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Language maintenance in a rural community in Southern Thailand: Ban Khiriwong

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Article Info

Abstract

This ethnographic study was conducted over one year in Ban Khiriwong, a remote farming community in Southern Thailand now exposed to external influences from globalization. This article explores villagers' maintenance of the local language, Southern Thai. Instruments used were field notes and interviews. The researcher used participant and non-participant observation. The participants were community members. They expressed an overwhelming preference for using Southern Thai among themselves and a strong attachment to maintaining the language, partly as a marker of identity; however, Standard Thai is used in some domains. When communicating with Thai speakers from other regions, some villagers resist using Standard Thai even at the risk of losing mutual intelligibility; others, particularly younger people, are willing to speak Standard Thai, albeit sometimes code-changing with Southern Thai. With the few foreign visitors, villagers use various combinations of Southern Thai, Standard Thai, and/or some English. Younger people and those whose work brings them into contact with foreigners, seem more willing and able to use English. Any future threat to language maintenance in this community seems to come from Standard Thai rather than from English.

Introduction

In recent decades, there has been a dramatic increase in contact among people across linguistic boundaries. Such contact requires language choices, which may reinforce the use of a language or precipitate its erosion or death. About half the world's languages have fewer than 10,000 speakers (Lewis, 2009) and many of them, especially those spoken in isolated rural areas, are endangered. Indeed, according to Rymer (2012), half the world's languages will die this century; however, there are even more dire predictions, for instance that about 90 percent of them could become extinct (Lewis, 2009).

Maintaining active use of languages is widely regarded as important from several perspectives. The loss of language diversity can be seen as losing ecological information, cultural knowledge, and heritage (Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson, 2008). Moreover, evidence of the connection between language and identity suggests that a sense of both collective and individual identity is lost when the mother tongue erodes (Fishman, 1994). Social relations within communities and families can be radically affected where, during a "three generation shift" (Baker, 2006), children can no longer communicate with their grandparents. Thus, maintaining a community's language can be seen as crucial to such factors as sense of identity and intergenerational communication (Awal, Jaafar, Mis, & Lateh, 2014; Kama & Yamadeng, 2011).

Ban Khiriwong was the site of the current study in a rural community located deep in a mountainous valley in Southern Thailand. For centuries it was accessible to the rest of the world only by boat; however, in the past half century, it has experienced dramatically increased exposure to outside

influence. This exposure was accelerated by a series of natural disasters that repeatedly overwhelmed the villagers. Considerable outside assistance was required to ensure that the community remained viable. By now, the continuing presence of outsiders may have destabilized the community's language ecology and led to attrition of its mother tongue, Southern Thai. This concern is exacerbated by evidence of erosion of this language in nearby cities (Sriwimon, 2012).

Therefore, the purpose of this study was to investigate language maintenance in this community. The research question was: Is there any evidence of potential threats to language maintenance in Ban Khiriwong? This ethnographic study reveals community members' beliefs about their language use.

Literature Review

Thailand has four regional Thai languages (Premsrirat et al., 2004; Smalley, 1994): Northern, Northeastern, Central and Southern Thai; this study adopts Premsrirat's and Smalley's terminology for regional Thai language varieties. Central Thai is the closest to Standard Thai, which is the nation's official language and the only language with a recognized written code. Southern Thai, mother tongue to about six million people, has been divided into two categories: "educated", the variety spoken by urban professionals, and "rural", the variety spoken by villagers (Diller, 1976). Sriwimon (2012), studying university students from the southern city of Songkhla, found shrinkage in the comprehension and use of Southern Thai proverbs. Half her subjects reported using Central Thai at home even though their parents were Southerners and could speak Southern Thai, and two-fifths of them said they could not speak Southern Thai. This is surprising evidence that Southern Thai is not being maintained, at least among urban speakers.

Language maintenance has been defined as a situation where speakers use their mother tongue "even when there is a new language available" (Spolsky, 1998, p. 123) and may be threatened by language shift, "the gradual replacement of one language by another…often the outcome of language contact" (Weinreich, 1953, p. 68). Maintenance may vary hugely within one country. Across three generations in Australia, Clyne (1991) found that Turkish immigrants had a first-language (L1) maintenance rate of 83.6 percent whereas that of Danish immigrants was 0.6 percent. Ethnolinguistic vitality theory (Giles, Bourhis, & Taylor, 1977) posits that a language's chances of maintenance may be linked to: the demographic size and concentration a language group; institutional support from government, education and the media; and the group's socioeconomic status within the wider community.

