A Comparison of Classifier Usage among Three Generations in Lao Ubon

การเปรียบเทียบการใช้คำลักษณนามของคนสามระดับอายุในภาษาลาวอุบล

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Abstract

This paper aims to study classifier usages which are varied by the age of the speakers of Lao Ubon, a Northeastern Thai dialect spoken in Ubon Ratchathani Province (UB), Thailand. The informants are divided into three generations, G1, G2, G3 representing the old, middle aged, and young generation respectively. The classifier usages have been categorized into two types, the single and combined types. Based on the single type of classifier used by the three generations, it is found that the number of specific classifiers used by G1 speakers or the old generation is the most and the number of specific classifiers used has decreased in G2 and G3 respectively.

This finding supports the hypothesis that the number of specific classifiers used in the society has decreased because the younger generation tends to use some classifiers more broadly, such as general classifiers and repeater classifiers because it is easier than using specific ones. The older generation tends to use original classifiers rather than the Central Thai classifiers. The G1 speakers use specific classifiers with most nouns when compared to the other generations. In contrast with the old generation, the younger generation uses repeaters and general classifiers with many nouns, so specific classifiers are used less by G3 speakers.

On the other hand, when the combined types of classifiers are considered, the number of specific classifiers used by G3 has increased significantly due to the fact that G3 speakers use all types of classifiers, that is, UB specific classifiers, specific classifiers borrowed from Central Thai as well as new classifiers created for some nouns. G3 speakers have been exposed to Central Thai mostly by media such as television and schools where Central Thai is used as a medium of instruction and have added Central Thai classifiers to their classifier system.

Classifiers used among three generations in UB are compared with other three sub-dialects; Nakhon Ratchasima sub-dialect (NR), Khonkaen sub-dialect (KK) and Lao. There are twenty classifiers which appear with the same nouns in all four sub-dialects so these classifiers are compared. The classifiers used in NR seem to differ from the other three sub-dialects. They are similar to those used in Central Thai both in form and meaning. On the other hand, since UB borders Laos, the classifiers used in UB are closely related to those used in Laos.

Keywords: comparison, classifier, Lao, Ubon Ratchathani province

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บทคัดย่อ

บทความนี้เป็นการศึกษาการใช้คำลักษณนามที่แตกต่างกันไปตามอายุของผู้พูดภาษาลาวอุบลซึ่งเป็นภาษาถิ่นตะวันออกเฉียงเหนือของประเทศไทย พูดในจังหวัดอุบลราชธานี ประเทศไทย โดยแบ่งผู้บอกภาษาออกเป็นสามระดับอายุ ได้แก่ ระดับอายุมาก อายุปานกลาง และอายุน้อย ผลการศึกษาได้แบ่งการใช้คำลักษณนามออกเป็นสองแบบคือ แบบการใช้คำลักษณนามเดี่ยว และแบบการใช้คำลักษณนามร่วม จากการพิจารณาแบบการใช้คำลักษณนามเดี่ยว พบว่าผู้พูดที่มีระดับอายุมากใช้คำลักษณนามเฉพาะมากที่สุด และผู้พูดที่มีระดับอายุปานกลางและอายุน้อยใช้คำลักษณนามเฉพาะน้อยลงตามลำดับ

ผลการศึกษาสนับสนุนสมมติฐานที่ว่า จำนวนคำลักษณนามเฉพาะจะลดลงเพราะผู้พูดที่มีระดับอายุน้อยมีแนวโน้มที่จะใช้คำลักษณนามในลักษณะกว้าง เช่น ใช้คำลักษณนามทั่วไป และใช้คำลักษณนามซ้ำคำนามเนื่องจากง่ายกว่าการใช้คำลักษณนามเฉพาะ ผู้พูดที่มีระดับอายุมากมีแนวโน้มที่จะใช้คำลักษณนามดั้งเดิมมากกว่าใช้คำลักษณนามภาษาไทยกลาง และจะใช้คำลักษณนามเฉพาะกับคำนามส่วนมากเมื่อเปรียบเทียบกับผู้พูดที่มีระดับอายุน้อยกว่า ในทางกลับกัน ผู้พูดที่มีอายุน้อยจะใช้คำลักษณนามซ้ำคำนามและคำลักษณนามทั่วไปกับคำนามจำนวนมาก และใช้คำลักษณนามเฉพาะน้อยลง

