

**RESEARCH IN LANGUAGES AND CULTURES IN ASEAN
COUNTRIES:
A RESEARCH PROJECT ON MIDDLE MEKONG
LINGUISTICS**

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INTRODUCTION

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My name is Norihiko Hayashi from Kobe City University of Foreign Studies! Today this is my great honor to have a small lecture here again in Nakhon Phanom University! My specialties are linguistics, especially in language documentation, historical linguistics and Areal linguistics in Southeast Asia.

TODAY'S TALK

Research in Languages and cultures in Asean countries:
A research project on Middle Mekong linguistics

「メコン川中流域を中心とした諸言語の言語実態と変容プロセスの研究」

(JP17H02335) funded by Japan Society for the Promotion of Science



- 1) Project Aim/ Goal
- 2) Methodology
- 3) Research Outcomes
- 4) Future Prospects

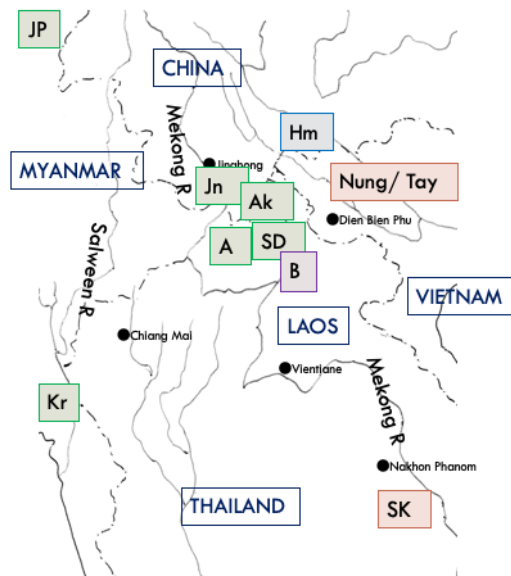
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Today I would like to talk about the research in languages and cultures in Asean countries, focusing on our research project on Middle Mekong linguistics powered by Japan Society of the Promotion of Science.

Here are the directions of this presentation. Firstly, I would like to introduce the project aim and goal, and secondly wish to explain the methodology of this project. And the third, I wish to mention the research outcomes of this project and finally would like to conclude and say something about the future prospects.

PROJECT AIM/ GOAL: MIDDLE MEKONG AREA

- 1) Language Description
 - Phonetics and Phonology
 - Morphology
 - Syntax
 - Faunal Terms---Language/ Culture/ Ecology
- 2) Historical Linguistics
 - Language Change
 - Grammaticalization
 - Dialectal Variation
- 3) Areal Linguistics
 - Tibeto-Burman, Tai-Kadai, Hmong-Mien,
 - Mon-Khmer
 - Language Contact



In this slide I wish to mention the project aim and goal. This map shows the southeast asian continent. Here are Mekong river and Salween River, which cover China, Myanmar, Thailand, Laos and Vietnam. We are focusing on the middle Mekong region and its surrounding area.

Firstly this project focuses language description. Our team members are doing fieldwork in this area and collecting new data to analyze phonetics and phonology, morphology, syntax. And one thing to note for this project is to collect faunal terms, in other words, animal names in some languages. The animal names are very interesting and important but many linguists have less attention to them.

Second, we are focusing on language change. Historical linguistics reveals what language are related, how language changes and sometimes how the speakers moved from where to where. As you can see the map, the different kinds of language groups, such as Tibeto-Burman, Tai-Kadai, Hmong-Mien, and Mon-Khmer, are spoken in the same area and they are intermingled in various places. From the historical linguistics and Areal linguistic viewpoints, we will analyze the sound change, grammaticalization, dialectal variation and language contact.

METHODOLOGY

1) Linguistics Fieldwork

Interview

Recording Sounds and Videos

2) Language Comparison

Compare consonants, vowels and tones between dialects/ languages

Lexical comparison to study the historical change

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On methodology, as I mentioned in the previous slides, we carry out linguistic fieldwork. In the fieldwork, we interview the native speakers of the language at the site, and record sound files and video clips.

And after compiling the lexical data, we compare the sounds like consonants, vowels and tones between dialects and/or languages. In some cases, we compare lexical data to analyze the historical development of the certain words.

RESEARCH OUTCOMES

Workshops on Middle Mekong Languages

Jan 2018, May 2019

Southeast Asian Linguistics Society (Tokyo 2019)

***Topics in Middle Mekong Linguistics* (Kobe City University of Foreign Studies)**

To be published in January 2020

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Our Project started in April 2017, and this is the third year. We already had international workshops on Middle Mekong Languages in January 2018 and May 2019. Some of the members presented their papers at the annual meeting of Southeast Asian Linguistics Society which was held in Tokyo this May.

