

A Synchronic Study of Hmong Language Spoken in Mae Rim District, Chiang Mai Province

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Abstract

The objectives of this research aim to study 3 objectives: 1) The phonological Structure of Hmong language 2) The Morphological Structure of Hmong language and 3). The Syntactical Structure of Hmong language, by six villages in Mae Rim District Chiang Mai Province to collect data from in-depth interviews with a sampling population of 36 people divided into three groups: the first group, adolescents aged from 15-25 years, the second group, middle-aged aged from 26-50 years, and the third group Elderly from aged 51-70 years, and analyzing language changes between groups of different age groups, and the factors causing the linguistic change of the Hmong language.

The result found that 1) The phonological structure, there are two major dialects were spoken in six villages and differ in both vocabulary and certain aspects of phonology and words are monosyllabic, large, complex inventories of tones languages.

2) The morphological structure is an isolating language; new words can be formed by compounding and reduplication and nouns show their case function through word order in the subject/object position. When it comes to nominative and accusative cases on nouns, they are not inflected for number, case, or gender. The same word could be used to translate singular, dual, and plural pronouns.

3) The syntactical structure is an analytic SVO language. The pronominal system distinguishes between three grammatical persons and three numbers

- singular, dual, and plural. They are not marked for case, that is, the same word is used to translate both “I” and “me”, “she” and “her”. From the analysis results, it was found that the group that had the most change in the phonological structure was adolescents aged 15-25 years who used transliteration and borrowed from Thai and English, to make a new word and used it with friends and family.

Keywords: Hmong, phonological, Morphological and Syntactic structure

Introduction

Hmong History

The origins of the Hmong are obscure and the subject of speculation and debate. Hmong folktales - which describe an ancient homeland of ice and snow, darkness and light - have led some to speculate that the Hmong originated in central Siberia, although there is no independent evidence for this theory and because Hmong retains cultural traces of the earliest forms of Chinese social organizations, however, other specialists have considered them to be among the aboriginal inhabitants of China. The earliest recorded homeland of Hmong was in China. The Chinese classic of History (Nusit Chindasri 1976) it records that Hmong was banished from the central Yangtze plain by Yu the great (2205-2198 BC) to northwestern Kansu. However, about three thousand years later, after there is not any information about them because the Chinese records usually use the single term ‘man’ meaning ‘barbarians’, ‘Nan-Man’ meaning southern barbarians’, for all the non-Han Chinese groups in the region. They had often fought against the Chinese for a long time and finally they were defeated, then they moved to southward. (Taweesak Kulyot, 2529)

In the present day, the majority of Hmong still live in China (the most Hmong live in different provinces such as Kweichow, Hunan, Yunnan,

Kwangsi, Szecwan, Kwangtung, and Hupeh). In the other hand, during 18th – 19th century there were some groups of Hmong began to migrate from China to Vietnam, Laos, Myanmar and Thailand following the end of the Vietnam war, tens of thousands of Hmong speakers emigrated to France, USA and Australia. (Frank M. Lebar and Adrienne Suddard, 1967)

The Hmong migrated to the northern areas of Thailand up high on the mountainous area during the World War II. They moved through Nan, Chiang Rai and Loei provinces. Then they moved to the mountainous areas of many provinces in the North of Thailand. The group that migrated to Thailand, first came to build a village on the mountain and live there by planting opium for trading and there are many of them also smoked opium. However, The King Rama 9th came up to the mountain for starting more than 3,000 projects help hill tribes which including Hmong people too.