ในทางตรงข้าม หากพิจารณาแบบการใช้คำลักษณนามร่วมจะพบว่า คำลักษณนามเฉพาะที่ผู้พูดระดับอายุน้อยใช้จะมีจำนวนเพิ่มขึ้นเนื่องจากผู้พูดเหล่านี้ใช้คำลักษณนามทุกประเภท กล่าวคือทั้งคำลักษณนามเฉพาะของภาษาลาวอุบล คำลักษณนามเฉพาะที่ยืมมาจากภาษาไทยกลาง และคำลักษณนามใหม่ที่สร้างขึ้นมาสำหรับคำนามบางคำ ผู้พูดที่มีระดับอายุน้อยจะมีการสัมผัสกับภาษาไทยกลางมาก เช่น จากวิทยุ โทรทัศน์ โรงเรียนซึ่งใช้ภาษาไทยกลางเป็นภาษาในการเรียนการสอน ทำให้เพิ่มคำลักษณนามของภาษาไทยกลางเข้าไปในระบบคำลักษณนาม

คำลักษณนามที่ใช้โดยผู้พูดสามระดับอายุได้นำมาเปรียบเทียบกับคำลักษณนามในภาษาถิ่นอื่นๆ อีกสามถิ่น ได้แก่ ภาษาถิ่นนครราชสีมา ภาษาถิ่นขอนแก่น และภาษาลาว คำลักษณนามที่ใช้กับคำนามเหมือนกันในภาษาทั้งสี่มีจำนวนทั้งหมด 20 คำที่สามารถนำมาเปรียบเทียบกันได้ คำลักษณนามในภาษาถิ่นนครราชสีมาแตกต่างจากภาษาถิ่นอื่นเนื่องจากมีความคล้ายกับภาษาไทยกลางทั้งรูปคำและความหมาย ในทางตรงกันข้าม เนื่องจากจังหวัดอุบลราชธานีมีอาณาเขตติดกับประเทศลาวจึงมีการใช้คำลักษณนามที่ใกล้เคียงกับภาษาลาว

คำสำคัญ: การเปรียบเทียบ, คำลักษณนาม, ภาษาลาว, จังหวัดอุบลราชธานี

1. Introduction

1.1 Rationale

A classifier is a word that is used after ordinal numbers in order to enumerate the nouns. Nouns that share the same semantic components are classed with the same classifier. Some nouns may be classified by more than one classifier depending on various semantic components of the nouns. The numeral classification is regarded as an area linguistic feature in Southeast Asia, East Asia, and the Pacific.

Classifier usage differs from one place to another depending on the society, culture, and world view of the speakers. Previous studies have found that classifier usage in each place is different and varies with the age and occupation of the speaker. Since there is no study on classifier usage varied by ages in Northeastern Thai dialects, this study[1] chooses a Northeastern Thai dialect spoken in Ubon Ratchathani Province (UB) as a representative dialect to study classifiers used by speakers of different age groups in order to find out whether age is a social variable which causes a variation of classifier usage. It is hypothesized that the total number of specific classifiers used in society has decreased because the younger generation tends to use some classifiers more broadly, especially general classifiers and repeater classifiers which are easier to use than specific classifiers.