Demographic factors are echoed in Trudgill's (1974) gravity model, whereby the gravitational force of large cities diffuses language change to smaller cities and thence to rural areas. Thus, where communication involves speakers with different L1s, varieties spoken in urban areas seem likely to be favored. Some governments have institutional support through language policies that promote a national language, often via education and the mass media. Thailand promotes Standard Thai as the official language, the principal language used in the media, and the only language mandated for use in schools nationwide. Thirdly, ethnolinguistic vitality may be linked to a community's socioeconomic status within the wider community. Sallabank (2011) claims that once a language becomes associated with poverty, it may become endangered. For example, during a protracted economic crisis in the nineteenth century, Irish began to lose ground to Irish English as part of a collective quest to "improve economic conditions" (Harris, 1991, p. 44). Recognizing the limitations of objective assessments on language survival, ethnolinguistic vitality theory was extended in the 1980s to include subjective perceptions of community members, which is what the current study sought to do.

A key measure of a language's vitality is its utility across many domains, a domain being "a typical situation of language use, such as home, school, workplace" (Coulmas, 2005, p. 234). The crucial threshold at which a language becomes threatened is when it ceases to be transmitted intergenerationally in the home, family, and neighborhood (Fishman, 1991).

Fishman (1964) refers to psychological, social, and cultural changes that can occur in language contact situations and can affect the likelihood of language maintenance. The degree to which speakers identify with their L1s can affect linguistic vitality. May (2004) considered regional languages may be maintained where they are important to their speakers' collective identity even though globalization or government policies force their coexistence with a national and/or foreign language. However, identities are not fixed; thus, language maintenance may be threatened in the face of identity shift. Identities may also vary geographically within a country or region (Sriwimon, 2012).

Internationally, much communication is now conducted in English (for example, Crystal, 2006). Warschauer (2000, p. 512) claimed that globalization has created "a new society, in which English is shared among many groups of non-native speakers". Indeed, the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), comprising 10 countries, adopted English as its working language (ASEAN Charter, 2008, article 24). However, while the trend in international communication is for English to be used as a lingua franca (ELF), it is being diffused unevenly, with cities apparently in the vanguard. The rise of urban middle classes in increasingly sophisticated economies seems to have precipitated an increasing demand for English (Bolton, 2008). Lamb's study (2004) at a junior high school in Indonesia revealed that young people aspire to attain a "bicultural" identity combining L1 and global Anglophone cultures.

As globalization creates jobs requiring bilingual speakers, schoolchildren are learning English at younger ages; in Thailand, the starting age was reduced to six in 1999 (Nomnian, 2013). Graddol (2006, p. 72) anticipates that this trend will shift the function of English in the curriculum from that of a foreign language to that of a "near universal basic skill". If so, this could mean increasing numbers of bilinguals or multilinguals. During such a transition, increasing amounts of code-changing (that is, intrasentential code-mixing and intersentential code-switching) are likely to occur.

Methodology

Research Context

Ban Khiriwong, henceforth Khiriwong, is located in Nakhon Si Thammarat province, 780 kilometers south of Bangkok and has a population of about 2,200. The residents' primary occupation is tropical fruit farming. Traditionally, barter-trading of agricultural produce occurred between Khiriwong and rice-growing coastal communities about 60 kilometers downstream. However, life in this remote community changed dramatically in 1962, when a typhoon rendered the local rivers unnavigable, precipitating the villagers' construction of a road connecting the community with Thailand's highway network. Two subsequent typhoons, in 1975 and 1988, necessitated major community reconstruction involving considerable assistance from the outside world.

Government policy is another factor that has increased the community's exposure to the outside world and, thus, to other languages. The duration of compulsory education has been increased to nine years (APEC, 2012) and, since national education policy has traditionally prescribed the use of Standard Thai in classrooms, children's exposure to this variety of Thai has increased. In addition, more young villagers study at a tertiary level, where courses are typically mediated in Standard Thai and, increasingly, in English. Furthermore, recent technological advances have facilitated outside contact. Being in regular contact with people from elsewhere in Thailand and abroad may have had an impact on Khiriwong's hitherto stable language ecology.

