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PALEERAT SAPPROONG : SOCIAL VARIATION OF (ɲ) IN THE URBAN SONGKHLA DIALECT. THESIS ADVISOR : ASSO. PROF. AMARA PRASITHRATHSINT, Ph.D.
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Previous studies of Songkhla dialect show that /ɲ/ does not exist as an initial consonant phoneme, Speakers of this dialect do not use /ŋ/ but /ɲ/ which corresponds to /ŋ/ in Standard Thai. However, the researcher, a native speaker of Songkhla, has observed that [ŋ] exists as a variant of (ɲ) in the speech of urban educated young speakers, and that [ŋ] has become stigmatized in the urban community,

The purpose of this study is to analyse how (ɲ) in the speech of urban Songkhla people vary according to these social factors : the speaker's sex, age, education, domain of language use and attitudes towards the dialect.

The data were collected from 100 Songhla speakers living on five main roads in Songkhla municipal areas. The analysis shows that (ɲ) has three variants : [ɲ], [h] and [ŋ]. The dominant one is [ŋ]. Without controlling for the other social variable, it is found that (ɲ) varies according to each of the five social factors with the statistic significance at 0.01 level.

When controlling for other variables, the result shows that (ɲ) also varies according to each of the five social factors, The most significant factor is the speaker's age. The less significant factors, ordered from most important to least are education, attitudes towards the dialect, domain of language use and sex.

An interesting finding in the study is the complex relationship among the social variables especially the domain of language use and attitudes towards the Songkhla dialect. It is found that the educated young speaker who use Standard Thai in daily life always have negative attitudes towards the Songkhla dialect. In addition, among the uneducated group, the use of the native variant [ŋ] does not correspond to their attitudes towards the dialect. They always use the local variant [ɲ] inspite of their negative attitudes towards it.

We can say that the social group that plays the leading part in mobilizing change in progress of (ɲ) in urban Songkhla dialect are the educated young people who use Standard Thai in daily life and have negative attitudes towards the dialect.