Culture and Religion

The origin of the Hmong's belief is ancestor worship and they combined it with supernatural power. In every village, there is a spiritual leader to communicate with the ancestor spirit or other supernatural powers which the others cannot. If someone is ill without a reason or cause, then his/her family will go to the shaman for checking what was wrong with their family member. The shaman will contact the ancestor and guide the solution for that family. Hmong will bury the dead body after a two- or three-day ceremony. They do believe that humans will be reborn again after passing away. Nowadays there are many Hmong people turned to follow Buddhism and Christianity because of the environment and social contact. Hmong are usually work the hold year-long without contact with other tribes. Every year in between December to January is the celebrating New Year for Hmong in each village. They will not claim the date exactly like others, within two months they can arrange their own new year depending on the village committee's agreement to manage the event. Actually, during this time

nobody works, everyone can rest, eat, drink, and gamble in competition for 5 days. They dress in beautiful clothing which they spent a whole year to prepare for this purpose only. During these 5 days, it is a good opportunity for the boys and the girls to know and meet each other at the place for throwing a ball and have some conversation to know more each. During the 5 days celebrating a boy who is ready to have a new family may choose one that he likes to marry and take her home. However, with the new generation and modern technology of internet social contact, this custom was ignored to them because it is illegal to Thai law to take someone who is not granted to be your wife. The status of the women in Hmong culture is not equal to the men. The Hmong men can have the right to have two and more wives but the women cannot have two husbands.

Hmong language

There are many scholars stated that the Hmong language belongs to the Miao-Yao branch of the Sino-Tibetan language family, it has three dialects spoken in the western Hunan, the eastern Guizhou and Chuan Qian Dian (Sichuan, Guizhou and Yunnan) respectively. (Linda Tsung, 2009) The Miao-Yao family, is one of the major language stocks of Southeast Asia. Most of the languages of the family are spoken in southwestern China, but several languages are spoken in the northern portions of Vietnam, Laos, Thailand, and Burma. (David Strecker, 1987: 2)

Chinese scholars have claimed that Hmong-Mien belongs to the Sino-Tibetan language family, along with Chinese, Tibeto-Burman (which includes Tibetan, Burmese, Karen, and many smaller languages of southern and western Asia), and Tai-Kadai (which includes Thai, Lao, Shan, Zhuang, and many smaller languages of Southeast Asia). He also mentioned that according to Wang 1986 and Pan 2006) stated that most recent Chinese linguistics scholarship supported this view as well. (Martha Ratliff, 2010)

Hmong language has at least two forms, White Hmong, Hmoob Dawb (mong daw), and Blue/Green Hmong, alternatively known as Blue Hmong, Hmoob Njua (mong njua), or Green Hmong, Hmoob Leeg (mong leng). While many linguists regard these as dialects of the same language, some Hmong reject that designation and see Hmoob Leeg as a separate language, which they call Mong (Moob Lub Neej). There is considerable controversy in the Hmong community over these claims (for a scholarly discussion, see Thao 1999). In its written form, White Hmong is commonly represented by the Romanized Popular Alphabet (RPA), while Blue/Green Hmong is often represented by a variant of the RPA. (John M. Duffy, 2007)

Hmong languages are monosyllabic and tonal, they have remarkable large consonant inventories and are non-inflective. Hmong is the language of the Hmong ethnic group that has a rich history and is spoken by millions of people nowadays. Hmong translation is a challenging service to perform for both translators and DTP due to the fact that it is a tonal language with complex phonology and many different dialects. Language facts that affect Hmong translation to English and other languages: There are two main dialects Hmong Njua (Green Hmong) and Hmong Daw (White Hmong). While the speakers of both dialects can understand each other,

In Thailand, Hmong people live on the hills in many provinces in the mostly northern area as follow; Chiang Rai, Phrae, Nan, Phayao, Chiang Mai, Lampang, Phetchabun, Tak, Kamphaeng Phet, Phitsanulok, Sukhothai, and Loei. There are 49 villages and the population around 45,000 people in Chiang Mai. My target groups are from 6 villages in Mae Rim district, Chiang Mai to collect data for study by in depth- interview.