With increasing exposure to the global economy, some villagers have engaged in second occupations, mostly related to tourism. Some run resorts, homestays, or cottage industries while others are trekking guides, escorting visitors for overnight camping trips. Villagers' efforts to diversify the local economy have been recognized in several tourism awards, such as "Best Practices in Sustainable Tourism Management Initiatives for APEC Economies" (Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation) (APEC, 2006). Thus, Khiriwong has been seen as a "model community", which, along with tourists, has thus attracted researchers and study visitors. From 2000 to 2005, over 99 percent of visitors to Khiriwong were Thai (70,000 to 75,000 annually), the remainder being foreign, according to Participant 18 (in-depth interview), who works in tourism. The figures suggest residents' increased exposure to other varieties of Thai rather than to foreign languages.

Participants

There were 21 participants (P1 to P21) in this study (see Table 1), divided into three groups:

gatekeepers (GKs), who have authority to allow access to community members and activities (n = 3); key informants (KIs), who have broad or deep knowledge of aspects of the community relevant to the research (n = 13); and complementary informants (CIs), who give supplementary information that can be used to cross-validate data gained from GKs and KIs (n = 5). The sampling strategies for participant selection are shown in Table 2.

Participants were selected throughout the process of data collection. The reputational case strategy was used to select the GKs who, besides being farmers, had administrative posts. Then the big net approach was used when the first researcher narrowed her focus, and the snowball approach was employed through progressive contact with villagers. These two approaches were used to select KIs and CIs. The participants signed a consent form to participate in this study.

Table 1 Participants

Number	Category*	Instrument**	Biodata***
P1	KI	ID	M 56; ex-village headman; committee, savings and loans
P2	KI	ID	F 45; staff, tourist center; head, homestay hosts
P3	KI	PO	M 49; secretary, agriculture and environment group
P4	KI	PO	F 48; English teacher
P5	KI	PO	F 49; English teacher
P6	KI	PO	M 46; village headman
P7	KI	PO	M 54; head, handicraft cottage industry
P8	CI	SS	M 31–45
P9	CI	SS	M 16-30
P10	CI	SS	F 16
P11	GK	ID	M 45; resort owner; vice president, local administration
P12	KI	ID	M 72; fruit-farming expert; head, bio fertilizer group
P13	CI	SS	F 16
P14	KI	PO	M 38; ex-secretary, ecotourism club; committee, savings and loans
P15	KI	ID	F 46; head, tie-dyeing cottage industry
P16	KI	PO	M 57; resort owner
P17	KI	PO	M 37; trekking guide; head, handicraft cottage industry
P18	KI	ID	F 37; ex-staff, tourist center; homestay host
P19	CI	SS	F under 16
P20	GK	ID	M 38; head, trekking guide
P21	GK	ID	M 36; secretary, local administration; ex-staff, tourist center

*GK=gatekeeper; KI=key informant; CK=complementary informant

**Interviews: ID=in-depth; SS=semi-structured; PO=participant observation (field notes)

***F=female; M=male; age/age range. All the participants live in Khiriwong, are farmers or the children of farmers, and some have a second occupation.

Table 2
Sampling strategies

Sampling strategy	Description	Application
Reputational case	Selection is based on the recommendation of residents who have authority to allow outsiders access to the community and its activities (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2003)	GKs; KIs
Big net	The researcher narrows the focus to specific situations or individuals (Fetterman, 2010).	KIs; CIs
Snowball	One participant recommends another (Wellington, 2001).	KIs; CIs

Instruments

Human instrument

The first researcher played the role of instrument using her eyes and ears as primary modes of data collection (Fetterman, 2010). When encountering potential participants in the field, this entailed using field notes and interviews as instruments to collect data.

Field notes

Field notes were used to record information from participant observation (PO), when the first researcher was verbally involved in an event, and from non-participant observation (NPO), when she merely observed events. Field notes were recorded in two forms: handwritten in Standard Thai and Southern Thai and audio-recorded; the latter were translated into English, and typed into Microsoft Office Word files.

Interviews

Semi-structured (SS) interviews were used to collect data specific to the research questions and to cross-validate emerging data from field notes and other interviews. In-depth (ID) interviews were conducted with gatekeepers and key informants for more detailed information on emerging themes. The interviews were conducted in Southern Thai, audio-recorded, translated into English, and typed into Microsoft Office Word files.

