

Community-based language revitalization in Thailand

Mayuree Thawornpat, Ph.D.

23 April 2021

Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia, Mahidol University Resource Center for Documentation, Revitalization and Maintenance of Endangered Languages and Cultures,

mthawornpat@gmail.com, mayuree.tha@mahidol.ac.th



Resource Center for Documentation and Revitalization of Endangered Languages and Cultures

Mission: To preserve and revive language in crisis by

Linguists and Community activists.

Focus: To put community members at the heart of

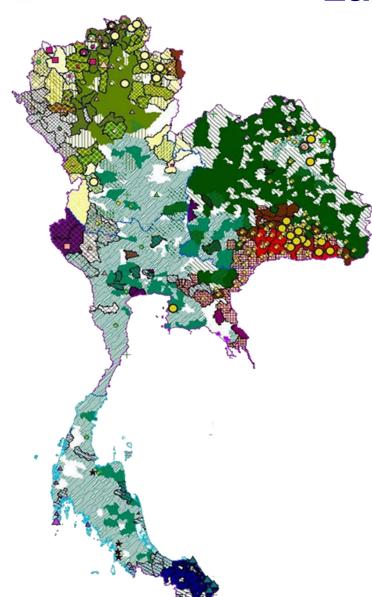
revitalization efforts through involvement at all

steps of the revitalization process.

It is essential to reverse the role of the language speakers from being informants to project owners / researchers of their language revitalization project, and linguists act as facilitators.



Language Diversity in Thailand



65 million population

Speak 70+ living Languages,

Belonging to 5 Language Families

- Tai (24)
- Austroasiatic (22)
- Austronesian (3)
- Hmong-Mien (2)
- Sino-Tibeton (20)



Language Endangerment Situation

- Ethnic minority languages are declining.
- Younger generation becomes monolingual in Thai (National language).
- 16 languages are seriously endangered.
- All major non-dominant languages, are potentially endangered and show signs of contraction, especially in vocabulary and grammar
- Oral traditions and music are disappearing very fast.



11. Supportive National language policy and **Educational Policy**

10. Stakeholder Networking

- Local and central Government **Agencies**
- Academic institutions
- Local Administrative Organization
- International Organizations
- 9. Monitoring, Evaluation, and Facilitation
 - 8. Community Business
- Creative products and activities

7. Local Knowledge Studies and Revival Efforts

- Forest and local plants -**Food culture**
 - Herbal medicine
 - Ritual and ceremonies

1. Preliminary research

- Linguistic analysis
- Language situation / Literacy survey

- Seminar
- Discussion group
- Study visit

MU MODEL

Community - Based

Language Revitalization and Maintenance

3. Developing Writing **System**

- New Orthography

2. Awareness raising &

mobilizing partners

- **Orthography reform**
- Orthography Bridges
 - 4. Literature Production in **Vernacular Language**

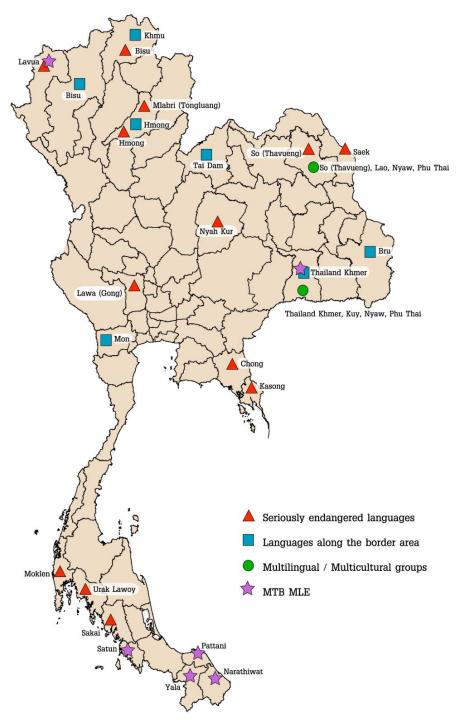
(Stage 1 - 4 books)