Significant of Problems

In the present time, the new generation lack of their own culture and much more adapt to other cultures, for instance, the young generations not only lack of their own culture but also ignore their identities of blood as

well. In my experience, the hill tribe native speakers could not speak the Thai language clear, which brought some Thai people to look down on their identities. From my own perspective and experiences, I think that because of this reason change the young generation trying to hide their own race from the Thai people by lack of Hmong language and teaching their own children to speak only the Thai language. I have met with some young generation from Thailand as well as in the U.S.A they even cannot speak Hmong at all. If this idea of hiding their own race by lacking their own language, I think that the Hmong language may no longer be alive 50 years from now. I personally study and do research on this topic because I want to know the daily life vocabularies how much can they remember as their own languages and research what the exact factor cause language and to maintain and preserve the Hmong language to the next generation. This study aims to study the Hmong language according to linguistics in terms of phonological, morphological, and syntactical structures. It shall be analyzed the structure of the Hmong language, in order to preserve their culture of language to the next generations. I hope that my research would be beneficial to Hmong people around the world and to whom it may be interested to study in the Hmong language.

Objectives of the Research

- 1) To study phonological structure of Hmong language
- 2) To study morphological structure of Hmong language
- 3) To study syntactical structure of Hmong language
- 4) To analyze the structure of Hmong language

Research Methodology

The Research method will be employed are consisted into two methodologies viz. documentary and fieldwork. For the documentaries research, it will be investigated in research papers that concerning on the

work of Hmong language and for the fieldwork, it will be conducted in 6 villages of Hmong people in Mae Rim district, Chiang Mai province. All data will be collected from the heads and shamans of Hmong communities by interviewing, who have spoken their dialect in daily life. The method of this research is divided into a series which are described as follows.

Research Design:

Research is a qualitative design consist of 500 examples words list using in daily life divided into twenty-six categories, to study as follows; 1) Phonological Structure, 2) Morphological & Word Order Structure and 3) Syntactical Structure. The research design is concerned with a structural study of Hmong language spoken in northern region of Thailand with linguistic approach. During 2018 and 2021, the researcher will take time to interview the native speakers in six villages of Mae Rim district to interview.

Key Informants:

In order to obtain reliable information, the researcher choose particular in-depth interviews with 36 key informants (for 6/village) who are native speakers in Mae Rim district, Chiang Mai province for collecting data in the three different age as following;

- 1) First group was teenagers between 15 - 25 years old two per each village.
- 2) Second group was adults between 25 – 50 years old two per each village.
- 3) Third group was senior between 51 years up two per each village.

Research Tools

Research Tools: Laptop, recorder, papers, pens, ruler, smart and other materials will be used to note information from informants. Smart phone will be used to take photos during the fieldwork of data collection within 6 villages from Mae Rim district as well as Windows 10 will be used to expose the words, pictures and so on for the research.

Data Collection

Data collection consists of two parts: data and fieldwork. According to the collection of In-depth interviews, focusing group discussion and useful notebooks, newspapers, magazines, and other social media such as website facebook line, etc., this data consists of the following: the study of 500 into tall for phonological structures, morphological structures, and syntactical structures of Hmong language; English Texts are related the books with qualified academics. All the sources are based on English related to the Hmong language. All data can be recorded into a computer program called Fieldworks Language Explorer. Only the basic wordlist can be recorded with a smartphone in order to analyze tones.

Results

In this research, the researcher would like to present a summary based on the following objectives: The research found that

1) The phonological structure; Hmong Daw and Mong Leeg are the two major dialects spoken in six villages in Maerim. The dialects differ in both lexicon and certain aspects of phonology. For instance, Mong Leeg lacks the voiceless/aspirated /**ṃ**/ of Hmong Daw and has a third nasalized vowel, /**ã**/; both dialects have numerous Thai loans. Most words in Hmong languages are monosyllabic and tonal languages, some with large and complex inventories of tones. For the vast majority of words, therefore, word structure is the same as syllable structure: CV(C)—i.e., an initial consonant or consonant cluster followed by a vowel, in some cases closed by a final consonant. Each word also bears a distinctive tone, which contributes as much to the identification of the word as do the consonants and vowels. Most Hmong's word's structure is monosyllabic and start with one or more consonants followed by a vowel and, sometimes, by a final consonant.

Hmong's consonants language has a large number of initial consonants, including retroflex, uvular and glottal sounds, besides the usual labial, dental/alveolar, palatal and velar. Voiceless stops and affricates are more common than voiced ones. Stops and affricates can be aspirated or pre-nasalized, yielding a four-way contrasts: voiceless unaspirated, voiceless aspirated, voiceless prenasalized, and voiced.