Data Collection and Analysis

The first researcher conducted her fieldwork during the March 2009 to March 2010. During data collection and analysis, she was engaged in progressive focusing, which refers to the fact that "ethnography is governed by an 'inductive' or 'discovery' orientation" and "it represents the process of inquiry as involving a gradual clarification ... of the research problem" (Hammersley, 2014, p. 1).

Thematic analysis was utilized. Matthews and Ross (2010, p. 373) refer to it as a 'process of working with raw data to identify and interpret key ideas or themes'. In analyzing themes, the following steps were observed: the data were read repeatedly to identify possible themes; codes were generated in the raw data; relationships among codes were identified to combine them into macro-themes; themes were reviewed; and then themes were defined and named. Progressive focusing was employed to achieve intra-rater reliability and subsequently a high level of inter-rater reliability; for validity, triangulation among the instruments was utilized.

Results

Three macro-themes emerged from the data: villagers' communication among themselves, with Thai visitors, and with foreign visitors. Under each of these macro-themes, there were two themes: evidence of language maintenance and potential threats, which are presented with examples.

Villagers' Communication among Themselves

The overwhelming majority of the villagers use Southern Thai to communicate among themselves in the home and work domains: *"It is used by the villagers everywhere, inside and outside their homes, at their neighbors' houses, along the way to their mixed orchards"* (PO). Nevertheless, in recent years, a potential threat to language maintenance has appeared via exposure to Standard Thai in the media. For example, one villager says: *"Now, one family has two or three TVs, in every bedroom"* (P1, ID); another says young villagers *"have more and more Internet connections in their houses"* (P2, ID).

The education domain also provides exposure to Standard Thai. A middle-aged villager says it has been used as the medium of instruction in the village school *"...for a long time, since [my] grandfather's time"* (P3, PO). Even so, despite government policy enforcing Standard Thai in state education, Southern Thai continues to be used in the classroom as teachers code-change between these two varieties: *"She uses Standard Thai as a medium of teaching, as do other teachers.... She sometimes switches to Southern Thai or mixes Southern words to facilitate her explanations in Standard Thai"* (P4, PO). Another teacher gives another example by explaining that in unplanned speaking with their teachers, students often alternate between Southern Thai and Standard Thai and that such code-changing "happens naturally"; further, she says that *"teachers and students...unintentionally pronounce Standard Thai words with a Southern Thai accent"* (P5, PO).

In the domain of official community meetings, the village headman reports that he "always" speaks Southern Thai but Standard Thai is used for written documents (P6, PO). In another instance, when reading aloud from written documents (NPO), the chairperson uses Standard Thai with a Southern accent, known as *phasa thongdaeng.* (This accent arises from the fact that Southern Thai has seven tones whereas Standard Thai has five tones. This is often observed among Southerners speaking Standard Thai.) In both instances, Standard Thai for the written mode is likely to occur because Southern Thai has no written code.

Villagers' Communication with Thai Visitors

Many villagers, particularly older ones, irrespective of their proficiency in Standard Thai, insist on maintaining use of their own language. There are five explanations for this: language proficiency, loss of face, identity, regular exposure to Standard Thai, and age-related shift towards bilingualism.

For language proficiency, one villager reveals *"Talking in Standard Thai, I have to be careful and think of the right words"* (P7, PO). Another frequently cited reason involves loss of face when speaking Standard Thai with a Southern accent*: "I understand Standard Thai, but I don't want to speak it. I don't want to be embarrassed by using 'phasa thongdaeng'. So, to save face, I prefer to use my language"* (P8, SS).

The third reason for maintaining the mother tongue is the widespread sense of a profound link between Southern Thai and the villagers' collective identity: *"[I/We] use our language. It's our identity showing we are Southerners"* (P9, SS). Another villager uses Southern Thai to convey her culture: *"When we speak Southern Thai, visitors can learn our way of life through our language"* (P10, SS). Even some villagers whose Standard Thai is highly proficient resist its use; a resort owner and his daughter prefer *"to use Southern Thai if we talk to Thai visitors"* (P11, ID).

Fourthly, villagers whose work involves regular contact with Thai visitors cannot maintain exclusive use of Southern Thai. Even though tourist-center staff routinely greet Thai visitors in Southern Thai, for visitors who cannot understand it, they subsequently have to switch to Standard Thai. At the cottage industries, the head *"provides information…in Standard Thai…The villagers and some local experts…use Southern Thai for group discussions among local members and code-change to Standard Thai with group members who cannot understand Southern Thai"* (NPO). Perhaps surprisingly, exposure to code-mixing can also occur in conversations about fruit farming, a domain integral to villagers' collective identity: *"Some [researchers] talk to us in Standard Thai and then talk among themselves with some words in English. We understand when they talk to us in Thai, but we don't understand when they talk in English"* (P12, ID).

