

The Contribution of Folklore to Sociolinguistic Work: A case Study in Thailand

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Abstract

The main purpose of this paper is to point out the importance of folklore for work in sociolinguistic as Dell Hymes (1971) proposed in his work - The Contribution of Folklore to Sociolinguistic Research - that the study of folklore is essential to the progress of the trend in linguistic work called "Sociolinguistic". The data were collected by the research in Thailand, as it is the case study of, and were analyzed by using Linguistics and Folklore criteria. The findings of this study reveal that folklore is strongly across sociolinguistics and both are interdisciplinary.

Keywords: Folklore, Sociolinguistic, Interdisciplinary

บทคัดย่อ

บทความนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์หลักเพื่อศึกษาความสำคัญของคติชนวิทยาที่มีต่องานทางด้านภาษาศาสตร์เชิงสังคม เช่นที่ เดลล์ ฮาย์มส์ (๑๙๗๑) ได้กล่าวไว้ในงานของเขาที่ชื่อ "The Contribution of Folklore to Sociolinguistic Research" ว่าการศึกษาคติชนวิทยามีความสำคัญต่อแนวทางการศึกษาทางด้านภาษาศาสตร์แขนงหนึ่ง คือ ภาษาศาสตร์เชิงสังคม ข้อมูลที่นำมาวิเคราะห์เก็บจากฐานข้อมูลวิจัยในประเทศไทยซึ่งเป็นกรณีศึกษาและวิเคราะห์โดยใช้แนวคิดทางด้านภาษาศาสตร์และคติชนวิทยา ผลการศึกษาแสดงให้เห็นว่าความรู้ทางด้านคติชนวิทยา

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มีความเกี่ยวข้องกันอย่างยิ่งกับความรู้ทางด้านภาษาศาสตร์เชิงสังคมและอาจกล่าวได้ว่าทั้งสองสาขานี้เป็นสหวิทยาการอย่างแท้จริง

คำสำคัญ: คติชนวิทยา, ภาษาศาสตร์เชิงสังคม, สหวิทยาการ

1. Background

Folklore and Sociolinguistic research are related by their principles, contents and methodologies. In the world of globalization, interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary are discussed wildly. Therefore, researchers integrate sciences to their research in order to make it multidimensional. That research in one science is contributed to another. The purpose of this article is to present how the science of Folklore contributes to the research of Sociolinguistics by presenting the overall image that shows trends and directions of the science study and I hope the study will be useful to the humanities and social sciences.

๒ Working Definition of Folklore Studies and Sociolinguistic Area

2.1 Definitions of Folklore Studies

The American Folklore Society (<http://www.afsnet.org>) mentioned the definition of the term Folklore as the traditional art, literature, knowledge, and practice that shows sense of its own identity shares, as a central part of that identity, folk traditions, the things that people traditionally believe, do, know, make, and say. Moreover, folklore shades the dimension of culture. And share a strong interest in-group, and also it is the way of life.

Benjamin A. Botkin (1938, as shows in <http://www.afsnet.org>) stated that:

Folklore is a body of traditional belief, custom, and expression. It also related to a commercial and academic means of communication and instruction. The common interests and purposes are also defined, the educated or uneducated, rural or urban can be named its folklore. Botkin defined traditions, individual, popular, including literary which has its value and continuity for the group as a whole.

Dan Ben-Amos (1972) defined the meaning of folklore as: folklore is artistic communication in small groups.

Jan Brunvand (1978) mentioned that folklore are unrecorded traditions in the society within both the form and content of traditions. It is more concerned with the technique of communication between two persons and folklore definitely means traditional, unofficial, non-institutional part of culture. Knowledge, understandings, values, attitudes, assumptions, feelings, and beliefs transmitted in traditional forms by word are also included.

William A. Wilson (1988, as shows in <http://www.afsnet.org>) says about folklore as the linking between people to their cultural heritages. It is an interdisciplinary connected the interrelationships of different cultural expressions. A study of folklore is attempted to discover the basis of our common humanity.

