endangered Language is a language at risk of becoming dead or extinct, where it either has no native speakers left or no one speaks it at all.

Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (GIDS) is Fishman's scale of measuring to what extent a language is in danger of being lost, by looking at how it is being used within family environs and by the community of its speakers.

Language maintenance refers to the continued use of a language in the face of a regionally or socially more powerful language.

Language vitality measures the usage of a language by its native speakers, whether it is being maintained or whether it is endangered.

Participation Observation (PO) offers a means of verifying quantitative studies in that it bases quantitative study results in the reality of community situations. It is a qualitative means of acquiring information about a language and its speech community by way of direct involvement and observation by the researcher.

Pidgin is a simplified form of speech that is usually a mixture of two or more languages, has a rudimentary grammar and vocabulary, is used for communication between groups speaking different languages, and is not spoken as a first or native language.

Recorded Conversation Analysis (RCA) is a means of determining language vitality in a speech community experiencing language endangerment. It makes use of two minute recordings of naturally occurring conversation between speakers of the language, rate of speech, tone, grammar and code switching can be counted and comparisons made to that of native speakers.

Restaurant Survey Questionnaire (RSQ), designed as a tool aiding in the determination of a Thai restaurant's level of Thainess, it incorporates questions regarding the amount of Thai-directed signage and Thai-based business.

Sentence Repetition Tests (SRT) are an assessment of second-language proficiency of large communities, and are fitted for the purpose of sociolinguistic survey. Pre-recorded sentences in the native language are played for respondents to repeat to the best of their ability.

Social Network Analysis (SNA) is the analysis of interactions between members of a speech community, determining the strength of language vitality.

Sociolinguistics is a field of study which looks at language use in the context of society; its object of interest is in the communities in which languages are used, more so than in the languages themselves.

UNESCO's factors in language vitality and endangerment include nine areas of assessment of a community's language for the purpose of vitality evaluation.

Vitality Survey Questionnaire (VSQ) is the comprehensive survey of Thai Washington immigrant language attitude, domains of usage and maintenance by way of self-administered or orally administered questions.

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