And now I am editing a volume called "Topics in Middle Mekong Linguistics" which will be published by Kobe City University of Foreign Studies next month. This volume contains four papers on animal names, two papers on historical linguistics and one paper on language documentation.

SAEK PROJECT: A CASE

- 1) linguistic fieldwork at Ban At Samart, Nakhon Phanom
- 2) gathering the lexicons and phrases
- 3) recording sound files and video clips
- 4) compiling "a new dictionary"
- 5) research on animal names



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Hereafter I would like to introduce my project on the Saek language conducted in here. This project contains the linguistic fieldwork at Ban At Samart, Nakhon Phanom province of Thailand, gathering the lexicons and phrases. I also record sound files of this language and sometimes videotape our research sessions. These works are for compiling a new dictionary of this language. And also I am collecting animal names which the previous studies have not discovered yet.

As you may know, the variety of Saek at Ban At Samart is a truly endangered language. Fortunately I happened to have a brilliant teacher of Saek, who can be seen in this photo and is 95 years old. I am trying to collect the linguistic data from her as much as possible.

SAEK PROJECT: A CASE

linguistic fieldwork and gathering data

Using wordlists to gather lexical data

Using language textbooks to gather phrases and sentence data

Videotaping

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In linguistic fieldwork, I usually gather data by using wordlists that I prepared in advance. Firstly I collected 500 basic lexicons by using standard Thai. I wrote down the Saek word by using International Phonetic Alphabet.

After that, I have used a Thai-Japanese dictionary to collect more lexical data and phrasal/ sentential data. I also used language textbooks containing a lot of conversational sentences. These language textbooks are very useful in that they include the whole basic grammar of the language.

Sometimes I videotape the interview sessions and how the native speaker pronounces the sounds that I feel so difficult.

Here I will show a videoclip of my linguistic interview with my language teacher of Saek.

SAEK PROJECT: A CASE

Main Previous Works

William Gedney's Work (compiled by Hudak (1993, 2008))

Kosaka (1992)

Khanittanan (1976)

Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia, Mahidol University

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There are several previous works on Saek. The most influential and famous one is William Gedney's work. He conducted his linguistic fieldwork in 1960's and he considered this language is going to die in the near future. His fieldnotes are compiled by his student Thomas Hudak.

Ryuichi Kosaka also carried out his fieldwork in 1990's and present the papers on Saek phonemes.

Khanittanan (1976) analyzed the Saek lexicon and grammar. Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia of Mahidol University compiled a dictionary of the Ban Bawa dialect of Saek by utilizing Thai script.

SAEK PROJECT: A CASE



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This photo was taken at Ban At Samart last year. They prayed for the local god in the traditional way.

SAEK PROJECT: A CASE



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This photo was taken at Ban At Samart on the same day. They performed the Saek dance called 'Sek Saat'. Two people sitting in the different lines have two sticks and try to pinch the feet of the dancer rhythmically. The dancer jumps and tries not to be pinched by the sitting people.

SAEK PROJECT: A CASE

Animal Names (Birds)

Gloss	Hayashi's fieldnote	Gedney
chicken	thua4 kay6	kay6
crow	kaa1	kaa1
hawk	thua4 lam5	lam5
greater coucal	nɔk6 kuut6	-----
flycatcher	nɔk6 kaʔ6 cip4	-----
sparrow	nɔk6 cɔk6	-----

new words are found

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This slide shows some of the animal names in At Samart Saek. My field data at At Samart Saek are illustrated in the central column, and Gedney's data are in the right column.

As you can see, the first three words, 'chicken', 'crow' and 'hawk', are mostly the same between my data and Gedney's. But the last three bird names, such as 'greater coucal', 'flycatcher', and 'sparrow', can be seen in my fieldnote, while cannot be seen in Gedney's. So they can be thought of as newly found names.

AKHA DIALECTS PROJECT: A CASE

Akha dialects in Muang Sing District, Luang Namtha Province, Laos

Akha Buli

Akha Chicho

Akha Kopien

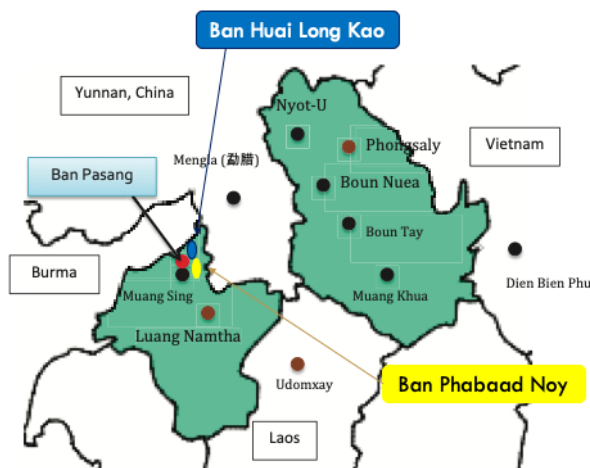
1) Phonology and Lexicon Data

2) Basic Sentences

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Next I will want to mention my own project on Akha Dialects, which I have been working in Muang Sing of Luang Namtha, Northern Laos. There are three varieties of Akha in Muang Sing, such as Akha Buli, Akha Chicho, and Akha Kopien. Here I have been collecting lexical data to analyze their phonological system and basic sentences to understand their grammar.

