Code-Switching Between the Thai and Isan Language

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Abstract

The Code-switching phenomenon prominently spreads to communities around the globe according to the multilingual increasing including Thailand. People in each region have their native language while Standard Thai or Bangkok language as a national language plays a crucial role in the daily speech of locals in all domains. This research is a sociocultural linguistic perspective focusing on code-switching is taking place in rural villages in the northeastern region. The qualitative method by recording broadcast tower announcements, language observation, and purposing key interviews are used for data collection. The fieldwork is in 3 rural villages in Udonthani province where the Isan language is major and home language. The research finding shows that code-switching between the Thai language and Isan language involves interlocutors, place, situation, and age. The Thai language is widely used in government contents and formal situations or speak to strangers while the Isan language is used in local cultural contents, informal situations, familiar interlocutors, and daily speech. The Isan language does function to deeply explain the government's contents, meeting, particularly the covid-19 situation reported. Code-switching occurs in variously language use domains. In terms of speaker's age reveals that worker groups rather switch languages than a teenager and elder groups. The finding discloses the Thai language's influence on its dialects even though speakers live in a remote area. The code-switching phenomenon should have been studied in other regions to understand how multilingualism and code-switching between the Thai language and its dialects of Thailand are taking place.

Index Terms— Bangkok language, Code-Switching, Isan language, Thai dialects, Language change

I. INTRODUCTION

Global information accessing the English language plays an important role as international language and lingual franca by differently native speakers even remote villages [1]. Each country the national language or official language replaces its dialects in modern society. Locals there is an increasing the bilingual or multilingual in a country. In the present time it seems that people in the world have come to be multilingual much more by education role and commercial sectors [2].

The code-switching is a phenomenon when speakers alternated between two or more languages. Seemingly this phenomenon wildly spreads various domains of language among bilingual or multilingual increasingly around the world. This significant phenomenon of code-switching as verbal action that it has a creates communicative and social meaning [3].

Thailand has Thai language meaning Thai language (TL) as national and official language, however, the country has 4 its dialect spoken in regions. Moreover, there are plenty ethnic languages and border language as well. In the present time, it seems that TL is used in all domains; education, mass media, official communication, and economic sector. Therefore, TL plays in crucial role into its dialects almost completely similarly global dialects.

Hence giving a value of BL increasing, the parent in remote villages have preferred their children to speak BL than dialect. The children have been studied in the city's school where use

BL in daily speech. The dialect or mother tongue using in Thailand are decreasing by an increasing of bilingual children including.

The phenomenon of TL instead of dialects in rural areas appearing in the northeast where Isan language (IL) is mother tongue. The IL is a Thai dialect so it has shared the cognates with BL. There are the linguistic differences in several feature; consonants and tonal levels, therefore huge vocabularies are similar meaning and pronouncing to each other. It leads to having code-mixing between IL and TLs in words and tone levels easier. Obviously, Isan teenagers mixed BL in IS at school being in the city particularly in economic cities in the northeast. [4]

There are finding of the TL influence into its dialect including IL, however, it has lack to study in the remote village situation. This article will disclose the code-switching phenomenon between TL and IL in rural villages at northeastern region. It is able to fulfill the state of dialect change knowledge and increasing of bilingual in Thailand.

II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A.   Research design
This research is a qualitative in sociocultural linguistics perspective focusing on the situation of code-switching phenomenon between Thai language (TL) and Isan language (IL) spoken in northeastern region. The research field is the 3 rural villages in Udonthani province. The villages are representative suitably of rural village changing by the economically government policy. The research questions are (1) what contents of code-switching and (2) what are key factors of code-switching.

B.   Data and collection
The data were collected by mixing methods; recording the broadcast tower announcement, insider observation of daily speech in major places; temple, shop, saloon, public area, and school, and key informant interview such as village header, teenagers, parent, monk, teacher in village school.

The villager groups are divided into 3 groups based on way of life. The first group is 'children and teenager' being 7-21 years' old. The second group is 'worker' being 22-50 years' old. And the last group is 'elder' being over 60 years' old.

C.   Analysis
The data will be analyzed by code-switching concept relevantly sociocultural linguistics. The research finding is divided into 3 aspects that is 1) code-switching and places, 2) code-switching and situation, and 3) code-switching and ages. The knowledge IL using currently in the province will be stated.

III. CODE-SWITCHING IN THAILAND
Thailand are divided into 4 main regions relating its different geography that are north, northeast, central, and south. The regions have different dialects which are belong to Thai dialects. The figure 1 shows the 4 main regions and its dialect.

