แนวแบ่งเขตด้านวรรณยุกต์ระหว่างภาษาไทยถิ่นกลางกับภาษาไทยถิ่นใต้: การแปรตามรุ่นอายุ

เรืองสุข คงทอง[1] และม.ร.ว. กัลยา ติงศภัทิย์[2]
[1]อ.ม. (ภาษาศาสตร์),
 E-mail: ruangsuk.k@gw.co.th
[2]Ph.D.(Phonetics and Linguistics), ผู้ช่วยศาสตราจารย์,
 ภาควิชาภาษาศาสตร์ คณะอักษรศาสตร์ จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย

บทคัดย่อ

ภาษาไทยถิ่นกลางและภาษาไทยถิ่นใต้ใช้พูดในพื้นที่ที่ติดต่อกันบริเวณคาบสมุทรทางตอนใต้ของประเทศไทย ภาษาไทยถิ่นทั้งสองแตกต่างกันทั้งในแง่ของรูปแบบการแยกเสียงรวมเสียงวรรณยุกต์และสัทลักษณะของวรรณยุกต์ งานวิจัยนี้มุ่งศึกษาการแปรดังกล่าวเพื่อหาแนวแบ่งเขตระหว่างภาษาไทยถิ่นทั้งสองนี้ พื้นที่ที่ศึกษาครอบคลุม 15 อำเภอบริเวณจังหวัดประจวบคีรีขันธ์ จังหวัดชุมพร และจังหวัดระนอง โดยเลือกจุดเก็บข้อมูล 1 จุดเป็น ตัวแทนของแต่ละอำเภอ ผู้บอกภาษาที่ให้ข้อมูลในแต่ละจุดเก็บข้อมูลแบ่งเป็น 2 รุ่นอายุ: สูงกว่า 50 ปี และ 10-20 ปี รุ่นอายุละ 5 คน รายการคำที่ใช้ทดสอบการออกเสียงเป็นคำพยางค์เดียว จำนวน 15 คำ ในการวิเคราะห์ใช้วิธีการ ทางกลสัทศาสตร์ โดยเลือกการออกเสียงแต่ละคำมา 5 ครั้ง ผลการวิจัยพบว่า รูปแบบการแยกเสียงรวมเสียงวรรณยุกต์ ปรากฏวิธภาษา 3 ภาษาในพื้นที่ที่ศึกษา: ภาษาไทยถิ่นกลาง ภาษาไทยถิ่นกลาง-ใต้ และภาษาไทยถิ่นใต้-กลาง เมื่อพิจารณาสัทลักษณะของวรรณยุกต์ของผู้บอกภาษาทั้งสองรุ่นอายุ พบว่าวรรณยุกต์ในภาษาไทยถิ่นกลาง-ใต้ และภาษาไทยถิ่นใต้-กลางคล้ายคลึงกับภาษาไทยถิ่นใต้มาก งานวิจัยนี้จึงเสนอว่าแนวแบ่งเขตระหว่างภาษาไทย ถิ่นกลางกับภาษาไทยถิ่นกลาง-ใต้น่าจะเป็นแนวแบ่งเขตหลักระหว่างภาษาไทยถิ่นกลางกับภาษาไทยถิ่นใต้

คำสำคัญ: การแปร, แนวแบ่งเขตระหว่างภาษาถิ่น, ภาษาไทยถิ่นกลาง, ภาษาไทยถิ่นใต้, รุ่นอายุวรรณยุกต์, วิธภาษา

Tonal Borderline between Central Thai and Southern Thai: Variation by Age Group

Ruangsuk Kongthong[1] and M.R. Kalaya Tingsabadh[2]

[1] M.A. (Linguistics),

 E-mail: ruangsuk.k@gw.co.th

[2] Ph.D. (Phonetics and Linguistics), Assistant Professor,

 Department of Linguistics, Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University

Abstract

Central Thai and Southern Thai are spoken in adjoining areas along the peninsula of Southern Thailand. The two dialects differ both in their patterns of tone splits and merges and tonal characteristics. This study aims at investigating such variation to locate the tonal borderline between the two dialects. The study area covers 15 Amphoe from Changwat Prachuap Khiri Khan to Changwat Chumphon and Changwat Ranong - one location per Amphoe. Five speakers in each age group - over 50 years old and 10-20 years old - were interviewed at each location. The wordlist consists of 10 tokens of 15 monosyllabic words. Acoustic analysis was carried out on 5 tokens of each word. Results show that, on the basis of the patterns of tone splits and merges, three varieties are spoken in this area: Central Thai, Central-Southern Thai, and Southern-Central Thai. On the basis of this criterion, the borderlines among the varieties are located and the results of the two age groups are found to be close together. When the tonal characteristics in these varieties are considered, both Central-Southern Thai and Southern-Central Thai are shown to be very similar to Southern Thai. Consequently it is proposed that the borderline between Central Thai and Central-Southern Thai should be regarded as the main borderline between Central Thai and Southern Thai.

