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VARIABLES

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This study investigates the relationship between the variants of the high-falling tone in Suphanburi Thai and two social variables : age and place of residence. In this study, 2 age groups (15-35 year old and 45-65 year old) and 2 places of residence (Amphoe Muang and Amphoe Si Prachan) are used. There are 3 variants of high-falling tone : falling, rising, and falling-rising. It is hypothesized that the 15-35 year old group uses the rising variant more frequently than the 45-65 year old group and the residents of Amphoe Muang use the rising variant more frequently than the residents of Amphoe Si Prachan. The data were collected by interviewing informally 107 native speakers of Suphanburi Thai.

The result of the analysis shows that the relationship between the social variables and the linguistic variants is statistically significant. Thus, the hypotheses were confirmed. It is found that the older group residing in Amphoe Si Prachan is the most conservative, i.e. they tend to use the falling variant, while the younger group residing in Amphoe Muang is the most progressive, i.e. they tend to use the rising variant. As for the other two groups, the older living in Amphoe Muang and the younger living in Amphoe Si Prachan, it is found that they have the same patterns of usage and frequencies of occurrence of the tone variants. Regarding the falling-rising variant, the phonetic characteristic of which is a mixture of the falling variant and the rising variant, the result shows that it occurs most in the younger group residing in Amphoe Muang.