2.2 Definitions of Sociolinguistics

Sociolinguistics is a term including the aspects of linguistics applied toward the connections between language and society, and the way we use it in different social situations. It ranges from the study of the wide variety of dialects across a given region down to the analysis between the way men and women speak to one another. Sociolinguistics often shows us the humorous realities of human speech and how a dialect of a given language can often describe the age, sex, and social class of the speaker; it codes the social function of a language. (<http://logos.uoregon.edu/explore/socioling/>)

3. Methodology

In this research, the researcher mainly collected data from documents following procedure:

3.1 Collected books and documents mostly are research of Folklore and Sociolinguistics under these topics:

Prajak Saiseang (<http://www.thai-folksy.com>) stated that Folklore study in Thailand was impacted by the West. Most Folklore research is in the area of folk songs, quiz, proverbs, tales, etc. The study leads to culture study, traditions, and faiths of people in the society.

Siraporn Na Thalang (1998) stated that during B.E. 2515-2540 there were almost 100 Folklore research and in B.E.2542 Folklore Centre established as the centre to connect and trade Folklore information in order to develop Folklore research.

6. Sociolinguistics Background in Thailand

The first linguistics curriculum in Thailand is the Chulalongkorn University's curriculum started since B.E. 2477. At the first place, "Linguistics" called "Etymology" and changed to be "Linguistics" in B.E. 2505. The first teacher was Phraya Anumanrajation (www.arts.chula.ac.th)

As the area of Sociolinguistics in Thailand is widen and related to many sciences, social variables are widely used in Sociolinguistics like sex, education, career, age level.

There are several interesting study points:

(1) Language change

(1.1) *Synchronic Study* is the study of language change in a period of time

(1.2) *Diachronic Study* is the comparative study of language change in

periods of time -more that two-

(2) *Social variables that impact language usage of people in the society*

(2.1) Sex: Male/Female

(2.2) Age

(2.3) Education level

(2.4) Career

However there are factors that impact language of people in the society in the same way same as communication situation, place of living or social status.

7. Types of Folklore Data Used in Sociolinguistic Research

There are three categories of folklore data used in Sociolinguistics, which are verbal, non-verbal and mixed (Kanyarat Vechasat, 1995), as show below:

Verbal	Non-Verbal	Mixed
tales	arts	singing
songs	crafts	games
riddles	architecture	plays
proverbs		ceremony
dialect		tradition
faiths		

8. The Point of Sociolinguistic Research Impacted by Folklore

Sociolinguistics is a branch of linguistics that studies from the contexts of dialogues to a conversation of people in a society as speech community. Speech community means the way people in the community talk in the same standard or rules.

Speech Variety is the characteristics of language which are standard language, sociolects, regional dialects, and register used by a certain group of people.

Standard language as in developed societies, presently, there is only one variety settled by government. Media including academic system expand written language to people.

Sociolects is one of social varieties that concerns factors of the speaker like race, ethnics, sex, career, or age.

Functional speech variety or Register is a form of language usage being uttered in differentiation situations.

Social differentiation of language is variation of language usage in societies.

Social stratification is the study of how people in a society use language to each other and how the level of salary, career, education impact choices of language use. In different communities, language use is different and Sociolinguists believe that stratification of language is not universal. That is because it altered by the language users and proved by the research result that, in fact, there are different stratifications of language because speakers' sex is different but not SES (socio-economic status).

concrete objects like animals, nature, happiness and love. And the connotative meanings are politeness, love, happiness, etc. These meanings reflect Thai significant values, such as prosperity, happiness, love, power and also reveal two aspects of Thai world view: the world of discrepancy between men and women and the world of merit and demerit”

Another interesting research is of **Dhirajit Leetrakul (1978)** which is about “Linguistic taboo in Thai”. Leetrakul stated that linguistics taboo is a prohibited or avoided verbal behavior in reference to the values of linguistic community. It can be characterized as avoidance in the normal use, and is a cause of the reluctance of speakers to say certain expressions in certain contexts. Other expressions, both loan words and new compound words, replace those which are avoided. Violating the taboo is likely to cause an irritating feeling, or cause one to be regarded as vulgar. In Thai, linguistic taboo will include forbidden or avoided words in the area of religion, sex, excretion and reverence. The taboo words in reference to these aspects are totally or contextually taboo.

