

DEVELOPMENT OF PERSONAL NAMING IN LAOS

Kulyarat Unthanon and Rattana Chanthao

Thai department, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Khon Kaen University, Thailand

ABSTRACT

This paper aims to explain the personal naming development in Laos in terms of language perspective. The data was collected out of 400 first names and their nicknames of non-minority ethnics living in Lao's capital Vientiane. These names were divided into two groups of ages according to the name holder; 50-65 years and 10-25 years. The results have shown that in the first group same first names are used for both male and female persons, which is mostly different in the second group. Nick names are rarely found in the first group while the second group is characterized by nicknames of English language's origin. The first group, they are usually constructions of 1-2 syllables while the second group's first names are built out of 2-3 syllables. The language used for first names in the first group mostly is Lao while the second group is mostly using Pali-Sanskrit sources. The development of personal (first) naming in Laos had been influenced by Thailand as a Lao neighbor country and Thai language. Future studies should compare personal (first) names of different ethnicities' members living in the same area, especially in the capital Vientiane which is focused by migration movements within Laos.

KEYWORDS: Lao language, personal pronoun, personal name, person naming

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Great Lao Change (GLC) in 1975 explicitly impacted to its language in terms of decreasing of consonants and writing system as well as the influence of English into Lao. Khonphutphro(2002) examined that more English words were borrowed into Lao while some French loanwords used during the French colonial period were replaced by English as well. After the Open Door Policy (ODP) in 1980s launched the Thai language plays an crucial role into Laos as it is a language for access to Thai mass media and tourism. In this time the people in other provinces moved to Vientiane capital city for studies and works. Seemingly the English and Thai languages are increasingly important in this time (Chanthao, 2017) especially the Thai language according to Enfield (2006) stated that Thai language accessed from mass media such as television and radio. The economic cities of Laos which are closely Thailand, people in these cities have learned Thai by a conversation with Thai tourists. Both English and Thai languages also influence to the naming of Lao people in the present time. The research finding of Unthanon (2010) was found that Lao people use the Lao original words for naming their names; however, the personal naming of a new generation is changing to use Pali-Sanskrit increasingly.

Language is a culture that was changed following its society. The personal naming also has been changed according to the modern language in their society. Suzman (1994) published the article namely 'name as Pointers: Zulu personal naming practices'. The result was found that Zulu people who live in different areas; economic cities, agricultural cities, and rural cities have the different

personal naming. That is, the people living in rural cities use the original words for naming while agricultural and economical cities use the modern language. Similarly, the finding research of Na-Bang Chang (1984) was found that the name of Thai people in 3 periods around 200 years; Sukhothai period, Ayutthaya period, and Rattanakosin period, changed depending on how Thai language and society have changed in each period. It is not only the country being developed but its language also is developed at the same time. The Lao's personal naming in each period that is before and after 1975 also can explain its society and the role of Thai language and English language toward into Lao people and society. The figure below is the map of Lao's People Democratic Republic that is a part of Southeast Asian Mainland and one country of Mekong's sub-region having long borderline to Thailand.



Figure1Map of Lao's People Democracy Republic

2.0 METHODOLOGY

This research uses linguistic perspective to explain the development of personal naming of Lao people in two periods that is before and after 1975. This year is the Great Lao Changed in both society and language according to the new of government and regime of Lao's People Democratic Republic (Lao. PDR.). The names of 400 Lao people who are living in Vientiane capital were collected as the data for this research. The names were divided into two groups by ages that are there are 200 names in each group. That is the first group being 50-65 years old as the agent of personal names before 1975 and the second group being 10-25 years old as the agent of names after 1975. Both groups have males and female and they are non-ethnicities. These names will be analyzed the language constructions; syllable, language, nickname, and gender differences. The research finding will be shown by examining the names and percentage. This research is qualitative research and the

result was a descriptive analysis. These symbols and number use to explain the example names as follow;