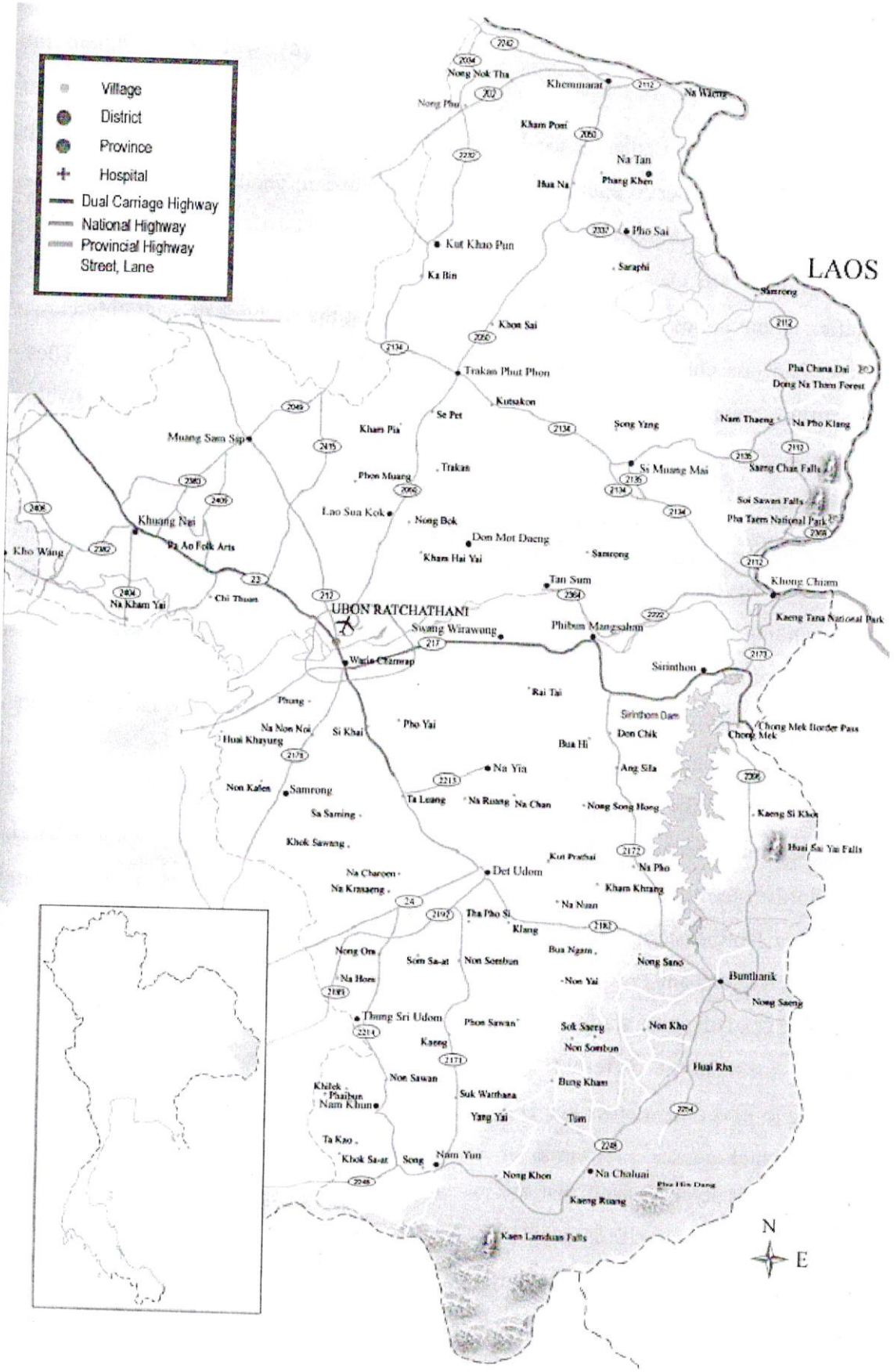
This study will also compare the classifiers used in Ubon Ratchathani Province with classifiers found in other parts of Northeastern Thailand and Laos, which have been studied by other researchers.

There are some limitations to this study. First the study deals with only classifiers which occur after numbers. These numeral classifiers are used by twelve speakers in Ban Thabo, Muang district, Ubon Ratchathani Province. Second, classifiers which are used with verbs such as /ti:^{33}/ in the sentence /ti:^{33}sɔ:ŋ^{13} tʰi:^{53}/ 'hit two times' are excluded.

1.2 Ubon Ratchathani Province and Northeastern Thai Sub-Dialects

Ubon Ratchathani Province is located in the northeastern part of Thailand, close to Laos as shown in Map 1. It borders Amnatcharoen Province in the north, Bantat Mountain in the south, Sisaket Province and Yasothon Province in the west, and the Mae Khong River in the east.

According to Raluek (ระลึก 2546), before Ubon Ratchathani Province was established, the region and nearby areas were home to many groups of people including people from Laos. During his reign, King Rama I planned to establish cities in order to bring together people who lived far apart. The monarch proclaimed that he would install as the governor the person who could



Map 1 *Location of Ubon Ratchathani Province*

Source: http://www.thailandmaps.net/ubonratchathani/ubonratchathani.html

assemble the most people. In 1786 AD, Phra Pathumsurarat led the people from Laos and settled at Tambon Jaramae which currently is called Ban Thabo, Amphoe Muang, Ubon Ratchathani Province.

