

## CHAPTER 6

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

#### 6.0 Introduction

This last chapter summarizes the results of this research project regarding language use and language attitude of the Yong people in Lamphun.

#### 6.1 Language Use

##### **6.1.1. Research question 1: What dialects do the Yong people use in their community? What are the important factors in the choice of dialect use of Yong people in different domains?**

The Yong community is basically trilingual with most every Yong person speaking Yong, Kammuang and Standard Thai. Yong people generally use their dialect to communicate within their community and with other communities also. Sixty-five percent of all subjects use the Yong dialect in order to communicate with the interlocutors. Social variables such as age, gender, education and place of residence did not seem to have much of an affect on the choice of dialect of the Yong people. According to age, although both age groups spoke mostly Yong in each domain, the highest degree of dialect use, 37%, was found among the older age group. The younger age groups also spoke Yong in many domains but the use of Kammuang and Standard Thai was higher than with the older age group. The use of Kammuang tended to increase when both age groups spoke to children. The tendency of using Yong of males and females was slightly different. With some people females spoke more Yong than males, for example 100% (24/24) chose to speak Yong to their siblings, while with others males might speak more Yong than females, for example 92% (22/24) of males chose to speak Yong with the village leaders but females chose

to speak Yong 83% (20/24). Lower-educated people spoke Yong slightly more with the individuals in each domain than the higher-educated people. People with higher education spoke more Standard Thai with non-Yong friends and with people in the government domain. The language that city dwellers spoke with the individuals was significantly different with three interlocutors, children, people at the market, and people in town. Other than these differences, Yong was the most common language that people in the two places spoke. The use of Kammuang seems to be increasing among city dwellers. It was interesting that the subjects did not speak Yong with Yong people only but they also used it with non-Yong speakers. It seems that Yong was intelligible for many non-Yong people in Lamphun. The pattern of language use that different people spoke to the subjects was similar. They mostly spoke Yong to the subjects; some spoke Kammuang and Standard Thai. Similarly, the use of Yong dialect was found mostly in the family and community domains, while Kammuang and Standard Thai were used with non-Yong people and people in the government and public domains.

The language that Yong people in different groups indicated as the language that children learn first was Yong. The number of people who indicated Yong was higher among the older age group, males, and village dwellers. The younger age group, females, higher education people, and city dwellers felt that children were learning Kammuang first. There were various languages that children knew before they started school, mostly Yong, Kammuang, and Standard Thai. People in different age, gender, education, and place of residence had difference opinions as to which language children knew before they started school. The older people, males, lower-educated people and village dwellers indicated children knew Yong more often, where the younger age group, higher-educated people, and city dwellers indicated Kammuang and Standard Thai more often. The language that most Yong people thought Yong mothers should speak to their children was Yong. Some indicated Kammuang and Standard Thai also.

The Yong dialect was still the most common dialect used in the Yong community. Social variables such as age, gender, education and place of residence did not have much affect on the choice of dialect use of the Yong people. Each group of people maintained speaking Yong in many domains. Kammuang and Standard Thai were used mostly with non-Yong speakers, which led city dwellers, who meet non-Yong people more frequently, to use less Yong as compared with the village dwellers.

## **6.2 Language Attitude**

### **6.2.1. Research question 2: How do the Yong people feel about their dialect and other dialects spoken in the community?**

Attitudes toward language appear to be quite consistent throughout the Yong community. The subjects from different groups did not have widely different attitudes. Yong was still important for the subjects, especially, to be accepted in the community, talk with people in the village, or listen to the radio. The response of the subjects toward these activities showed the importance of the integrative attitude among the Yong people. The subjects' responses did indicate that instrumental attitudes were not strong, i.e. that Yong was not so important for talking with government officials, teachers, or for writing. Age, gender, or education did not have a statistically significant impact on subjects' responses toward the importance or unimportance of the Yong dialect. But the one division among the Yong community that this section did highlight was the difference between village and city dwellers. People in different places of residence had statistically significant differences of opinion toward eight activities; making friends, listening to the radio, getting a job, going to temple, going to market, going shopping, talking to people in the village and talking to people outside the village. Most of the village dwellers indicated Yong was important for them, but the city dwellers stated Yong was not important. If more

Yong village dwellers move into the cities, their feeling about the importance of Yong may also change, possibly leading towards language shift.

Chi-square tests also showed statistically significant differences towards the responses toward negative and positive statements among village and city dwellers. The village and city dwellers had significant differences toward statement 1 'It is important to be able to speak Yong', statement 17 'I enjoy going to Yong cultural events', and statement 18 'Yong younger people like to speak Yong'. However, when the data was examined more closely, it was found that most subjects from each group agreed with positive statements and disagreed with negative statements. They just differed on the degree of agreement. The overall result still showed the positive attitudes of the Yong people. The subjects also had positive attitudes toward other dialects used in Lamphun province because they indicated that they agreed that Yong, Kammuang and Standard Thai could be used in Lamphun and it was not difficult for them to speak these three dialects at the same time. The concepts of instrumental attitude, the desire to gain achievement, status, personal success, and integrative attitude, the desire of people to be like members of a given language community (Baker, 1992) were used to consider the attitudes of the subjects toward their dialect. Integrative attitudes affected most subjects' responses. The Yong people need to use the Yong dialect in order to identify themselves as members of the Yong community. Instrumental attitudes toward the Yong dialect were not as strong among the subjects. They can gain achievement or personal success by being trilingual.

