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ABSTRACT

This thesis aims to study the lexical variation and distribution of Northern Thai, Northeastern Thai and Central Thai dialects in Phichit province. The results of this study were displayed in linguistic maps.

Data collecting methods were done by distributing questionnaires, which contain 40 semantic units represented by Northern Thai dialect, Northeastern Thai dialect and Central Thai dialect. The questionnaires were filled in by all the village headmen of the province at a monthly meeting at the district office.

Two semantic units were problematic, therefore they were

discarded. The data were analysed to find out the lexical variations. Linguistic maps were then drawn to display the lexical distribution by allocating one semantic unit to each map. The distribution of the isoglosses produced an unclear form which meant that dialect boundaries could not be determined. An alternative method was employed using the number of occurrences of each dialect as a criterion to decide on the trend of dialects used in each village.

The result of this analysis shows that three dialects are used in Phichit province. These dialects are Northern Thai, Northeastern Thai and Central Thai. The most widely used dialect in all of the province is Central Thai. In comparison with the Central Thai dialect, Northeastern Thai is used by fewer people, most of these along the East and fewer along the West of the province. Northern Thai is used in two villages.

The historical settlement of people in every village of Phichit province, shows that the use of Northeastern Thai and Northern Thai dialects in this province is probably due to people migration. The mixture of dialects in some villages makes it impossible to determine which dialect is prominent in each village. This mixture has most likely been caused by linguistic influences from nearby areas.