b. **Color terms** - to study basic and non-basic color terms in Thai and other languages by using social variable as gender, age, education, and occupation. The color terms study is the study of color perception of the people in the society not in the aspect of scientifically analysis, mixed with the linguistics and Sociolinguistics in the categories of culture and basic perception of the folk as in “Color terms and color perception of Tai Lue, Lua Mong and Karen speakers in Chiangrai and Phayao” stated in the research by **Satanan Chua-Maharwan (1998)**. The writer says that the purposes of this work are to analyze the basic and non-basic color terms in Tai Lue, Lua, Mong and Karen and to analyze their color perception and attitude. The data was collected from 40 female informants whose age was between 30-45 years old. The elicitation of color terms was done by using 208 color cards. The research result indicates that these 4 languages have different numbers of basic color terms. The numbers of basic color terms in Tai Lue, Mong and Karen are 12, 5, 6 and 5 respectively. Based on the theory of the Universality and Evolution of basic color term (Berlin & Kay, 1969), it can be concluded that the basic color terms in these languages are at different stages in the evolution of basic color term.

Moreover there are interested research studies like "Color terms and the concept of color of the Thais in the Sukhothai period and at the present time" by Supamas Engchuan (2000) in which the objectives and results of the study are to analyze the basic color terms, the boundaries and foci of basic color categories, the change in color categorization and concept, as well as the non-basic color terms in the Sukhothai period and at the present time. The study shows that there are five basic color terms in Sukhothai Thai and twelve basic color terms in the present day Thai. According to the theory of evolution of basic color terms in the Sukhothai period white food items and fruits are found at the present time. The boundaries of the basic color terms were analyzed to confirm that those inferred from metaphorical expressions and those inferred from the informants identifying color chips are not different. Two experiments were carried out: 1) the informants were asked to identify the colors of the objects representing the source domains in metaphorical expressions; 2) The informants were to identify 360 color chips in the standard color chart. The findings were used for determining color boundaries. It was found that those inferred from both experiments show no difference. Such a fact leads to the assumption that the boundaries of the colors inferred from metaphorical expressions in Sukhothai Thai can be taken as those inferred from Sukhothai people's identifying color chips. The analysis of the foci of the basic color terms shows some semantic change in color terms from the Sukhothai period to the present time. For example, the color term /khiat aw/ 'green' in Sukhothai had a broader meaning than that at the present time. It also denotes 'purple' and 'blue', whereas the color term /khiat aw/ at the present time means only 'green'. The rest of the denotations are signified by the specific basic color terms for 'purple' and 'blue'. As for the coining of the non-basic color terms, four strategies are found in both periods; 1) compounding two basic color terms; 2) using specific objects as color terms; 3) modifying basic color terms; and 4) modifying non-basic color terms. Two more strategies are also found at the present time: 1) modifying basic color terms with specific object terms with or without a connector; and 2) modifying specific object terms with a word signifying degree of lightness and saturation."

(2) *The study point of names - to study on people, places and plants names that based on people's faith and reflects language usage of the people in the society. The faith has been traced from generation to generation therefore people think and feel in the same way as snouen in below research.*

structure of the village names is in 5 different patterns; from one-word names to five-word names. Regarding their initial words, the names can be classified into several semantic groups such as water site, landscape, building structure, direction or position, plant, animal, artificial object, body organ, profession, goodness, descriptive, character, action, quantity and others. Moreover, each semantic field can be further divided into a number of subfields."

9. Conclusion

From the analysis of Sociolinguistic research in Thailand, it was found that there are folklore points as faiths and perceptions of the folk having been most studied and used in the Sociolinguistic research. The work that study about faith – basic idea that everyone think oneself, people around them and their society like Taboo words, Color terms, and Naming. The Folklore data most used are verbal data and mixed data. The research indicates the trend and direction of the relation of Folklore study and Sociolinguistics. In the future the form of the research will be interdisciplinary research which is exactly useful to the overall education circle.

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