Fig. 1: *The 4 main regions of Thailand* (cited in http://thailandforvisitors.com/general/regions.html)

As the TL plays in crucial role into education, mass media, official communication and lingual franca of people different mother tongue. Regional people alternate to use TL and their dialect. In northeastern region the IL is spoken in rural villages rather than cities. The rural people; however, work in the cities, they prefer

to speak TL than IL. The locals use the TL or national standard language mixed to their home language. For example, the local villages in northern Thai dialect have switched between TL and northern dialect [5]. The southern Thai dialect spoken as native language of southern people, nevertheless, this region has Malay language spoken in border area along Thailand and Malaysia. The people of both countries have shared business and travel to each other easier across the road, so the language contact appears in this area. It also lets the locals have switched between TL and Malay languages [6]. In northeast the teenagers more use TL than dialect while elder people prefer to speak ethnic language as first language and IL than TL [7]. Seemingly, all regions have switched or mixed between their language and TL in daily speech.

Seemingly, regional people there are bilingual between their dialect or ethnic language and TL. That means TL being popular in local's speakers. In terms of local government have attempted to maintain local languages by having dialect or ethnic language revitalization projects such as Isan language revitalization [8],[9] and Chong ethnic language in east region [10] in order to teach in primary local schools. The projects were supported by NGOs and local government; however, these projects have done and work by local people themselves. Nevertheless, it is not able to against the TL role in locals because the positively language attitude of parent toward TL that they prefer children to speak TL as mother tongue. In near future of dialects and ethnic languages in Thailand should be changed to modern dialect by having language contact significantly. It has not only TL which popular in local teenagers but also the English language is coming to replace the TL in daily speech especially word level [11],[12].

IV. ISAN LANGUAGE IN UDONTHANI PROVINCE

The IL is spoken around 21 million who living in northeast and other regions around Thailand. The northeast area, moreover, has border linked to Laos in the east and Cambodia in the south; therefore, Lao language and Khmer as Cambodia's national language have spoken several provinces. Farm is the significant career in this region. When it is not farming season, the villagers immigrate to other economic cities such Bangkok, Phuket, Chonburi, Chiang Mai, for part time works in industry, tourist, construction, house keeper food shop. These cities are different regions, so the Isan people have to use the BL as lingual franca. This situation lets the Isan people improve their TL skill and commonly use in daily life. When they back hometown in northeast the code-switching between TL and occurs unsuspectedly.

In remote village of Udonthani, the daily language is IL as regional language. In the past time the people commonly speak IL to each other no matter wherever. In the present time the people are familiar to speak TL in publish area where outside their village. This displays that the IL using domains is narrower than the past time. Indeed, it mostly used in the village than the cities. The IL, moreover, faces the private school from the economic cities which expand their business into rural villages by offer bus to bring the children to the cities. This lets the parent make decision the children to study in the cities rather than publish school in their village. They believe that the children can get better knowledge and speak TL than studying in village school. It seems that speaking TL well is key choice. This lead to the parent speak TL with their children at home. This is a factor that have language contact and the TL begin come in local families and villages. Bilingualism in Isan families; therefore, has increasing by the factor above. The parent speaks IL as theirs first language while they use TL with children at home. After primary school in the cities, the children learn to speak IL themselves because to communicate to other friends in villages. This knowledge of IL gradually reveals the bilingualism forming in the remote area of northeast.

In terms of economic city of Udonthani province, has been developed as mainly border trading between Thailand and Laos after Laos opened the country in early 20 centuries [13].

Among border trading rapidly increase, Thailand and Laos have welcome to each other in terms of border trading and tourist by Thai-Lao/Lao-Thai Mittraphap bridge. Udonthani is determined as hub of Mekong sub-region. Udontani has been developed in many sectors; education, international business, international airport and coming of people from other area living in Udonthani. The TL is used as formally situation and quickly spreads into local villages. This city is not only being the border economic area but it is also promoted as the tourist place for Laos people especially from Vientiane, a capital city of Laos where far from Udonthani 80 kilometers. This is an overview of how Udonthani is developing of which involves the TL role in this province and rural villages. The figure 2 shows the central area of Udonthani province.

Fig. 2 *Central area of Udonthani city*
(https://udona2z.com/2017/04/14/udonthani-my-home-city-in-thailand/)

V. RESEARCH FINDING

A. *Language in rural villages*
The villages in field work is 3 Sea-Jae villages, Phasuk subdistrict, Kumphawapi city at Udonthani province. There are 1,300 villagers. There are 1 public primary school, 3 temples, 8 shops for customer goods, and 2 saloons. Here is far away from the center city about 30 kilometers so the villagers get conveniently by car or public transportation; train, bus, to study or work in the city. When villagers back home,

they bring the TL and switching or mixing with IL speaking. The code-switching situation in the villages there are key several factors; place, setting or situation, age of speakers as well as interlocutors.