In the open question section of the questionnaire, the subjects were asked to answer seven questions. Younger people stated that Yong teenagers spoke Yong correctly, while older people and city dwellers had the opposite opinion. Subjects in each group had similar answers; learning to speak both Kammuang and Standard Thai was good for children. Kammuang was the language that was used as a language of wider communication in the Northern part, while Standard Thai was the national language

of Thailand, so it was necessary for Yong children to learn these two languages because they were Thai citizens. Most subjects in different age, gender, education and city dwellers, knew Yong people who did not speak Yong any more and they expressed different attitudes towards those people; most of them said it was bad that the Yong people did not speak their mother tongue. Village dwellers were different from the city dwellers. They stated that they did not know any people who did not speak Yong language. They thought that Yong people must be able to speak their own language.

Younger subjects stronger believed that children in their village would speak Yong when they grew up and have their own children. Higher educated people and city dwellers also had the same opinion. Conversely, lower educated people and village dwellers thought that those children would not speak Yong any more. All subjects indicated positive attitudes towards the use of their mother tongue among other people. They stated that when Northern Thai or Central Thai people were around they were not embarrassed to speak Yong language. It showed that Yong people were proud of their language and proud to speak it. Subjects in different age, gender, and place of residence had similar opinion in that the next generation of Yong would not stop speaking Yong. Most of the subjects with higher education also expressed the same, while lower educated people were different. These people were concerned about their language because they thought that the next generation might not speak Yong any more.

However, the overall result on the questionnaires showed that Yong people had strong positive attitudes towards the Yong language. The social variables such as age, sex, educational level, and place of residence did not reflect much on the attitudes of the subjects. The more the Yong people continue speaking Yong, and also have positive attitudes towards their mother tongue, the more the Yong dialect will maintain its vitality. They also had positive attitudes toward other dialects that are

spoken in Lamphun province. They could use different dialects with different people without having any problems.

### **6.3 Summary of the future of the Yong dialect.**

#### **6.3.1. Research question 3: What is the long-range outlook for the Yong dialect? Will the Yong people maintain their dialect or shift to Kammuang?**

In many ways this research project seems to indicate that the long-term outlook for the Yong dialect is good. According to the researcher's observations and to the subjects' own estimate, the Yong people use the Yong dialect in many situations. They feel sufficiently positive enough about the language to use it in front of and with non-Yong people. Attitudes toward Yong are good among a wide range of social groups. Young people and educated people, who are often considered trendsetters in a community, felt positively about the Yong dialect. Cultural events based on promoting the Yong language were common in the community, as were organizations which were actively trying to preserve Yong culture and traditions. Radio programs broadcast the Yong dialect to all parts of the Yong speaking region. All of these are signs of strong language attitudes and good prospects for language maintenance.

But there are some danger signals as well. The most serious of these was the increase of use of Kammuang with children. In order to preserve a minority language, intergenerational language transfer is essential (Fishman, 1991: 92). This seems to be more of a problem among urban educated Yong people. Even though many educated people said they support Yong and believed it will be spoken for many generations to come, in actual fact they spoke Kammuang to their children. Such people need to see that they are part of the language maintenance problem, and that loss of the home domain will weaken the Yong dialect considerably.

The other danger signal is the gap between urban Yong and their village-dwelling counterparts. City dwellers have little instrumental motivation to use Yong. Their main interest in retaining Yong is integrative, to remain part of the Yong community. Village dwellers have a much higher regard for the instrumental use of Yong in the market and in the community. This difference is not a serious problem in itself, but if more people move to the city, or as the countryside becomes more industrialized, it is possible that even the integrative motivation to speak Yong could begin to weaken.

Despite these danger signals, the outlook for Yong is a good one. Those organizations seeking to promote the Yong dialect need to understand these areas of potential weakness and work to alleviate them. With proper attention, the Yong dialect should remain as part of the cultural mosaic of northern Thailand.

#### **6.4 Further Research**

Because the researcher had limited time to do this research, only two Yong communities in Lamphun were studied. In order to gain more data about the pattern of language use and language attitudes of the Yong people, other Yong communities in Lamphun or in Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai, or the other provinces should be investigated. This research focused on four social variables, age, gender, education and place of residence. It is possible for further research to investigate other variables such as social status, occupation or context of situation in order to find out additional differences of language use and language attitude among the Yong people in Lamphun province.