Hmong languages do not have voiced stops may pronounce a voiceless stop with both pre-nasalization and aspiration yielding a slightly different four ways contrast in which all stops are voiceless: unaspirated, unaspirated prenasalized, aspirated, aspirated prenasalized. Another interesting feature of Hmongic consonant systems is the occurrence of contrasting pairs of voiceless and voiced nasals (voiceless nasals are comparatively rare in world languages). The only permitted final consonants are the dental and velar nasals (n, ŋ). In contrast, the inventory of Mien initial consonants is smaller but more consonants are permitted in final position, including three nasals (m, n, ŋ) and three stops (p, t and glottal ʔ).

Tones; There are 8 tones (though some say there are 7). There is a high tone, low tone, and even a low falling tone. Regardless of the tone of a word, the final printed word will have an indication of which tone should be used when that word is to be spoken. The difference; the written form of Hmong is vastly different from the spoken and that poses a challenge. It is written in the Latin alphabet but the spelling is not phonetically-alike

2) The Morphological structure; Hmong is an isolating language, where new words can be formed by compounding and reduplication. Nouns show its case function through word order in the subject/object position, where the adjectives and demonstratives follow the noun. When it comes to nominative and accusative cases on nouns, they are not inflected for number, case or gender. Therefore, the same word could be used to translate the singular, dual and plural pronouns.

Hmong is isolating languages; the nouns are not inflected for number, case or gender; the verbs are not marked for tense, mood, person or number. New words can be formed by compounding, clipping, phonological change and reduplication. Numeral classifiers are required when enumerating nouns. In contrast with Chinese, there are no suffixes and only a limited number of prefixes. Serial verb constructions are frequent. They involve two or more adjacent verbs (without any intervening conjunctions), all of them sharing the same subject. They usually express a sequence of closely related actions. Hmong language has a special kind of words called ideophones that evoke vivid sensations or sensory perceptions such as smell, color, sound, shape, movement, etc. there are formed by reduplication and/or has an onomatopoeic character. Hmong's vocabularies and pronunciations change according with their social contact and countries where they belong to.

3) The Syntactical structure; Hmong is an analytic SVO language in which adjectives and demonstratives follow the noun. Noun phrases can contain the following elements (parentheses indicate optional elements) (possessive) + (quantifier) + (classifier) + noun + (adjective) + (demonstrative). The Hmong pronominal system distinguishes between three grammatical persons and three numbers - singular, dual, and plural. They are not marked for case, that is, the same word is used to translate both “I” and “me”, “she” and “her”, and so forth. These are the personal pronouns of White Hmong (Hmoob Dawb) and Mong Leng (Moob Leeg):

Due to the complete absence of inflections, word order and positions are essential to determine syntactical relations. Normally, like in English, the subject precedes the verb which is followed by the object (SVO). Within the noun phrase, possessors and classifiers generally precede nouns, while adjectives follow the noun. Particles may be placed at the end of the phrase to express the state of mind of the speaker like uncertainty, confirmation, impatience, etc.

From the analysis results, it was found that the group that had the most change in the phonological structure was adolescents aged 15-25 years who used transliteration and borrowed other languages words. The pronunciation of Hmong words is different from the middle-aged population and the elderly population. As for the morphological structure, it was found that the sample population had mixed words from Thai and English, to make a new word and used to chat with friends and family. As for The Syntactical structure, there is no change in sentence patterns. The Syntactic structure, grammar, due to the structure of the Hmong language, it has a grammatical structure similar to Thai language. It can be concluded that the reason for the change in the Hmong language arise from the social and cultural context in which immigration communication and learning in different cultures.

Discuss

Language changes can be caused by internal or external factors. For linguists, language change occurs when there is a mechanism by which language changes such mechanisms include mutation, analogy, and borrowing of other languages. Hmong language, the main mechanism by which the Hmong language can be changed is the borrowing mechanism, which occurs when two or more speakers of different languages must communicate with each other with the necessity due to the need to communicate with each other in terms of business or politics. This causes the user of a language change their own sound from Thai and English:

As a result of language words borrowing, it caused effects on languages that borrow or receive words from other languages into 2 ways as following: 1). The impact of phonological system changed, 2) The impact of morphological changed.