For the last reason, evidence of perhaps a greater threat to the maintenance of Southern Thai in Khiriwong comes from an age-related shift towards bilingualism. Young villagers such as this one, under the age of 16, often advocate accommodation via Standard Thai: *"Visitors don't understand our Southern Thai, so we should use Standard Thai. We all learn Standard Thai… Why don't we talk to them in Standard Thai? It is easier for them to understand us"* (P13, SS). However, while *"…younger people under 25 years are able to use Standard Thai better than in the past…they do not use it for speaking at home or among residents, [unlike] people in the city"* (P3, PO).

Villagers' Communication with Foreign Visitors

While the data provide compelling evidence that English is not a threat to the maintenance of Southern Thai, some potential threats were found. For maintenance of the mother tongue, three factors were found: earning potential, unwanted pressure to learn English, and difficulties in communicating with non-native speakers of English (NNSs). Even some villagers who have regular contact with foreigners resist learning English for economic reasons: *"We cannot just learn English to serve foreigners. We earn more from our orchards"* (P2, ID). A second factor is resentment about official local tourism policy that homestay and resort owners should learn English (P14, PO). One villager says that some community members object to being "forced" by tourism officials to learn

English (P15, ID); another says: *"If community leaders want to promote tourism, they should be the ones who speak English to visitors"* (P16, PO).

The third factor is that most foreign visitors are NNSs, e.g. from Brazil, Germany, Russia, Malaysia, and Singapore. The experience of a trekking guide, whose contact with foreigners spans more than a decade, reveals clear recognition that English is a pluricentric language; some visitors do not understand his English, he does not understand their English, and *"people from different countries speak different Englishes"* (P17, PO).

Not all villagers are hostile to English, however. Three potential threats to Southern Thai were found: code-changing, age-related attitudes to English, and some beliefs about the utility of English. A homestay host says that with their guest, her family *"normally code-change among Southern Thai, Standard Thai, and easy English"* along with non-linguistic strategies including paralanguage (P18, ID) while a resort owner successfully communicates in English with two German speakers despite all three interlocutors having low English proficiency (P11, ID).

As with Standard Thai, there appears to be an intergenerational shift in attitudes to English. Several villagers under the age of 16 hold views such as this: *"I use English, [but] one language is not enough. Foreigners are the same as us; they use English…even though I feel they can't speak good English"* (P19, SS).

Thirdly, villagers of all ages offer reasons for their beliefs in the utility of English: making extra money (e.g. P20, ID); selling products abroad (P17, PO); preserving the community's reputation (e.g. P18, ID); telling their own story to foreigners and not relying on translators (P15, ID); communicating in the future (P21, ID). However, while this does not seem to translate into a widespread willingness to learn or use English, there are exceptions. Two villagers in regular contact with foreigners expressed a degree of integrative motivation. One said that English *"…provides an opportunity to access the wider world and understand other people who are different from us"* (P15, ID) while the other uses it as he wants *"…to know where [foreign visitors] are from and what they are doing in their countries"* (P20, ID).

Discussion and Conclusion

This study found abundant evidence of the maintenance of Southern Thai in Khiriwong, though, arguably, there is evidence of threats to its long-term strength. Ethnolinguistic vitality theory (Giles et al., 1977) seems to explain some of this regional language's continuing resilience. This farming community, though small, is proud, relatively prosperous, and largely intact (Issarakraisila, Margaret, Somsri, & Somsri, 2016) with no official hostility to its language. Another indicator of its strength in the community can be found in Fishman (1991), who, when assessing the chances of a language surviving, stressed the importance of intergenerational family transmission. In Khiriwong, Southern Thai is spoken in every domain by all generations. Indeed, there is a remarkable level of language loyalty even among some of those villagers who have regular contact with outsiders, many seeing their mother tongue as part of their collective identity.