The Northeastern Thai dialect is spoken in the Northeastern region of Thailand which covers 19 provinces. It belongs to the Lao Branch of Southwestern Tai (Brown 1965). It is generally called "Lao Isan" or simply "Lao". The dialect is more closely related to the Lao language spoken in Laos than to Standard Thai as, historically, the people living in the Northeastern region of Thailand migrated from Laos. Since the Northeastern Thai dialect is spoken by the people in the Northeast, which covers a huge area, the dialect spoken in each province is referred to as a sub-dialect and generally called Lao followed by the place where it is spoken such as "Lao Ubon" (dialect spoken in Ubon Ratchathani Province and "Lao Khonkaen" (dialect spoken in Khonkaen Province).

2. Methodology

2.1 Site Selection

People who are now residing in Jaramae canal have migrated from different places including Laos. Ban Thabo is one of the villages situated on the banks of the canal. People of Ban Thabo were chosen to represent Ubon Ratchathani people because they or their ancestors have been living in Ubon Ratchathani Province for a long time. Few people have moved in so language usage in the village has been little influenced by other dialects. Therefore, the people in this village were ideal informants.

2.2 Informant Selection

The informants are divided into three generations:

a. The first generation (G1), representing the older people, consists of informants who are 60-65 years old.

b. The second generation (G2), representing the middle aged people, consists of informants who are 35-40 years old.

c. The third generation (G3), representing the younger generation, consists of informants who are between 10-15 years old.

The interval between each generation is 20 years so that the differences in classifier usage are noticeable.

All the informants must have finished Grade (Prathom) 6 which is the highest level of elementary school. They have not studied beyond this level because with higher education the informants may have been influenced by the use of classifiers in Central Thai dialect. They must also have been born in Ubon Ratchathani Province and been living in Ban Thabo ever since. Due to

the qualification requirements of the informants of this study, there are four qualified informants in each generation. The total number of informants in all three generations is twelve. All the informants are female as they seem to be more aware of classifier usage than male informants.

2.3 Data Collection

a. Nouns that are used in daily life have been gathered from Northeastern Thai dialect dictionaries (Preecha ปรีชา, 2532; and Somdejphramaha Veravong สมเด็จพระมหาวีรวงศ์, 2515) to make sure that the nouns were varied so that the classifiers used with these nouns could be elicited.

b. The nouns are grouped into various semantic fields to facilitate interviews.

c. These nouns are used in interviews with the informants to discover which classifiers they use with these nouns.[2] The UB dialect is used for the interview. The informants are asked to identify appropriate classifiers in the frame "noun + number +.....".

2.4 Data Analysis

2.4.1 Classification of Entities

The entities which are expressed by nouns and shared by the same classifier are put into the same class. The classification of entities into different semantic domains is adapted from the classification of Adams and Conklin (1973), Denny (1976) and Allen (1977) as diagramed below.