B. *Code-switching and places*
This article discloses the code-switching in different places that I temple, shop, saloon, school, and public area.

1. *Temple*
As the Buddhism plays a significant role to rural villages while the monks play an important function to be key respect person of villages. In the morning the villagers do activities related to the religion such as food for the monks, go to temple for praying or clean temple. The languages use in temple are TL and IL. When the monks preach to the people in formal situation, the TL will be used. The IL is used in people's conversation together. The code-switching in conversation occurs by monk's conversation to people and the switching will take place when temple has other people outside villages. The code-switching remark in temple are the monk and people outside villages.

2. *Shops*
There are 8 local shops which sell commercial goods, fresh foods, cooked food, and house and agriculture tools because the villages are far from the city. The sellers give a good service as they are living in villages. The sellers alternate IL more than TL to communicate with customers because they have known each other well. Having customers from outside the sellers will do switch from IL to TL because they assume that these customers might be speak TL.

3. *Saloons*
There are 3 saloons for villager services of which are not separate for man and woman. The saloon service for hair washing, cutting, nails cleaning. All villagers come these saloons and they have conversation that time. The hairdressers speak mostly IL to their customers,

in spite of they use the TL to the children or some teenagers who prefer to speak TL. There are some customers from outside villages; the hairdressers would alternate to speak TL with these customers.

In terms of customer gender this finding notices that the IL has been spoken to elder man than woman while the TL has been spoken to the children or teenagers than elder people. The reason might relate to the young people are rather completely bilingual than elder one.

4. School

All 3 villages have shared one primary school. Each year there are 60-100 students between 6-13 years old. Half of children in villages parent is preferable them to study at private schools in the cities even though they spend 2-3 hours for travelling and expensive cost than studying in the village. The city schools offer traveling for the students. The students; therefore, come from different villages around area of which speak variously languages such as ethnic language, IL sub-dialect, and TL. The TL get permission to use as medium in schools and students' conversation. It seems that private school preference of parent practically appears code-switching in children and teenager easily that mean the young people have coming to bilingual. Seemingly the young in other countries have developed their modern language culture [14] as well as code-switching taking place in the globe.

In terms of language using in local school, the students speak both languages, IL and TL even though in classroom with teachers and friends. School is an official place where people should speak TL as medium of education, however, teachers allow the students speak IL in classroom because many teachers has IL as first language. Students in kindergarten level mostly speak IL from home; therefore, the language shock might happen to them in the first period in school [15].

5. Public area

A village has a public place namely local community's hall where is used in public activities such as Buddhism ceremonies, health care, group activities, meeting and official visiting. The people who come to public area mostly live in the village, hence the IL is spoken commonly. The switching from IL to TL occurs when the government officers visiting or people from outside attend Buddhist ceremonies.

As Buddhism deeply grapples in northeastern people's way of life. The Buddhism has ceremonies in 12 months. The public place is arranged these ceremonies. This figure 3 present an important ceremony a year that is 'Bun-Phrawat' (Mahachati-merit). In the ceremony the villages make the local furniture to donate for temple or for giving the people who do money donation to temple.

Fig. 3 *Villager activity in public place*

The figure 3 villager women confederated to make mats and the men make cradle. It is gender craftsmanship of in local northeast. The code-switching occurs because one of village's headman he is not IL native speaker. The people switch between IL to TL when express about handicraft. However, the TL has no word to explain the Isan culture so the people switch to IL in the culture topic. This finding is similar to the migrant Chinese families in Canada, the children are bilingual between Chinese and English; however, parent alternates Chinese language in order to clearly explain the Chinese culture that English [16].

C.   Code-switching and Situations

The code-switching situations occurs different types of formal and informal situations as follows;

1.   Formal situation

There are several formal situations in the villages that is community meeting, leader announcement, and official visiting. These situations have to use TL as formal language; however, the IL is switched by speakers and listeners in face-to-face communication. In terms of the community meeting is arranged by village headman in order to get villager's opinion toward many development policies that occurs 1-2 times a month. The village headman does announcement on village's broadcast tower to inform the time and place of each meeting. The community's hall is used for meeting. The participants are who village members; however, the headman has to use TL in formal meeting. In time of questions, discussion or shared idea, the participants are able to switch from TL to IL and the headman either.

In public announcement on broadcast tower the village headman has to inform the government's news and significant activities especially covid-19 situation. The TL has become to be major language in formal situation, however, the IL also is used in terms of culture topics or English loanwords and technical terms explanation to the people particularly uneducated elder in order to understand clearly.