Nonetheless, potential threats to language maintenance in Khiriwong may be on the horizon. Within the community, villagers' vastly increased exposure to Standard Thai via radio, television, and the Internet may affect the local language ecology. Natthida (2005), studying Thai Song Dam, a language with about 32,000 speakers in Central Thailand, found that exposure to mass media seemed to precipitate an increase in code-switching, potentially a precursor to minority-language erosion. For young people, exposure to Standard Thai is enhanced by language education policy. Although teachers currently accommodate their students by reverting to Southern Thai or code-changing between the two varieties, young people are becoming proficient in Standard Thai. Moreover, future generations with even greater exposure to the national language may feel more confident using it if they can speak it without a face-losing Southern accent (*phasa thongdaeng*). Thus, resistance to it may diminish over time.

Villagers' exposure to Standard Thai is also enhanced by influences beyond the community. The language is likely to benefit from increasing numbers of young villagers moving to nearby cities for primary, secondary, and especially tertiary education. Sriwimon (2012) found erosion of the regional language to Standard Thai in a city whereas, as shown in the current study, in a nearby rural area, the same regional language remains resilient.

Perhaps ominously, the gravity model (Trudgill, 1974) would predict that language erosion in cities not far from Khiriwong will eventually affect this rural community. The apparent identity shift among city dwellers could presage a similar change over time in Khiriwong. Moreover, while Southern Thai remains fully functional in the spoken mode, in a globalizing economy where literacy and written communication are prerequisites for many well-paid jobs, its lack of a formal written code could make it vulnerable to Standard Thai (Premsrirat, 2010). There is a widespread view, especially in the face of globalization, that written languages are more highly valued and thus more vital than unwritten ones (for example, Grenoble & Whaley, 1998), which is why many language revitalization programs include a focus on literacy (UNESCO, 2005).

In contrast to these potential threats to Southern Thai from Standard Thai, there currently appear to be no threats from English, Thailand's "international language" (Smalley, 1994, p. 16). Villagers who have no contact with the few foreigners who visit the community resist it while those with contact either also resist it or accommodate these visitors by speaking it as best they can. Even some resort owners and homestay hosts stress that their primary source of income is fruit farming and do not see the need to speak English. Bruthiaux (2002, p. 290) reported that for many people, economic development is paramount and "...the global spread of English is a sideshow". This certainly seems to be the case in Khiriwong.

Motivation to learn or use English is further undermined because most foreign visitors either have no English at all or are NNSs, sometimes with phonological accents that are hard for villagers to understand. Ironically, while English is widely spoken among NNSs, its pluricentric nature can make it hard to use as an ELF.

Nevertheless, a few villagers seek to attain some proficiency in English. The language is perceived to have utility in promoting and protecting the community's reputation in the outside world, or as Leech (2014, p. 25) might put it, in maintaining "collective face". This was often framed as villagers wanting to "tell their own story" and not diluting their voice by delegating that responsibility to interpreters. For some young villagers, already more proficient than their parents via exposure to the language in the media and education, there is the potential to earn more money. Taken together, education and earning power are likely to draw more young people towards urban jobs in the global economy.

In an increasingly connected world, code-changing and bilingualism are becoming more common. As one villager put it, "*One language is not enough*". Being bilingual or multilingual broadens speakers' communication with the outside world and can provide educational and professional opportunities (UNESCO, 2005). At present in Khiriwong, there is some evidence that code-changing is increasing, particularly among the young, but the community is far from being bilingual, even in Southern and Standard Thai. Thus, according to Sallabank (2011, p. 501), who says that "speakers of endangered languages are usually multilingual", Southern Thai is far from being threatened. Nonetheless, Natthida (2005, p. 165) warns that "the shift from 'healthy' to 'endangered' can happen very suddenly in an ethnolinguistic community". Serious attrition of Southern Thai may be happening in urban areas, where parents are beginning to use Standard Thai at home in an effort to help their children at school (Sriwimon, 2012). However, it does not necessarily follow that language ecologies in rural communities such as Khiriwong would evolve in an identical manner; it is also possible that any increasing code-changing and bilingualism would lead to the coexistence of more than one language.

It is well known that the findings from ethnographic studies cannot be generalized because the methodology requires a specific context. Nonetheless, the current researchers feel that the large amount of data yielded by such longitudinal, emic methodology have a greater potential to reveal communities' genuine feelings than some more commonly utilized methodologies. Previous research in this community by the first author using needs analyses failed to uncover the community's default choice not to learn or use English. Such resistance may be more widespread than is generally believed, particularly among middle-aged and older people in rural areas both in Thailand and elsewhere.

Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest.

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