

CHIRAPASR LIMPICHATI : WORLDVIEWS OF THE SIX HILLTRIBES IN
THAILAND AS REFLECTED IN NOUN CLASSIFIERS FOR HOUSEHOLD ITEMS.
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The study aims at a cross-language study of classifiers in languages of six main hilltribes in Thailand, with emphasis on worldview as reflected in the use of classifiers. The study covers Blue Meo, Mian-Yao, Lahu Shi, Skaw Karen, Lisu and Akha and deals with only classifiers for nouns of household items. Data were collected through interviews with native speakers of these languages in the province of Chiangrai.

It is discovered that all languages have 3 types of classifiers: general classifiers, classifiers co-occurring with sets of nouns and classifiers which simply repeat the nouns. The number of classifiers varies among languages from 33 to 6. General classifiers and classifiers for specific nouns reflect varying degrees of complexity in perception of household items.

It is also found that many of the features which explain the selectional restrictions between nouns and classifiers are shared by many languages, which can point to possible grouping of these languages on the basis of worldviews. These are features about physical shape, functional purposes and certain specific characteristics. This is also true for classifiers signifying groups of items. All languages have classifiers signifying pairing, piling and grouping into a set.