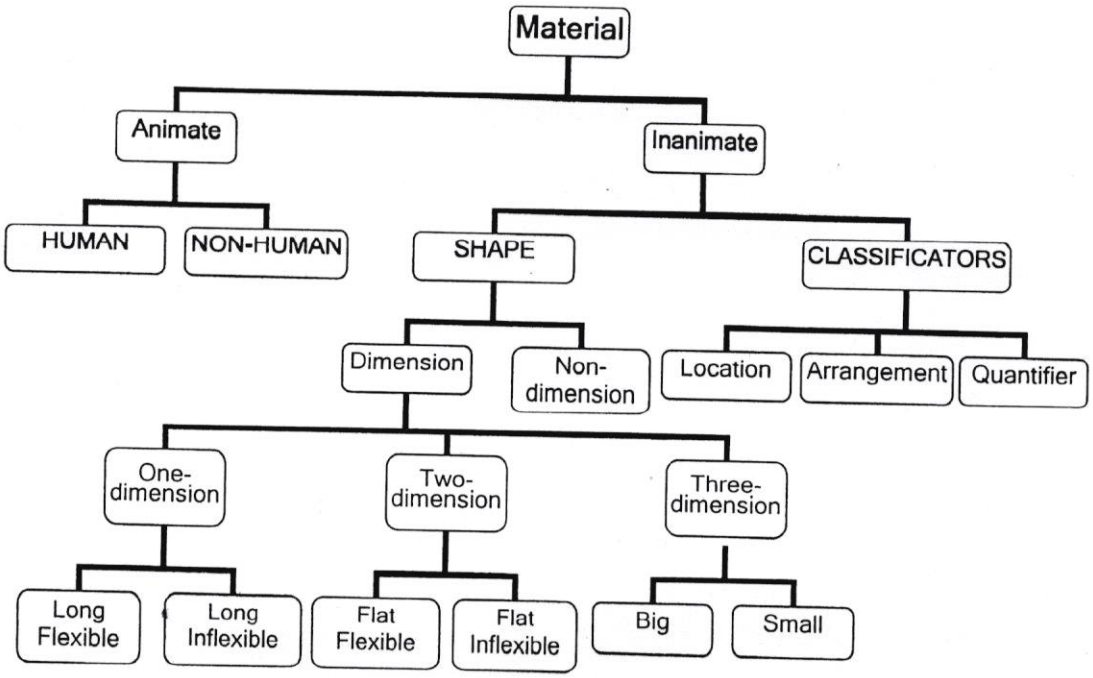


Diagram 1 *Categories of Entities Based on Their Semantic Components*

The first distinction of semantic domain is animate versus inanimate. Animates are divided into non-human and human. Inanimate is further subcategorized into shape/form and classificators. The shape/form classifiers have two subcategories, dimensional subcategory and non-dimensional subcategory. The dimensional subcategory consists of long (one-dimensionality), flat (two-dimensionality) and round (three-dimensionality) which further categorized by consistency (flexible, hard, non-discrete) and size (big and small). The non-dimensional subcategory classifies the objects with a prominent curved exterior or a hollow interior. The classificators are subcategorized into three groups, that is, location, arrangement (pleat, fold, twist, coil, loop, curl etc.), and quantifier (measure, volume, weight, time).

2.4.2 Identification of UB Sub-Dialect and Central Thai

Since UB sub-dialect and Central Thai are members of the same language group, i.e., Southwestern Tai, they share a large number of cognates. Therefore, a phonological variation is used as a criterion to identify the two dialects. The phonological variation can be either consonant, vowel, or tonal variation such as /to:^{33}/ (UB) and /tua^{33}/ (Central Thai). Other classifiers which are different in forms can be easily distinguished as exemplified in Table 1.

2.4.3 Categorization of Classifier Usages

The entities which share the same semantic features as presented in section 2.4.1 are classified with the same classifiers. Some entities may be classified with only one classifier. This kind of classifier usage is categorized as a single type of classifier. Some entities may possess a number of semantic features. Therefore, they may be classified with more than one classifier depending on the dominant semantic features perceived by speakers. Or, if the speakers cannot associate the semantic components of the entities with any classifiers, they may assign a general

Table 1 *Different Forms of Classifiers in UB Sub-dialect and Central Thai*

	UB sub-dialect	Central Thai
Classifier for long implements	/duəŋ^{33}/	/lem^{42}/
Classifier for fishing nets, mosquito nets	/da:ŋ^{33}/	/laŋ^{25}/, /pa:k^{22}/
Classifier for matchboxes	/kap^{13}/	/klɔ:ŋ^{22}/
Classifier for spoons	/ka:n^{42}/	/k^{h}an^{33}/
Classifier for tree branches	/ŋa:^{44}/	/kiŋ^{22}/
Classifier for places	/bɔ:n^{44}, mɔŋ^{22}/	/t^{h}i:^{42}/, repeaters

classifier or a repeater to those entities. The usage of several classifiers with one entity is called a combined type of classifiers.

3. Findings

3.1 Comparison of Classifiers Used among Three Generations in Ubon Ratchathani Province

Jones (1970:2) states that there are three types of classifiers in languages such as Thai and Burmese. The first type is the defining type. It consists of the bound morphemes that classify nouns into one of a limited number of categories. The classification is sometimes shape-specific but often arbitrary. The use of these morphemes is obligatory. The second type consists of nouns which can be used as their own classifiers. The second type of classifiers is usually referred to as a repeater classifier. The last type consists of nouns which measure quantity, time, and distance. The nouns referring to time or distance may occur in constructions without an additional noun. Those referring to quantities may occur in construction with any measured noun.

Besides the types of classifiers mentioned above, many languages have a general classifier for items which are not physically classified. As pointed out by Barz and Diller (1985: 173), "A 'general classifier' is used in some languages when a specific one is deemed inapplicable." The general classifier may be a genuine general classifier or derived from a shape/form classifier. Allen (1977: 295) points out that "many languages have a classifier for round or saliently three-dimensional objects." The 'round' classifier has been extended to class a large number of objects and thus become a general classifier.