The Influence of Phonological System Changed

There are many factors caused the phonological system changed, such as borrowing Thai words, for example: Telephone, refrigerator, Facebook, Internet, microwave, electricity, air conditioner, TV, fan, bag, watch, printer, these words make the Hmong phonological system changed from the studying the phonological change found that the current Hmong language has different pronunciation of consonants and vowels in speakers of different ages. The sound variability according to age by elderly, middle-aged, and young adolescent speakers will pronounce consonants that come from sounds in different ways. Hmong today has different sound of words in speakers of different ages by age-group such as older, middle-aged, and adolescent speakers but the meanings doesn't change. Some Phonology and Morphological structure Changed in Hmong language

However, even though there were some phonological and morphological changed from borrowing of Thai and English but the Syntax of Hmong language did not change. Because of Hmong language is the S V O structure as well as Thai and English. The Factors of phonological and morphological changed in Hmong language as following; Major reasons for the change in language This was due to a number of reasons as follows:

A. Social Geographic Factors; as a result of political governance Because the Hmong are a nation that does not have a state of its own. and live scattered in many countries where a common language is declared as the official language Therefore, it is necessary to learn the common language from the education system organized by the state. make various ethnic groups It is necessary to learn the common language of that nation-state. as a second language, Therefore, it is an important reason for the change in the Hmong language that exists in many countries, including the immigration of foreigners from different languages in the same area. would cause borrowing or a combination of languages

B. Economic factors; When there is trade exchange between groups There will always be a common language or any language as a medium for trading.

C. Information media factors; in modern times It is communicated through various communication channels such as computer networks, radio, television, printing, becoming a new channel of communication. writing new words for entertainment is an important medium that allows the new generation to receive news and stories about learning. accepting and adapting more languages

D. Language-communication factors; due to new vocabulary that some people have used until widespread because the existing Hmong language May is not able to convey the nature and details of what needs to be communicated enough. The messenger had to try to come up with a new word to be able to describe as much detail and his feelings as possible. or have a specific language of the group When a language is re-used resulting in new words being defined.

Although the Hmong language can change many characteristics as mentioned above. But such changes Linguists consider the nature of language to be immature. because the language is spoken in everyday life There must be a change (variation), which if the change has already occurred permanently. It is called the language that has changed. Therefore, for the use of language in modern forms such as fiery words or the language of teenagers. Linguists will regard it as just a change. but has not made any changes to the language.

This research was consistent with the study of Annie (1955), has studied and said that words in Hmong are monosyllabic but there are a number of high- frequency words which are disyllabic compounds. These compounds are spelled as two words by some Hmong and as single words by others.

John Duffy, Roger Harmon, Donald A. Ranard, Bo Thao, and Kou Yang, (2004), They have studied and said that there are numerous and

systematic differences between the two, however, and some Hmong claim to have difficulty understanding speakers of the other dialect. Most of these differences lie in pronunciation, though words and even syntax sometimes differ also.

Bliatout, and others, (1988) have studied and often stated that Hmong is a member of the broad Sino-Tibetan language family and related to Vietnamese and Cambodian in a third broad family of languages called Austro-Asiatic.

David R. (2017), stated that Hmong languages often have very large consonant inventories with rare classes of sounds like uvulars and voiceless sonorants.

Ramsey. (1987), said that a structural difference between Miao and Yao can be found in the inventory of consonants that can close a syllable. Yao syllables can end in -m, -n, -ng, -p, -t, or -k. But Miao has only a single nasal ending, which is realized phonetically as [-tig] after back vowels and as after front vowels. In some Miao dialects there is no final consonant at all, but only nasalization of the syllable vowel.