Keywords: age group, Central Thai, dialect borderline, Southern Thai, tone, variety, variation

Introduction

Central Thai is spoken in the central plain of Thailand as well as in the lower northern, the eastern, and the western regions. To the southwest of Bangkok it is spoken as far south as Changwat Prachuap Khiri Khan about 250 kilometres from Bangkok. Debavalya (1983) and Thongmark (1983) investigated respectively the tonal and the lexical borderlines between Central Thai and Southern Thai. They both found that the two types of borderline were located in Amphoe Thap Sakae, Changwat Prachuap Khiri Khan.

Twenty four years have passed since those two studies. During that time Standard Thai, which is very close to Central Thai, has substantially increased its influence through education and the mass media. Consequently changes have widely occurred among the dialects. Two studies have been carried out to check the lexical borderline between the two dialects – Maryprasith (1992) and Tantinimitrkul (2001) but none has been done on the tonal borderline. It is thus appropriate to reinvestigate it. This study has several purposes. Firstly, Tingsabadh (2001) suggested that the borderline shown in Debavalya's study may not be between Central Thai and Southern Thai but between Central Thai and a hybrid variety between Central Thai and Southern Thai, which will be called Central-Southern Thai (C-S Thai[1]) from now on. It is our intention to check the validity of that claim and if that is the case to locate the other borderline – the one between C-S Thai and Southern Thai. Secondly, this study investigates whether the location of the borderline between Central Thai and C-S Thai has moved from

where it was in 1983. Thirdly, the phenomenon of ongoing change is studied. Two groups of informants are interviewed at each location i.e. the young (10-20 years old) and the old (over 50 years old) to see whether each of the two borderlines is in the same area for both groups.

The tone systems of Central Thai and Southern Thai are quite different. Using Bangkok Thai and Nakhon Si Thammarat Thai as representatives of Central Thai and Southern Thai respectively (Brown, 1965) and using the tone box (Gedney, 1972; Tingsabadh, 2001) to display the tone systems, we can clearly see the distinction between the two systems (see Diagram 1).
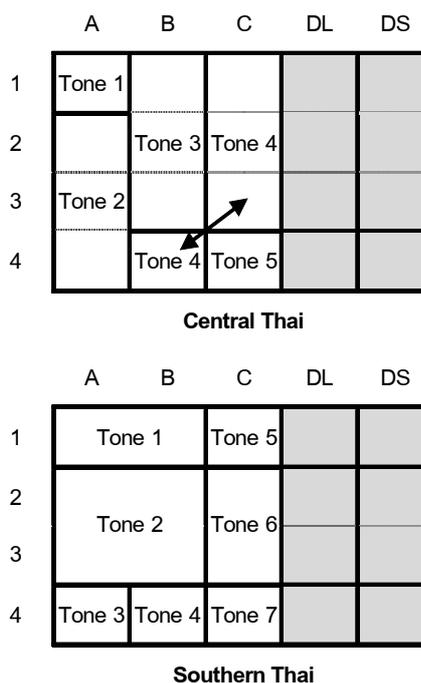

Diagram 1: The patterns of tone splits and merges of Central Thai (Bangkok Thai) and Southern Thai (Nakhon Si Thammarat Thai)

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[1]The shortened version i.e. C-S Thai will be used to refer to this variety from now on.

Column A and column B are where the two dialects differ most. In Central Thai tone splits occur between the two columns in all of the rows, whereas in Southern Thai merges occur in row 1, and rows 2-3. Central Thai has an additional distinctive feature – the merge between B4 and C123, and Southern Thai has the split between C1 and C23.

Another tone system occurs in the area between Bangkok and Nakhon Si Thammarat. Its pattern of tone splits and merges resembles that of Central Thai as well as Southern Thai (see Diagram 2). The merge between A1 and B1 is like Southern Thai. The split between columns A and B in rows 2 and 3, and the merges of A234, B123 as well as B4-C123 are like Central Thai. This system was identified by Brown (1965) with Chumphon - the province to the south of Changwat Prachuap Khiri Khan. Debavalya (1983) classified this system as Southern Thai and concluded in her study that the borderline between the Central Thai system and this system - located in Amphoe Thap Sakae, Changwat Prachuap Khiri Khan - was the Central Thai-Southern Thai borderline. As already mentioned, we decided, when designing this study, to regard the system shown in Diagram 2 as a hybrid between Central Thai and Southern Thai, and to call the variety C-S Thai.
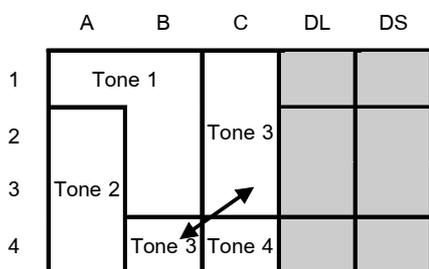

Diagram 2: The pattern of tone splits and merges of C-S Thai

The peninsula of Southern Thailand where Central Thai and Southern Thai converge provides an ideal setting for investigating the borderline between the two dialects along the north-south axis. While Debavalya (1983) only investigated the location of such borderline along the east coast, we will also explore the location of the borderline along the west coast aiming at providing a more complete picture in this study.