There are 88 classifiers which are found in UB sub-dialect; forty-eight specific classifiers (defining type), thirty-nine repeaters, and one general classifier. Tables 2 and 4 show the usage of classifiers with 178 nouns which are used in interviews with the informants to find out the classifiers they use with those nouns.

The speakers of all three generations may use a single type of classifier with a noun or combined types of classifiers as discussed below.

3.1.1 The Use of Single Type of Classifiers among Three Generations

In the single type of classifier, the number of specific classifiers used by G1 speakers is the most and decreases in G2 and G3 respectively as seen in Table 2. This shows that the older generation has preserved the specific classifiers more than other generations. G1 speakers or the older generation preserve the use of original classifiers more than other generations. They are rarely influenced by the use of classi-

Table 2 *The Single Type of Classifiers Used in Three Generations*

Single types of classifier	Frequency of classifiers used in each generation		
	G3	G2	G1
1. Specific classifier (SPF CLS)	64	89	101
2. Repeater classifier (RPT CLS)	10	17	15
3. General classifier (GNR CLS)	6	1	5
Total	80	107	121

fiers from Central Thai and rarely create new classifiers to use with new nouns. When encountering new entities they will try to relate the semantic components of the entities with the existing classifiers and apply an appropriate classifier to those entities. The classifier which has been applied by G1 speakers to a large number of entities and becomes generalized is the classifier /nuəy^{44}/ which originally classes round, annular and curved objects.

Speakers of all generations assign a single type of classifier to a single noun because of the prominent feature of the noun. Speakers can easily recognize this distinguished feature of the noun and decide what classifier they should use with this noun. So, there are no combined types of classifiers. For example, the dominant feature of the nouns /luət^{42}na:m^{13}/ 'wire' and /p^{h}om^{13}/ 'hair' is 'long',. so these nouns are used with the classifier /sen^{22}/ by speakers of all three generations. The classifiers which are used by speakers of all generations are listed in Table 3.

Table 3 *Classifiers and Entities Used by the Speakers of All Three Generations*

Classifiers	Entities used with classifiers
1. Specific Classifiers	
Animate Human	
/k^{h}on^{53}/	/dek^{13}nɔ:y^{42}/ 'child', /tam^{33}luət^{22}/ 'policeman', /nak^{44}hiən^{53}/ 'student'
/ʔoŋ^{33}/	/ka^{13}sat^{13}/ 'king', /p^{h}aʔ^{44}/ 'monk'
Animate Non-human	
/to:^{33}/	/kop^{13}/ 'frog', /k^{h}uəy^{53}/ 'buffalo', /pa:^{33}/ 'fish'
Inanimate	
One dimension	
/sen^{22}/	/luət^{42}na:m^{13}/ 'wire', /phom^{13}/ 'hair', /siək^{53}/ 'rope', /sɔy^{22}/ 'necklace'