AKHA VARIETIES IN LUANG NAMTHA, LAOS



This map shows the Northern part of Laos. This is Luang Namtha province and this is the Phongsaly province. Akha Chicho inhabits in Ban Pasang of the Muang Sing district of Luang Namtha, which is located about 60 km north from the Luang Namtha center. The Akha villages are very close to Laos-China border. I have been to two other Akha villages, like Ban Huay Long Kao and Ban Phabaad Noy. Ban Huay Long Kao is an Akha Kopien village and Ban Phabaad Noy is an Akha Buli village.

AKHA DIALECTS PROJECT: A CASE

Akha Chicho



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This photo illustrates my linguistic consultant of Akha Chicho. He is a chairperson of this village called Ban Pasang. It is a small village but neat and tidy.

This photo also shows that I have the document of consent of research signed by the linguistic consultant. Nowadays the research ethics gets more importance in linguistics fields, and I am also trying to have the documents signed as much as possible. Some people are still illiterate, so in that case, I asked such persons to give me the oral consent. In some cases, I ask the colleagues to videotape the oral consent.

AKHA DIALECTS PROJECT: A CASE

Akha Buli



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This photo shows two Akha Buli men and me taken in their village of Muang Sing, Luang Namtha Province of Laos. I already collected around 1000 lexicons including animal and flora names, and some basic sentences. The subgroup of Akha Buli are widely spread in Muang Sing District, which may influence linguistically. As I will mention the difference between Akha Chicho and Akha Buli, they can communicate each other in their own dialects

AKHA DIALECTS PROJECT: A CASE







Akha Kopien



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This photo shows two Akha Kopien persons and me. I went there two days and collected 500 basic lexicons. Akha Kopien lives also in Myanmar and Prof. Shintani published a book on this language in Japan. But I think the language spoken in Luang Namtha and the one spoken in Myanmar seem very different from each other.

DIALECTAL VARIATION AKHA CHICHO AND AKHA BULI (HAYASHI 2018)

Gloss	Akha Chicho	Akha Buli
'bone'	/ɕa ²¹ jø ²¹ / 	/ɕa ²¹ jø ²¹ / 
'blood'	/ɕi ²¹ /	/ɕi ²¹ /
'to eat'	/dza ²¹ /	/dza ²¹ /
'sand'	/kha ⁵⁵ ɕu ³³ /	/kha ⁵⁵ ɕɿ ²¹ /
'sky'	/uŋ ²¹ ɣuŋ ²¹ / 	/m ²¹ / 
'spider'	/a ⁵⁵ phja ³³ lu ³³ wa ³³ /	/a ²¹ ɕha ⁵⁵ ɕha ⁵⁵ gɔ ²¹ /
'cicada'	/a ⁵⁵ ɕɿ ⁵⁵ ɕɿ ⁵⁵ nɔ ³³ /	/a ²¹ dze ²¹ /
'easy'	/jɔ ³³ ja ⁵⁵ / 	/jɿ ³³ ɣɔ ²¹ / 

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Here, I will show some examples. Many cognates in Akha Chicho are the same as or quite similar to the words in Akha Buli. Like this.

But of course, there are a certain number of words that differ in Akha Chicho and Buli. Like these.

AKHA DIALECTS PROJECT: A CASE

Local Market in Muang Sing, Luang Namtha, Laos



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Of course, we would like to understand the local way of living and their cultures. This photo shows the local market in Muang Sing, Luang Namtha of Laos. This market also sells many kinds of fresh vegetables and meat as can be seen in Thailand, and the woman here wearing black clothes sells the mangoose. The Akha People and Tai Dam, and other ethnic groups gather here from the mountains and trade the goods from the villages.

FUTURE PROSPECTS

- 1) More fieldworks on other languages and dialects in Mekong Region
- 2) More language comparison studies
- 3) Broadening the research area
Brahmaputra river, Salween river and Mekong river

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All right. The final chapter of this presentation. We of course have to continue our project later on, and wish to carry out more fieldworks on other languages and dialects in Mekong region. And then, by utilizing the first-hand data, we wish to make more language comparison to reveal the historical development of each language. And finally, we wish to broaden our research area towards Brahmaputra river and Salween river. There are many related languages with the one spoken in Mekong region, and we would like to know the data of Brahmaputra and Salween region to reveal the areal feature and historical aspects of Southeast Asian languages.



Thank you very much!

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