

Language Change in Progress: A Case Study of Southern Pwo Karen Animal Name Words

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This paper is a continuation of the author's previous paper on Proto-Karen Fauna presented at SEALS 22 in May 2012. Seventy animal names selected from the seventy-three reconstructed Proto-Karen forms were used as a starting point. To conduct field research about 10 days in May and July 2012 for this present study, twenty Pwo men divided into two groups, 45-60 and 20-40, representing old and adult speakers, respectively, and ten Pwo boys (9-15) representing young speakers, were individually interviewed in Thai by the author at I-mat and I-sai villages in Kaen Makrut sub-district, Banrai district, Uthai Thani province. Animal pictures were shown to them during the interviews to ensure their recognition of each animal and its name. The research findings indicated that the two younger age groups (9-15 and 20-40) had lower lexical ranges compared to the older age group (45-60). Nowadays, with a decrease in hunting and an increase in transportation, compulsory education, mass media, rural development, tourism and so on, the younger groups are less and less familiar with wildlife. This contributes to native lexical attrition and lexical shift, i.e. increasing the use of Thai loanwords when it is necessary, since they are bilingual in Pwo and Thai. The research result can be regarded as evidence to support the concepts of "contact-induced language change" and "language change in progress or in apparent time".