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A Geolinguistic Study of Temporal Variation in Northeastern Thai

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Geolinguistic study is not new for Thai dialectologists. The discipline involves the use of Geographical Information System (GIS) in the study and analysis of geographical variation of dialects within a temporal framework. Combining geography knowledge and techniques with the methodology of dialectology has successfully overcome the central weakness of Thai Dialectology. This interdisciplinary approach has introduced means to analyze systemically dialect variation in the spatial and temporal domains. This paper aims to demonstrate an exemplified research by which dialect approaches, geography knowledge, and spatial-based technique using a GIS tool are integrated to explore and explain the change that occurred spatially in Northeastern Thai in the real time framework. This study employs 100 semantic units investigated in the two previous dialect surveys of the entire northeastern region of Thailand conducted in 1979 and 2002. Geographical distribution of the lexical items representing each semantic unit at the two different points of time were spatially overlaid to show the locations of real time change, especially the change from Northeastern Thai to Standard Thai. The role of geography was mainly focused on the GIS analysis. Preliminary findings are interesting and make contribution to the field of Thai Geolinguists, showing how interdisciplinary research - geography and linguistics - may advance the fundamental understanding of the spatial pattern of dialect change.

Keyword: Thai dialect, GIS, Geolinguistic study