David R. Mortensen (2000), studied the Sinitic Loanwords in Two Hmong Dialects of Southeast Asia found that Hmong Daw and Mong Leng are dialects of Western Hmong spoken China in Southeast Asia (Vietnam, Laos, and Thailand). Though the Hmong languages are not as heavily Sinicized as Mien, they do show unmistakable signs of Sinitic (Chinese) influence in their lexicon and are similar to the Sinitic languages in certain areas of their syntax, morphology, and phonology.

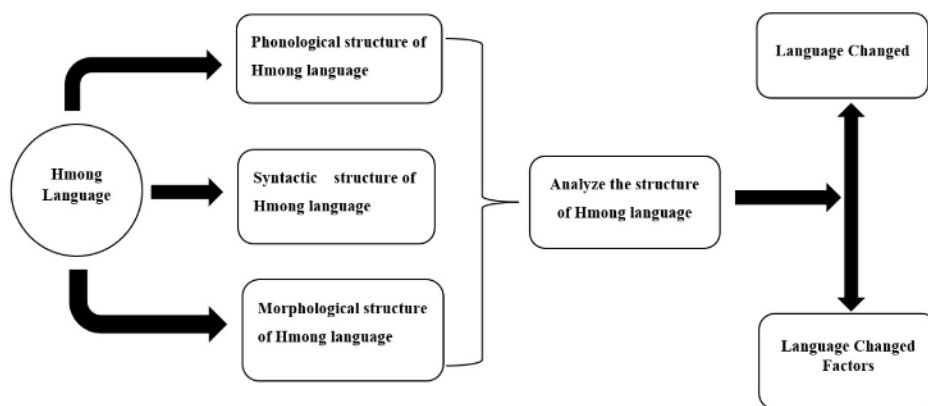
As a part of Hmong people, I found that the new generations ignored to carry on their own cultures and language because of the situation and environment has been changed following with the country developing. The are many Hmong people did not teach Hmong language to their own child instead of teaching their child with the second language or official language.

They tried to hide their own culture and language from the other people because of the hierarchical system of the country they live. The ethnocentric attitude from people in city toward Hmong is more negative with underdeveloped and concern with drugs.

This is one of the reason Hmong people tries to hide their own culture and language from people in the city by ignoring to speak their own language and also ignore transferring language to their child. The new Hmong generations are facing with the big problems of their culture and language. There are several problems such as they cannot speech any words of Hmong language, the pronunciation changed and they could not understand clearly of Hmong langue conversation etc. The purpose of this study was to investigate Hmong language according to linguistics in different ages to find out the truth of language ignorance from the present day of Hmong in the study areas, and I believe that it is not only this are that the language was changed but all countries where Hmong live today do so. Hmong language could be maintained and passed on to future generations. This study hopes to create awareness in the community and prevent the Hmong language from disappearing from the Ethnology. From the recommends of senior showed that Hmong language is important and would like to see it preserved for future generations.

Knowledge

From the study, the researcher studied the Hmong language by using the linguistic study principles method consisting of the phonological structure, morphological structure, and Syntactic structure to analyze the language change and the factors that are affecting the Hmong language in the present time. The researcher found that there are many factors as mentioned above it caused the Hmong language to change. The conceptual framework knowledge can be summarized in the following diagram;



Conclusion

From the study, I found that 1) The phonological structure; Hmong Daw and Mong Leeg are the two major dialects spoken in six villages in Maerim. The dialects differ in both lexicon and certain aspects of phonology. Most words in Hmong languages are monosyllabic and tonal languages, some with large and complex inventories of tones. For the vast majority of words, therefore, word structure is the same as syllable structure: CV(C) - i.e., an initial consonant or consonant cluster followed by a vowel, in some cases closed by a final consonant. 2) The morphological structure; Hmong is an isolating language, where new words can be formed by compounding and reduplication. Nouns show its case function through word order in the subject/object position, where the adjectives and demonstratives follow the noun. When it comes to nominative and accusative cases on nouns, they are not inflected for number, case or gender. Therefore, the same word could be used to translate the singular, dual and plural pronouns. 3) The Syntactical structure; Hmong is an analytic SVO language in which adjectives and demonstratives follow the noun. The Hmong pronominal system distinguishes

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