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APITCHAYA KAEWUTHAI : A STUDY OF THE VARIATION BY SOCIAL VARIABLES OF (mr) AND (ml) IN SONGKHLA DIALECT. THESIS ADVISOR : ASSOC. PROF. SUWATTANA LIAMPRAWAT. 186 pp.

This research is intended to investigate whether the variation of (mr) and (ml) in Songkhla dialect correlates with social variables : the speaker 's age, sex and locality. Included in this study are three age groups : youth (15 - 25 years of age) , adult (35 - 45 years of age) and senior adult (55 years old or more). The study covers two sexes : male and female. Two localities are selected : Muang district (Songkhla municipal area) representing an urban speech community and Krasaesin district (Tambol Kohyai) representing a rural speech community. The field work is carried out by the researcher using 25 test words (12 test words of (mr) and 13 test words of (ml)) to elicit the data from 120 selected informants.

The research results shows that (mr) has 14 variants : the dominant one is [m]. As for (ml) has 6 variants : the dominant one is [ml]. It can be concluded that (mr) and (ml) in Songkhla dialect are in the process of sound change. (mr) is likely to become an initial consonant sound while (ml) is likely to remain a consonant cluster.

Without controlling for the other social variables, it is found that (mr) and (ml) in Songkhla dialect vary according to the social variables: age and locality but not sex. When controlling for other variables, the result also shows that (mr) varies according to the social variables : age and locality but not sex . As for (ml) varies according to each of the three social variables: age, sex, and locality. The speaker 's locality is the most significant variable of (mr) and (ml) while the speaker 's sex is the least important variable. The speaker 's age is more significant than sex but not as significant as locality.

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