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THREE AGE GROUPS

PRANEET YAEMNGARM : THE COMPARATIVE STUDY OF LEXICAL USAGE
AMONG NORTHERN KHMER SPEAKERS OF DIFFERENT AGE GROUPS AT
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The purpose of this study is to compare lexical usage in Northern Khmer at Ban Talungkaw according to age differences, including the tendencies of lexical usage in the features of the speakers of three different age groups in Northern Khmer . This is field qualitative research. The researcher used 637 words divided into 12 groups for interviewing the Northern Khmer speakers. Data was collected from 18 informants; 9 females and 9 males. They were divided into three different age groups: the first generation age group (55 years or up), the second generation age group (35-45 years) and the third generation age group (15-25 years).

The results show that the three age groups of Talungkaw have 6 kinds of lexical usage. 1.) The Talungkaw lexical items which are the same word as base word used by all age groups (456 words or 72 %) 2.) The lexical items whose meaning can be used in place of the base word (3 words or 0.5 %) 3.) The lexical items whose meaning are in the same semantic field as the base word. (15 words or 3 %) This group is used more by the second and the third age groups. 4.) The lexical items that the speakers do not know or can not remember (61 words or 10 %) 5.) Loan words from Standard Thai (45 words or 7.5%). The third group and Thai loan words are used most by the third age group and less by the second and the first age groups respectively. 6.) A variety of lexical items (41 words or 7 %).

Besides the lexical variation, there are also phonological variations. There are variations in consonants, vowels and syllable patterns. Assimilation is found mostly in the first age group. The deletion of initial consonant clusters and final consonant of minor syllable are found mainly in the third age group. The usage of central lax vowel [ʌ] in minor syllable or presyllable and syllable reduction are found generally in all of the three age groups. The deletion of minor syllables is also found, especially in the third age group.

The findings indicate that, the speakers of third age group of Talungkaw Khmer speakers demonstrate the most lexical change and show a tendency of using a narrow domain of usage for the Khmer vocabularies and more Standard Thai loan words.