As already mentioned, the process of ongoing change is another aspect of investigation in this study. A recent study of Samui Thai (Tingsabadh, et al. 2007) shows that while lexical change is clearly taking place, tones remain in tact. Two studies (Maryprasith, 1992; Tantini - mitrkul, 2001) clearly show that the lexical borderline between Central Thai and Southern Thai tends to move further south over time. This implies the loss of Southern Thai lexical items in the borderline area. In this study we will compare the tone systems of the old group (over 50 years old) and the young group (10-20 years old) to see whether tonal change is taking place in the varieties spoken along the north-south axis in Southern Thailand.

Methodology

Fifteen study locations were selected, one from each Amphoe. Three locations are in Changwat Prachuap Khiri Khan, eight in Changwat Chumphon, and four in Changwat Ranong. They belong to 4 sets. The first consists of six locations. All of them are the same ones selected by Debavalya (1983)[1]. They are in Changwat Prachuap Khiri Khan and Changwat Chumphon. The second consists of four locations in Changwat Chumphon. These are the ones used in Tantinimitrkul (2001). Although Tantinimitrkul

investigated lexical variation, we select her study locations to facilitate future comparison between lexical and tonal studies. The third consists of one location in Changwat Chumphon that only occurs in this study. The fourth consists of four locations in Changwat Ranong. They are the same as those used in Daengwan (1988)[2].

Acoustic analysis is the method chosen for this study to provide concrete evidence for our conclusion. The tool selected for data elicitation is the tone set i.e. monosyllabic words which are as far as possible minimally distinguished by tones. Three sets are normally used i.e. open syllables, long checked syllables and short checked syllables. The 15 words chosen for this study are

Set 1[3]: /khaa^{A1}, kaa^{A2}, khaa^{A4},

khaa^{B1}, paa^{B2}, khaa^{B4},

phaa^{C1}, paa^{C2}, khaa^{C4}/

Set 2: /khaat^{DL1}, paat^{DL2}, khaat^{DL4}/

Set 3: /khat^{DS1}, pat^{DS2}, khat^{DS4}/

It is not possible to use minimal sets in this study since it deals with two main Thai dialects and one hybrid variety. The words chosen must be common words in all of these varieties to assist data elicitation. Ten occurrences of each word are placed at random in two wordlists – one list for set 1 and the other list for sets 2 and 3[4].

The informants are all male – ten per study location with five in the over 50 years old group and

five in the 10-20 years old group. They must have lived at the study location all their lives. If any of them have been away, they must not have spent more than 6 months elsewhere and must have returned to live at the study location more than three years. All of the interviews took place at the study locations usually at the informants' home. The interviewer was always the same person[5]. At the beginning of each interview personal information of the informant was obtained. After that each informant was trained to recognize the cue for each word - a question, a gesture, or a picture. Once the informant had mastered that first step, the interviewer elicited all of the 150 tokens in one session. Recording was made on a digital recorder.

The recording was analyzed using the Cool Edit Pro and the Praat speech analysis software. Microsoft Excel was used to produce line graphs. Five tokens of each word with the best sound quality were analyzed and their line graphs were drawn together with that of the average of the five tokens. Each graph is then reduced in size and placed in the appropriate slot in a tone box and lines are drawn where tone splits occur (see Figure 1).

After the tone box of the type shown in Figure 1 was produced for all of the 150 informants, we compiled the result for each age group at each study location (see Table 1). The borderlines were then located.

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[2]The southernmost location in Debavalya (1983) is in Amphoe Muang Chumphon. This study includes the areas as far south as Amphoe Lamae, Changwat Chumphon, and Amphoe Kapoe, Changwat Ranong.

[3]The tone markers are indicated by the slots in the tone box where these words occur. The slot A3 is not represented by any word since the words in A2 and A3 always carry the same tone in Central Thai and Southern Thai.

[4]A detailed explanation on the construction and the usage of tone set is given in Tingsabadh (2001).