- ‘ ’ nickname [] first name or real name / language root
- 1 monosyllable name 2 disyllable name 3 trisyllable name
- E English language L Lao language PS Pali-Sanskrit
- Tone marker in Lao by number (Higbie& Thinsan,2017)
- 1 rising tone 2 mid tone 3 high fallingtone
- 4 high 5 low falling tone : long vowel

3.0 RESEARCH RESULTS

I. Names of people being 50-65 years old

This result will be shown an overview of first names and nicknames of people who are 50-60 years old. There are 186 people no nicknames (93%) while there are 14 people have nicknames (7%). Indeed, nickname in Lao culture has not necessary because the most of first name has only 1-2 syllables. So, it is easy to call the people by their first name. However, people who have two syllables of first name will be shortly called by a nickname that mostly it is a part of their first name. The example names in the table 1 will show the nicknames, first name, gender, syllable, and language source as follow;

Table 1 Names of older group

No.	Nickname	First name	Gender	Syllable	Language First/Nickname
1	‘Som ⁵ ’	[Sompong]	F/M	2	L/L
2	‘Kham ⁴ ’	[Khampong]	F/M	2	L/L
3	‘Si: ⁵ ’	[Siha]	F/M	2	L/L
4	‘Si: ⁵ ’	[Sitong]	F/M	2	L/L
5	‘Pa:n ² ’	[Somphan]	F/M	2	L/L
6	‘Ham ⁵ ’	[Mai]	M	2	L/L
7	‘Ham ⁵ ’	[Khamphay]	M	2	L/L
8	‘Tit ⁴ ’	[Khammuan]	M	2	L/L
9	‘Noi ³ ’	[Wandi]	F	2	L/L
10	‘Noi ³ ’	[Lawan]	F	2	L/L

The nicknames and first names in example 1 to 5 can be used both man and woman and their nicknames are a part of first syllable of first name such as ‘Som⁵’ ‘Kham⁴’ ‘Si⁵’. The nicknames in examples 6 to 10 are different from their first name, however, these nicknames imply gender of owner. That is the nickname ‘Ham⁵’ No.6 and 7 is male’s nickname, as well as ‘Tit⁴’, which is the pronoun whose has been a monk. The nickname in example 9 and 10 ‘Noi³’ is used for a female. All nicknames are only 1 syllable. Mostly first names are 2 syllables and use the Lao language.

In terms of meaning, a baby will be named by what the day of birth. An instance, Sunday is the strong day, so the parent will search the name having strong meaning in Lao cultures such as the sun, mountain, stone, or Monday is a weak day, so a baby will be named about water, gold, sky. This belief lets understand why male and female have the same first name and nickname, in addition, there are not much variously named. The language source of the names in this group mostly is the Lao language.

The language as a part of the culture and its society, people’s names reflect the social structure each period. That is in Lao before 1975 being simplified society. People believe in the supernatural power that destines good or bad things with people having an inappropriate name with their birthday. The structural and characteristic of names and language source reveal an uncomplicated society in the past period of Laos.

II. Names of people being 10-20 years old

The people who have born between in 2007 to 1992 or their age are 10-25 years old, are representative of the new generation of Lao society. This period the society having been development in variously dimensions; transportation, education, media, as well as an economic. The English language as the second and business language plays an important role in supporting the nation and international business. Thailand is the top three investment countries in Laos, in addition, Thai and Lao language are similarly. These let Lao people learn Thai. Thai and English languages are important to having better chance occupations. The role of English and Thai languages had been used to name people in this group.

The names of 200 samplings show that there are 187 (93.5%) people have a nickname while only 13 (6.5%) people have no one. For nicknames were found that there are two types; the nickname is a part of first name and is not a part of their first name. The example names in table 2 will be shown both nicknames and first name of people in second sampling groups being 10-20 years old.

