Thailand Pwo Karen Linguistic Diversity, Intelligibility and Pedagogical Implications

Audra Phillips

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• Recent multilingual education for minority groups in Thailand
• Often, one curriculum will serve a whole group.
• However, in some cases, groups with the same name cannot use the same materials due to lack of intelligibility.
• The Pwo Karen of Thailand are one case.
• Background

• Survey Results
  ◦ Pwo Karen of Northern Thailand
  ◦ Intelligibility testing between Northern Pwo Karen and West-Central Thailand Pwo Karen

• Grammatical differences

• Conclusion
Tibeto-Burman...Karenic...Pwo Karen

Thailand Pwo Karen

West-Central Thailand Pwo Karen

Tha Song Yang Pwo Karen

Northern Pwo Karen

Lamphun Pwo Karen

Lampang Pwo Karen

Phrae Pwo Karen
• Northern Thailand Pwo Karen (N. Pwo)
  ◦ Originally from the Zwei Kabin hills east of Pa-an
  ◦ Forcibly resettled in N. Thailand by Kawila around 1802
  ◦ Further immigration encouraged by Chiang Mai kingdom

• West Central Thailand Pwo Karen (WCT Pwo)
  ◦ Invited into Central Thailand by King Rama I
  ◦ Served as border guards

• Observation – profound understanding difficulties
• Wordlist comparison: 92% lexical similarity
• Intelligibility testing
  ○ WCT Pwo: Question answers on N. Pwo personal narrative 26% correct
  ○ N. Pwo: Question answers on WCT Pwo personal narrative 25% correct
• WCT Pwo and N. Pwo are not mutually intelligible
• 1st person subject pronouns

• WCT Pwo

\[ j\emptyset \ t^\text{hãi} \ 1\hat{o} \]
1s return_home !
‘I am going home!’

• N. Pwo

\[ t\emptyset \ m\emptyset \ t^\text{hãi} \ 1\hat{o} \]
1s IRR return_home !
‘I am going home!’
• 1st person object pronouns

• WCT Pwo

`taĩkʰê plăi jè tɕʰâ kǐ`
Taokhe tease 1s INTENS INTENS
‘Taokhe really teased me.’

• N. Pwo

`ʔâ tau’ pʰli jê`
Ah! monk beat 1s
‘Ah! The monk beat me.’
• Proximal demonstrative similarities

• WCT Pwo

\[ jə \ mî \ bә \ jo \ lə \]
1s sleep moment this !!
‘I've just slept this moment.’

• N. Pwo

\[ pʰlô \ lə \ wē \ jô \ tai \ kʰû’sũ \]
person one village this walk flee
‘The people of this village had fled.’
• Proximal demonstrative dissimilarities

• N. Pwo

\( t^h\dot{m}\d\ wé\ dē\ ?ā \ p^h\dot{l}\d\ lə\ \wē\ \ddot{r}\i\ tə\ mə\ kō \)

think Ah! person one CLF this ls IRR lure

\( â'\ t^h\ddot{r}\ ?ə\ sī\ ê \)

3 to 3 die for.sure

‘(He) thought, “Ah! This person, I will lure him to his death for sure.”’
• N. Pwo preposition

?ә wә ?әtә’ ә’?ә pʰì tɗ lɪ
3 husband ask 3 exist to place QUES
‘Her husband asked her, “Where is (he)?”’

• N. Pwo adverbial clause introducer

pʰì ?ә tʰzìmŋ tʰə kʰé nɔ ?ә tɪ lɔ çú
PREP 3 think thing season that 3 money one 10.satang
lɪ lɑtʰe’ lɑmè wɛ dɛ xɔ’
this fall disappear EMPH
‘While he was thinking, his money, this 10 satang, fell and completely disappeared.’
- N. Pwo relative clause introducer

\texttt{tə tî lə çú pʰî nə kelá jê nə lâmè}

1s money one 10.satang REL 2s give 1s that disappear

‘My money, 10 satang, that you gave me disappeared.’

- WCT Pwo

  - No \textit{pʰî} preposition
  - No adverbial clause introducer
  - No relative clause introducer
• Before beginning a multilingual project, it is important to ensure intelligibility throughout the group.

• Tools that can be used to investigate intelligibility include:
  ○ Observation
  ○ Sociolinguistic questionnaires
  ○ Word list comparison
  ○ Intelligibility testing