[5]One of the authors - Miss Ruangsuk Khongtong – carried out the interviews. Her homeland is in Southern Thailand
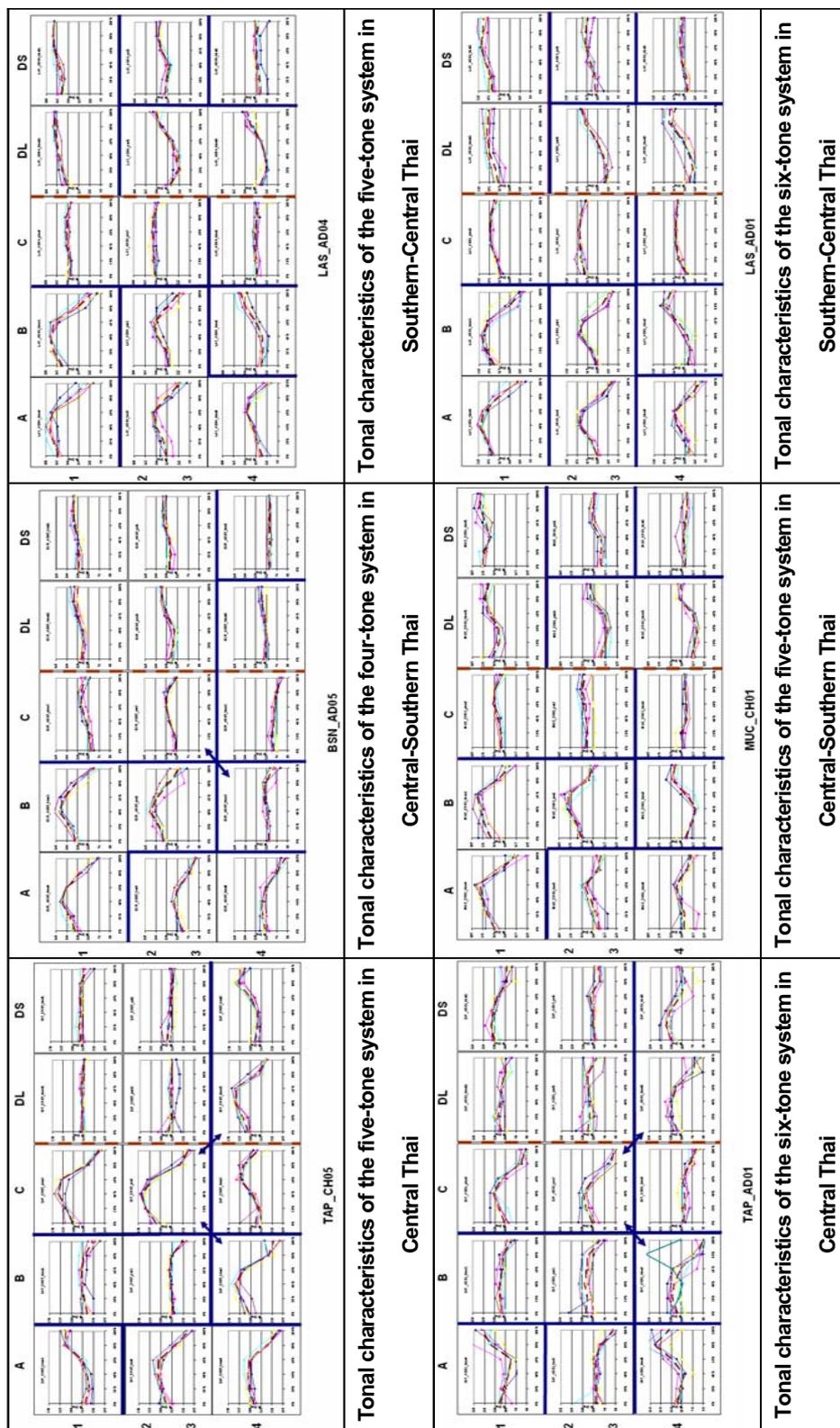
Figure 1: Six types of tone systems in Central Thai, Central-Southern Thai, and Southern-Central Thai

Table 1 Occurrence of types of tone system by age group and study location

Dialect				Number of informants using each type of tone system					
Types of tone system				Central Thai		Central-Southern Thai		Southern-Central Thai	
		Amphoe (A.) and Changwat (C.)	Age group	5 tones	6 tones	4 tones	5 tones	5 tones	6 tones
N O R T H	1.	A. Thap Sakae C. Prachuap Khiri Khan	Old	3	2				
			Young	5	-				
	2.	A. Bang Saphan C. Prachuap Khiri Khan	Old	-	-	2	3		
			Young	2	-	3	-		
	3.	A. Bang Saphan Noi C. Prachuap Khiri Khan	Old			5	-		
			Young			5	-		
E A S T C O A S T	4.	A. Pathiu C. Chumphon	Old			5	-		
			Young			4	1		
	5.	A. Mueang C. Chumphon	Old			-	5		
			Young			-	5		
	6.	A. Sawi C. Chumphon	Old					5	-
			Young					5	-
	7.	A. Thung Tako C. Chumphon	Old					3	2
			Young					3	2
	8.	A. Lang Suan C. Chumphon	Old					3	2
			Young					2	3
	9.	A. Phato C. Chumphon	Old					2	3
			Young					5	-
	10.	A. Lamae C. Chumphon	Old					1	4
			Young					4	1
W E S T C O A S T	11.	A. Tha Sae C. Chumphon	Old			3	2		
			Young			1	4		
	12.	A. Kra Buri C. Ranong	Old			-	5		
			Young			2	3		
	13.	A. Mueang C. Ranong	Old			-	2	3	-
			Young			-	5	-	-
	14.	A. La-un C. Ranong	Old					-	5
			Young					5	-
	15.	A. Kapoe C. Ranong	Old					5	-
			Young					5	-

Results

1. The varieties found in the study area based on the patterns of tone splits and merges

Central Thai is the first variety found spoken in the study area. It is spoken in Amphoe Thap Sakae and Amphoe Bang Saphan. There are two systems in this variety: the five tone system (see diagram 1) and the six tone system. In the latter an additional tone split exists between A23 and A4.