In terms of official sector visiting such as agriculture, health care, local bank, the official meeting is arranged at temple, community hall or village headman's house. The TL plays role the major language while IL is switched in difficult contents and for villager having.

2.   Informal situation

The language in daily life of villagers is IL. In greeting normally people use IL to each other. The TL will be used in greeting when parent sent their kids to school bus and having greeting and small talking to teacher who come on the bus. The greeting language is mostly IL, but it was found that the people use TL in greeting to the teachers in village's school as well and to neighbors who work in the cities. The villagers use TL to strangers from outside village. The group conversation is a significant informal situation in rural villages as it is an important way to exchange news, information, opinion, as well as socialization process. The IL is spoken in group conversation because they are very close to each other. The conversation group' topics are mostly gossip, attitude sharing, family, and health. The key remarks of informal situation switching are the interlocutor and topics.

D.   Code-switching and Age

The observation and interview methods was found that the code-switching occurs in age differently. Here will be divided the age group into 4 groups relate to way of life and language using in daily speech.

1.   Children and teenager

As there are 2 primary student groups that is one group who study in local school and another one is the students studying in the private school in the city. The children are 7-13 years old, studying in primary school. After primary school the students who are 13-21 years old will go to secondary school, colleges, or university in Udonthani city center or other economic provinces.

The code-switching situation in teenagers takes place when the students from the city back home. They use BL at the school while use IL at home. The children have switched in situation when they talk to teacher in villages or talk to friends who cannot speak IL. The children have mixed IL in BL when they have known the TL words. The teenagers have more TL vocabularies than children; therefore, they have not mixed IL in TL.

2.   Workers

After graduation most students work in the cities or move to economic industrial cities. The popular provinces are Bangkok as a capital city

and Rayong as the new economic province. The worker group are between 22-50 years old. This group is wider range because of their experiences of language using. The worker group has rather language switch than the first group above hence they have variously domain of switching between TL and IL in work places and area around. This finding reveals that they prefer to use TL with neighbor in villages because they often speak TL in daily life. This group obviously appear of code-switching in villages.

3. Elders

The retirement policy of Thailand is over 60 years' old.

The workers who live and work other provinces would like to back hometown. Even they have used TL in long year working, they are rather not often use TL in daily speech at the villages and there is not prominently code-switching that it is expected. Reasonably, they are desire the life similar when they were young. So the IL is more use than TL. The code-switching; however, takes place when they talk to friends who back hometown similarly.

VI.   SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

A.   Summary

The Standard Thai or Thai language influences to its dialects brings the local bilingual increasing including northeast where the Isan language or the northeastern Thai dialect functions as the mother tongue. Udonthani is big economic city and border trading area to Laos. This city rapidly has been developed. The TL has come to this region as lingual franca and official language. To speak TL is an important reason of parent for the children that results the parent that sent their children to city schools even it has villages' school. After primary school all students have to go to study in the cities where have to use TL. This factors lead to completely bilingual increasing in remote area of northeast.

The key factors of situation switching in the villages are place, setting or situation, age as well as age. The main places related to locals'

way of life are temple, shop, saloon, school, and public area. The code-switching appears all places. In terms of speaker's age, the worker group seems has much switching than children-teenager group, and elder group because they use TL in work places and with people in cities.

B.   Discussion

Code-switching phenomenon presents the dialect change and widely multilingual society as well as remote area of Thailand. The situation switching and single conversation switching taking place in an areas are differently depending on various social conditions. In rural villages of the northeast especially elder have maintain and speak IL in daily speech rather than young people. The remark factors of code-switching are interlocutors whether they are able to speak TL well or strangers. This finding reveals the language use tendency in close future of rural villages that the IL would be less using by parent attitude toward TL and IL for their children. The interesting issues are how code-switching between TL and other dialects take place and what are the key factors differently in each dialect.

This finding acknowledge the research questions that place is not significant factor while setting or situation; formal and informal, is the key remark of switching. The interlocutor is one key that villagers will switch from IL to TL. And age of speakers is another one that is the worker having much that other groups.

VII.   CONCLUSION

The code-switching phenomenon in rural villages at the northeast of Thailand where the locals speak the northeastern Thai dialect or Isan language as mother tongue while the Thai language as the nation language dominated all domains of language use such as official communication, mass media, local education, public place, and local trading. It seems that this period is significantly changing to be modern Isan language by having the code-switching with Thai language in daily speech.

The remark notices why the code-switching occurs and what its functions among bilingual

villagers increasing are. This article discloses the two types of code-switching that is situation and metaphor. The situation relevantly occurs to formal and informal situation and places. The metaphor switching involved to cultural meaning and identities including language attitude.

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