Table 2 Names of younger group

No.	Nickname	First name	Gender	Syllable	Language First/Nick name
1	‘Lu:k ³ na:m ³ ’	[Thidapon]	F	3	PS/T
2	‘Nui ³ ’	[Suphapon]	F	3	PS/L
3	‘Neng ¹ ’	[Chandara]	F	3	PS/L
4	‘Guitar’	[Phatthason]	F	3	PS/E
5	‘Alexandra’	[Thidarat]	F	3	PS/E
6	‘Barbie’	[Piyamas]	F	3	PS/E
7	‘Boy’	[Kritsana]	M	3	PS/E
8	‘Jay’	[Ariyavong]	M	3	PS/E

9	'Jimmy'	[Chantawa]	M	3	PS/E
10	'Tui ³ '	[Kawin]	M	2	PS/L

The examples of nicknames above were shown the various language sources that are Thai, Lao, and English languages. And, the first names were used only Pali-Sanskrit language which is dominated by the Thai language. Most of the first names have 3 syllables because Pali-Sanskrit language is multi-syllable language. The meaning of the first name in this generation obviously shown the difference from the older group that is, the first name of the male and female are separated from each other.

The similar point of people having no nickname of both younger and older groups is that they have the first name in Lao native language and have only 1-2 syllables, so it makes easier to call them by their first name. The first name of the younger group was found that they were named by using the English language such as Anita, Camry, Jimmy. The phenomenon of using English and Thai languages in their names are relevant to the development of Lao's society particularly Vientiane capital as the main city of business and education. People learn English as an economic language while the Thai language is an important one for access to mass media and tourism of Thailand.

III. Comparison names of younger and older people

The development of personal naming in Lao's society quietly obvious differences between younger and older people. An increasing social development after the Great Lao Change in 1975 lead to suddenly social change as well as its language. The nicknames and first names present this change by name structure and linguistic characteristic. The table 3 below will be presented the development of Lao's naming in terms of whether have a nickname, and linguistic characteristics of the name: syllable, language source as well as specific gender.

Table 3 Name comparison between younger and older groups

Older group	Nickname	Syllable	Language Source	Specific gender
Younger group	14 (7%)	1-2	L / PS	32 (16%)
Totally 200 people	187 (93.5%)	2-3	L / PS/ E / T	144 (72%)

The result in table 3 reveals that the older people (50-65 years old) have simply name by using Lao native and have only 1-2 syllables in the first name while they have no many people having a nickname. The language source mostly is Lao origin, in addition, male and female can have the same name for both the nickname and the first name.

In terms of younger people (10-25 years old) mostly have the nickname that differs from their first name. The name structure is increasingly complicated by having more syllables. It is not only structure of name but also language source is various languages that are Lao, Thai, and English

including the Japanese and Chinese languages of nicknames. In addition, man and woman's names are separated clearly in the younger group from an influence of Pali-Sanskrit language in naming that has the word's meaning of different gender.

The accessing the Thai mass media particularly television and magazine of Lao people in the new generation results to unavoidably use the Thai language in Lao society, so the name of famous actors from Thailand also dominated Lao people naming in the present. A clear evidence is a naming their babies by using the Thai language and Pali-Sanskrit that absorbed from Thai personal naming.

4.0 CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

The people's name in a society is related to its culture and beliefs. Laos has been suddenly changed in 1975 and open country in order to get aids from other countries and economic investment. It also brought into society new dimensions by developing various ways; economic, tourism, education, foreign relations, and infrastructures as well. Vientiane as a city center of business and government has rapidly grown to become complex social structure. Language as a part of its culture and society is related to contemporary society. The naming of people also was presented the language situation and an influence of other languages into Lao in a period.

The accessing mass media and the speaking English and Thai language are popular in people the new generation will make Lao languages being dominated by these languages unavoidably. The names have the support of its society, therefore, the development of personal naming in Laos also is one that supports the development of society. The future studies should be the naming of minorities who live in Vientiane as it is the city of people moving into. The result will let us know whether people are different ethnicities will maintain their mother tongue in their naming.

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