The second variety found spoken in the study area is C-S Thai. There are two systems in this variety: the four tone system (see Diagram 2) and the five tone system. In the latter B4 and C123 do not merge. The four tone system is closer to Central Thai as Central Thai has the merge between B4 and C123 while the five tone system without the merge is closer to Southern Thai.

Studying the occurrence of the two tone systems in C-S Thai along the north-south axis (see Table 1) one sees that the four tone system occurs close to the Central Thai area – in Changwat Prachuap Khiri Khan and the northern part of Changwat Chumphon – while the five tone system occurs further south in Changwat Chumphon and Changwat Ranong toward the Southern Thai area. It is noted with interest that three old speakers in Amphoe Bang Saphan use the five tone system. The question this raises is whether the five tone system is the original system in this Amphoe and has gradually been replaced by the four tone system under the influence of Central Thai. Further in depth investigation is required to answer this question.

	A	B	C	DL	DS
1	Tone 1				
2	Tone 2		Tone 4		
3					
4	(Tone6)	Tone 3	Tone 5		

Diagram 3: The pattern of tone splits and merges of S-C Thai

The third variety found spoken in the study area has the tone system that is very close to Southern Thai (see Diagram 3).

Comparing the pattern of tone splits and merges of this variety with that of Nakhon Si Thammarat shown in Diagram 1, it is evident that the system of this variety differs from that of Nakhon Si Thammarat Thai in one important aspect - the merge between C1 and C23. We thus propose to regard the system shown in Diagram 3 as another hybrid variety[6] and to call it Southern-Central Thai (S-C Thai[7]) to differentiate it from C-S Thai (see Diagram 2) spoken further up north and Nakhon Si Thammarat Thai spoken further down south. There are two tone systems in S-C Thai – the five tone system and the six tone system. The five tone system has the merge between A4 and A23B23 while the six tone system does not have that merge. The latter is thus closer to Nakhon Si Thammarat Thai than the former.

2. The borderlines

We now turn to the issue of borderline location. The two age groups will be considered separately using information in Table 1 (see also Figure 2).

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[6]This proposal of a new hybrid variety was suggested by Professor Dr. Theraphan LuangThongkum during the defence of the thesis on which this article is based in April 2007.

[7]The shortened version i.e. S-C Thai will be used to refer to this variety from now on.

The first borderline is between Central Thai and C-S Thai. In the old group, all speakers in Amphoe Thap Sakae use Central Thai while all of the speakers in Amphoe Bang Saphan use C-S Thai. In the young group, all of the speakers in Amphoe Thap Sakae use Central Thai and all of the speakers in Amphoe Bang Saphan Noi use C-S Thai while 2 speakers in Amphoe Bang Saphan use Central Thai and 3 speakers use C-S Thai. We conclude therefore that the borderline between Central Thai and C-S Thai lies between Amphoe Thap Sakae and Amphoe Bang Saphan in the old group and within Amphoe Bang Saphan in the young group.

The second borderline is between C-S Thai and S-C Thai. We consider the situation on the two coasts separately. On the east coast the borderline is very clearly located in both age groups at the boundary between Amphoe Mueang Chumphon and Amphoe Sawi. On the west coast, however, the two age groups differ. In the old group it is located within Amphoe Mueang Ranong where 2 speakers use C-S Thai and 3 speakers use S-C Thai. In this age group all speakers in Amphoe Kra Buri use C-S Thai and all speakers in Amphoe La-un use S-C Thai. In the young group the borderline is located between Amphoe Kra Buri and Amphoe La-un as well as between Amphoe Mueang Ranong and Amphoe La-un, Amphoe Phato and Amphoe Kapoe. In this age group all of the speakers use C-S Thai in Amphoe Kra Buri and Amphoe Mueang Ranong and S-C Thai in Amphoe La-un, Amphoe Phato and Amphoe Kapoe.

The third borderline - that between S-C Thai and Southern Thai is located in the area further south – not covered in this study. However, we can deduce from L-Thong-khum (1978) (see Figure 3) where the borderline between S-C Thai and Southern Thai is located. That study does not investigate variation by age group. It shows that S-C Thai is used in Amphoe Tha Chana, Chaiya, Tha Chang, Khiri Ratthani-khom, Phunphin, Mueang and Khian Sa whereas Southern Thai is used in Amphoe Ta Khun, Phanom, Phra Saeng, Wiang Sa and Ban Na San.