6. Community Learning **Center & Local Museum**

- Cultural Information Center
- Cultural activities
- Reading and writing
- Village language classes
- Community business

5. School – Based Revitalization Program

- Teaching local language (and wisdom) as a subject
- Bi / Multilingual education
 - Curriculum development
 - Lesson plan
 - Instructional materials development
 - Teacher training



Mahidol Model for Language Preservation

On-going Language

Revitalization Programs

(involving 26 ethnolinguistic groups)

Cooperative work

Local Community & Academic institution



Training of local volunteers / community research team



(To work WITH not to work FOR)





The Nyah Kur study folk botany



Local Knowledge Studies and Revival Efforts: herbal plants and food culture.







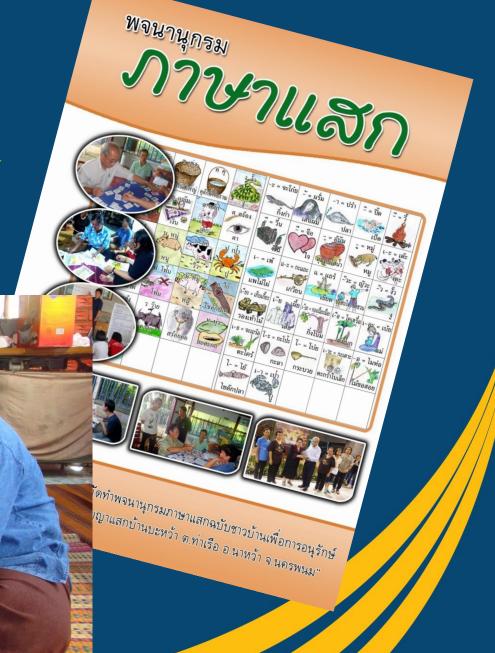
Indigenous Food of the Bisu

Lavua (Lawa) traditional poetry recital





A Saek-Thai dictionary made by the local speech community



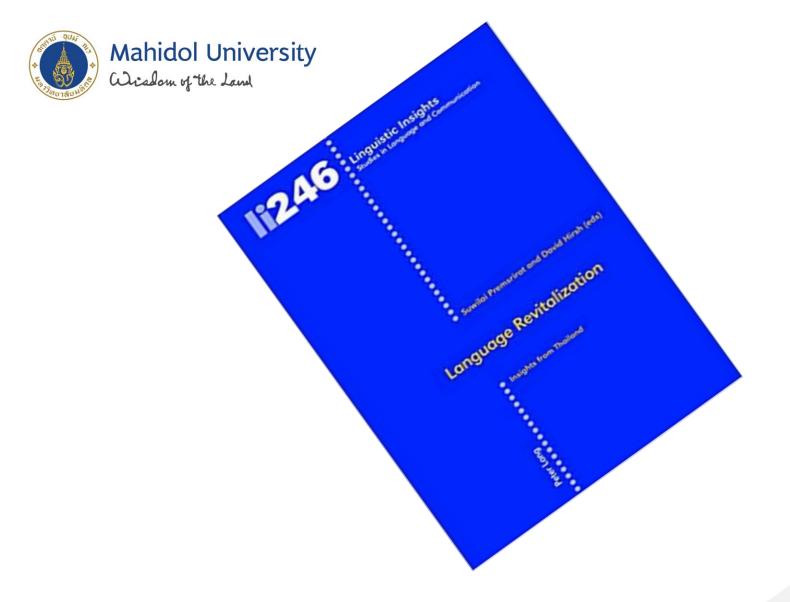




The endangered languages of ethnic groups in Thailand have been documented by native speakers.

Lavua Food at Ban Pa-Pae
Survey and mapping of local food
resources, gathering information and
knowledge about each kind of food, and
making a seasonal food calendar

Young Chong Love Chong Cuisine Reflection/Review of food situation Revision of Chong orthography Documenting Chong Recipes Keeping records of Chong cooks



Premsrirat, S. and Hirsh, D. (Eds.). 2018. Language Revitalization: Insights from Thailand. Bern, Switzerland: Peter Lang.

Lang Revival Team / Research Facilitators.





Thank you very much 😊