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WIMON THANAPAES : LANGUAGE USE OF THE ISAN GROUP IN PALAN VILLAGE TAMBOL PONG-NOI, MAE-CHAN DISTRICT CHIANG-RAI PROVINCE. THESIS ADVISOR : SUWILAI PREMSRIRAT, Ph.D., CAROLYN P MILLER, Lh.D., SUJARITLAK DEEPADUNG, Ph.D. 168 p. ISBN 974-661-745-1

The objective of the study is to investigate the patterns of language use and language attitudes of the Isan people in Palan village, Mae-Chan district, Chiang-Rai province. The study concentrated on the ability of the Isan people to speak a second language, language use in different domains, and the language attitudes of the Isan people toward their own dialect or the Kam-muang dialect. The data was collected using sociolinguistic questionnaires delivered 153 subjects. The study compares four variables; sex, age, education and birthplace. The Chi-square test was used to analyze the relationships of these variables.

The findings indicated that the Isan people have frequent contact with Muang people in the area where they settled. Ability in second languages of the Isan people is related to their contact with speakers of the second language. Subjects who are male, those who are younger, those with higher levels of education, and those who were born in Palan village show the highest ability in Kam-muang. The average ability level in Kam-muang from self-test testing was level four or full professional proficiency. Isan people use Lao in intra-group situations and Kam-muang in inter-group situations. Language use was correlated with four variables. Males use Kam-muang more than females. Young people use Kam-muang more than those who are older. Those with high education use Kam-muang more than those with low education and those who were born in Palan village use Kam-muang more than those who were born in the Isan region.

Isan people do not have a negative attitude toward Kam-muang. They give significance and equal status to both dialects, because both dialects are major regional dialects which have different functions. Lao is the most important language to them because they are Isan people. Kam-muang is important for communicating with Muang people. These conditions support Isan people to maintain using Lao dialect even though they are a minority group among Kam-muang speakers.