3. Ongoing change

We find some interesting cases of ongoing change in this study. In Amphoe Thap Sakae (see Table 1) only two old speakers use the six tone system of Central Thai while all five young speakers and three old speakers use its five tone system – the system with the same pattern of tone splits and merges as Standard Thai. It is thus likely that the six tone system will disappear from this Amphoe in the future.

Another case is in Amphoe Mueang Ranong. In this area both C-S Thai and S-C Thai occur. While both varieties are used in the old group, only C-S Thai is used in the young group. Thus it is likely that in the future only C-S Thai will be used in this area.

The final case is in Amphoe Phato and Amphoe Lamae. While the old speakers use the six tone system more than the five tone system of S-C Thai, the young speakers definitely prefer the five tone system. This situation is very interesting since the six tone system is closer to Southern Thai of Nakhon Si Thammarat. A further study is required here.

4. Using tonal characteristics in dialect borderline identification

Having used the pattern of tone splits and merges to locate the borderlines between Central Thai and C-S Thai, between C-S Thai and S-C Thai

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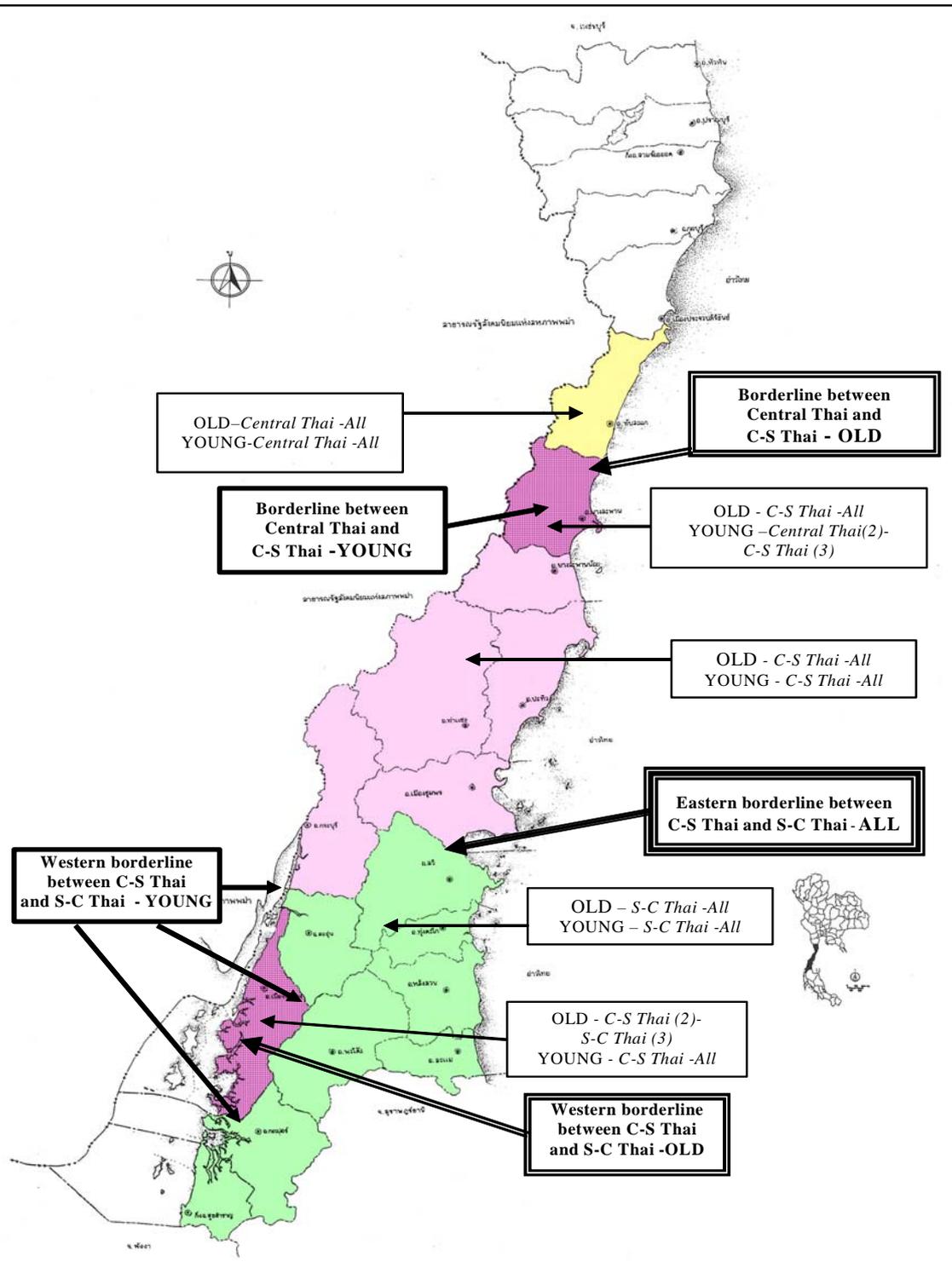
Figure 2: Map showing frequency of types of tone system, the boundary between Central Thai and Central-Southern (C-S) Thai and between Central-Southern Thai and Southern-Central (S-C) Thai
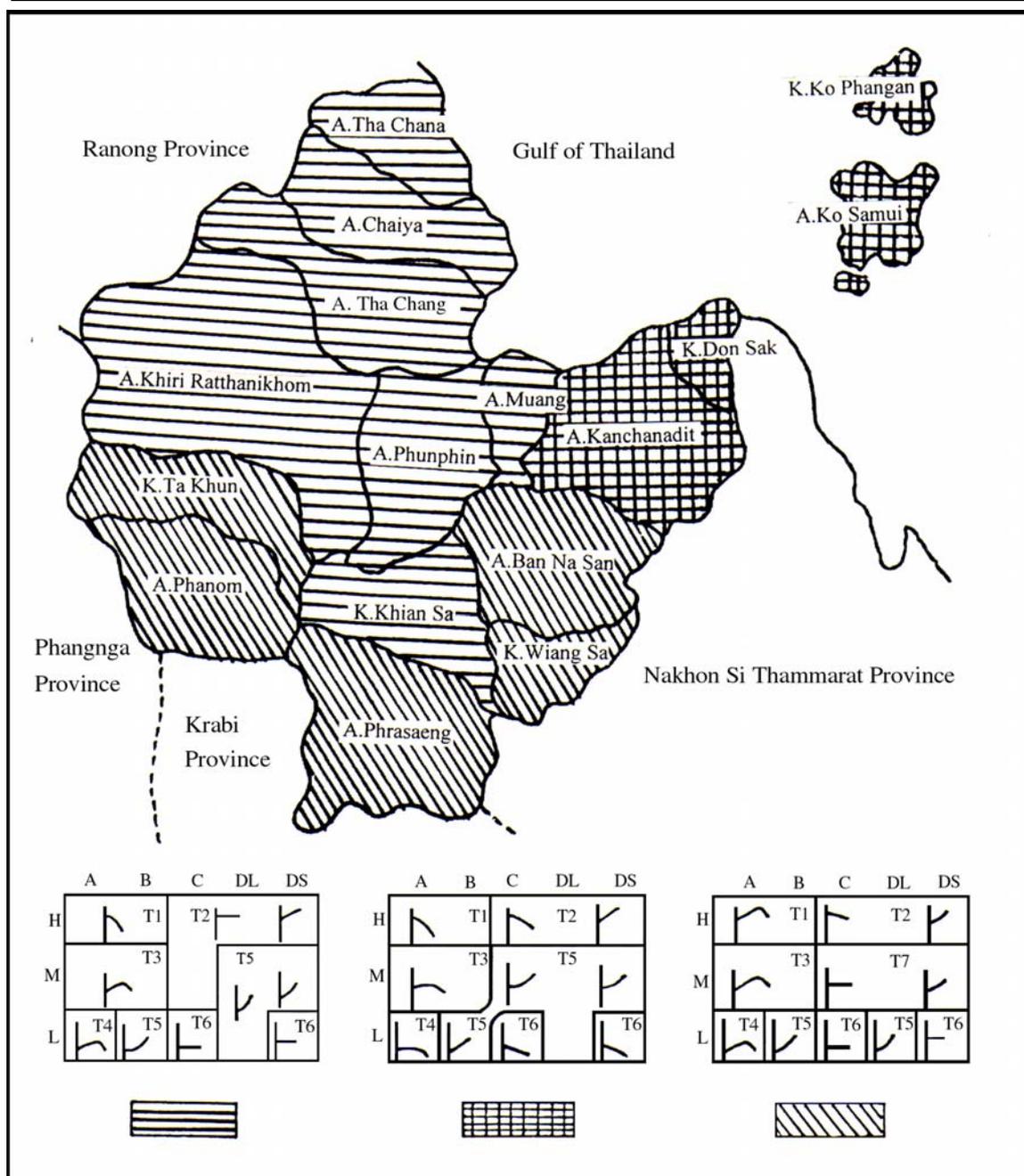
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Figure 3: Sub-dialect areas in Changwat Surat Thani based on patterns of tone splits and merges (adapted from L-Thongkhum, 1978)

as well as between S-C Thai and Southern Thai (the Nakhon Si Thammarat variety), we will now look at the characteristics of the tones in all of the varieties investigated. The question to be considered is whether dialect identification could be based on tonal characteristics.

Up to now tone-based dialect identification in Thai dialectology has most frequently used the pattern of tone splits and merges. This method effectively distinguishes the four main Thai dialects – Northern Thai, Norhteastern Thai, Central Thai, and Southern Thai (Tingsabadh, 2001). However, when distinguishing hybrid varieties, we propose that another method should be used – a combination of the patterns of tone splits and merges, and the tonal characteristics that appear in these varieties.

In this study we see that both hybrid varieties - C-S Thai and S-C Thai – have the merge between A1 and B1. Their patterns differ in the other places in Column A, B and C. Some parts are close to Central Thai, while the others to Southern Thai. When the characteristics of the tones in the two hybrid varieties are considered (see Table 2) we find that they are more similar to Southern Thai[8] than Central Thai. It is here proposed that the merge between A1 and B1 and the tonal characteristics in both of the hybrid varieties are sufficient to classify the two hybrid varieties as sub-dialects of Southern Thai. Consequently, we could argue that there is only one borderline between Central Thai and Southern Thai. In this study this borderline is located at Amphoe Bang Saphan, Changwat Prachuap Khiri Khan. In

Table 2 Tonal characteristics of Central Thai, Central-Southern Thai, Southern-Central Thai, and Southern Thai

	Central Thai	Central-Southern Thai	Southern-Central Thai	Southern Thai
A1	usually low rising	high rising falling	high rising falling	high rising falling
A23	Mid level	mid rising falling	mid rising falling	mid rising falling
A4	mid level or mid falling rising		low rising falling	low rising falling
B1	Low level	high rising falling	high rising falling	high rising falling
B23			mid rising falling	mid rising falling
B4	High falling	low level or low falling rising	low level rising	low level rising
C1		low level	high level or	high level
C23			mid level	mid level
C4	High rising	mid level	low level	low level

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[8]Nakhon Si Thammarat Thai (Brown 1965) is once again used as the representative of Southern Thai.

Debavalya (1983) this borderline was located further up north in Amphoe Thap Sakae. Another project that investigates tonal variation at the village level has to be undertaken to find out the exact present location of the borderline.

Conclusion

Using the tone box method (Gedney, 1972) we find that three varieties are spoken in the area of study: Central Thai and two hybrid varieties called here Central-Southern or C-S Thai and Southern-Central or S-C Thai. There are two tone systems in each variety: 5 and 6 tones in Central Thai, 4 and 5 tones in C-S Thai, and 5 and 6 tones in S-C Thai. The northern part of the study area is where Central Thai is spoken. Lower down from the east coast to the west coast is the area of C-S Thai and below that is the area of S-C Thai. Such results enable us to draw the borderlines among the varieties. We found slight variation between the two age groups in the location of the borderlines. In Amphoe Bang Saphan while all speakers in the old group only use C-S Thai, some speakers in the young group use Central Thai and the others use C-S Thai. In Amphoe Mueang Ranong, while some speakers in the old group use C-S Thai and the others use S-C Thai, all speakers in the young group use C-S Thai. Such results show that the borderlines between Central Thai and C-S Thai, and between C-S Thai and S-C Thai on the east coast are a little lower for the young group than for the old group. It could show that the young group is influenced by Central Thai more than the old group. We think that this influence is also shown by their preference of C-S Thai to S-C Thai.

In this study we went further beyond the area of study. Using the result of another study (L-Thongkhum, 1978), we came to the conclusion that the borderline between S-C Thai and Southern Thai proper is in the south of Changwat Surat Thani. This conclusion could of course be out of date and a new study of the area should be carried out.

Apart from using the pattern of tone splits and merges, we also consider the characteristics of the tones in the three varieties. Since we find that the tonal characteristics of both C-S Thai and S-C Thai are more similar to Southern Thai than Central Thai, we propose here that these two varieties are sub-dialects of Southern Thai. Consequently, we conclude that there is only a single borderline between Central Thai and Southern Thai between Amphoe Thap Sakae and Amphoe Bang Saphan in the old group and within Amphoe Bang Saphan in the young group. Comparing with the location of a similar borderline found in Debavalya (1983), the ones found in this study are a little lower. However, since this study selects just one location per Amphoe while Debavalya investigated at the village level, our result is thus less precise. Another study of tonal variation at the village level in Amphoe Thap Sakae and Amphoe Bang Saphan should be carried out – perhaps a sociolinguistic study since we have found that there is some variation by age group.

In addition to locating the borderlines, this study pinpoints the areas where ongoing change is taking place. They are where the old speakers and the young speakers use different linguistic features. In this study we find that the two generations living in the same area may speak different varieties or speak the same

variety but use different tone systems. Further research on ongoing change should yield interesting results.

Finally, this study shows that three tone types occur in a small area covering three adjoining Amphoe i.e. the four-tone type of C-S Thai in Amphoe Pathiu, the five-tone type of the same variety in Amphoe Mueang Chumphon, and the five-tone type of S-C Thai in Amphoe Sawi. It would be very interesting to investigate tonal variation at the village level in these three Amphoe to see the transition from one tone type to another.

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