Table 3 *(continue)*

Classifiers	Entities used with classifiers
/sa:y^{13}/	/t^{h}a^{13}non^{13}/ 'road', /mæ:^{44}na:m^{42}/ 'river', /sa^{13}p^{h}a:n^{53}/ 'bridge'
/duəŋ^{33}/	/k^{h}em^{13}/ 'pin', /mi:t^{42}/ 'knife'
/da:m^{42}/	/pa:k^{22}ka:^{33}/ 'pen', /din^{33}sɔ:^{13}/ 'pencil', /p^{h}a:^{42}/ 'jungle knife'
/lam^{53}/	/k^{h}ɨəŋ^{44}bin^{33}/ 'plane', /lɨə^{53}/ 'boat'
Two dimension	
/da:ŋ^{33}/	/ta^{13}k^{h}a:y^{44}/ 'net', /hæ:^{13}/ 'fishing net'
/p^{h}ɨ:n^{13}/	/p^{h}a^{22}hom^{44}/ 'blanket', /p^{h}a^{22}set^{44}to:^{33}/ 'towel'
/bay^{33}/	/bæŋ^{42}/ 'banknote', /san^{13}ɲa:^{53}/ 'contract', /tuə^{13}/ 'ticket', /muək^{22}/ 'hat', /ka^{13}sɔ:p^{22}/ 'gunny bag'
/ba:n^{33}/	/wɛn^{44}, ka^{13}cok^{13}/ 'mirror', /pa^{13}tu:^{33}/ 'door', /na:^{22}ta:ŋ^{44}/ 'window'
Three dimension	
/huə^{13}/	/k^{h}iŋ^{13}/ 'ginger', /k^{h}a:^{44}/ 'galangal', /man^{53}/ 'yam bean' /huə^{13}pi:^{33}/ 'banana blossom', /ka^{13}lam^{44}/ 'cabbage', /hɔ:m^{13}/ 'onion'
/tum^{44}/	/fay^{13}/ 'mole'
/kɔ:n^{42}/	/sa^{13}bu:^{44}/ 'soap', /kɔ:n^{42}hin^{13}/ 'rock'
/duəŋ^{33}/	/ta^{13}wen^{53}/ 'the sun', /dɨən^{33}, ʔi:^{33}kə:ŋ^{42}/ 'the moon'
/met^{44}/	/lu:k^{42}ʔom^{33}/ 'candy', /ka^{13}dum^{33}/ 'button' /ya:^{53}met^{44}/ 'pill', /met^{44}k^{h}aw^{22}/ 'rice crop'
/lu:k^{42}/	/bak^{13}si^{44}da:^{33}/ 'guava', /k^{h}aw^{13}/ 'mountain', /kun^{33}cæ:^{33}/ 'key'
/khɨəŋ^{44}/	/wit^{44}t^{h}a^{44}yuʔ^{44}/ 'radio'
/kap^{13}/	/kɔ:ŋ^{44}may^{42}k^{h}i:t^{22}/ 'match box'
Non-dimension	
/woŋ^{53}/	/wæ:n^{13}/ 'ring', /kam^{33}lay^{53}/ 'bracelet'
Location	
/laŋ^{13}/	/ hɨən ^{53}/ 'house'
/mɔŋ^{22}/	/suən^{13}/ 'garden', /ta^{13}la:t^{22}/ 'market'
Arrangement	
/muən^{42}/	/the:p^{42}/ 'tape'
Collective	
/p^{h}uəŋ^{53}/	/p^{h}uəŋ^{53}li:t^{22}/ 'wreath'
/t^{h}æ:w^{13}/	/t^{h}æ:w^{13}nak^{44}liən^{53}/ 'a row of student'
2. Repeaters	
/lɔ:t^{22}/	/lɔ:t^{22}/ 'straw'
/saw^{13}/	/saw^{13}/ 'pole'
/p^{h}u:^{53}/	/p^{h}u:^{53}/ 'hill'
/taw^{42}/	/taw^{42}nom^{53}/ 'breast'
/t^{h}aŋ^{13}/	/t^{h}aŋ^{13}/ 'pail'
/ha:n^{42}/	/ha:n^{42}/ 'shop'
/la:w^{42}/	/la:w^{42}kay^{44}/ 'chicken pen'
/lo:ŋ^{53} /	/lo:ŋ^{53}naŋ^{13}/ 'cinema', /lo:ŋ^{53}liən^{53}/ 'school'
/khɔ:k^{42}/	/k^{h}ɔ:k^{42}mu:^{13}/ 'pigsty'
/wat^{44}/	/wat^{44}/ 'temple'

Table 3 *(continue)*

Classifiers	Entities used with classifiers
3. General classifier	
/ʔan^{33}/	/k^{h}ay^{13}k^{h}uəŋ^{53}/ 'screw driver', /ʔuən^{33}/ 'seine', /ka^{13}dum^{33}/ 'button', /ka^{13}paw^{13}/ 'bag', /k^{h}iəŋ^{13}/ 'cutting board', /ta^{13}kiəŋ^{33}/ 'lamp', /sɔ:y^{22}k^{h}ɔ:^{53}/ 'necklace', /pi:^{44}/ 'flute', /siw^{13}/ 'pimple', /k^{h}ɔ:n^{42}/ 'hammer', /wi:^{13}/ 'comb', /na:m^{13}/ 'thorn' /na:^{53}li^{44}ka:^{33}/ 'watch', /may^{42}khi:t^{22}/ 'match'

3.1.2 The Use of Combined Type of Classifiers among Three Generations

The combined types of classifier show that the younger generations use more than one type of classifier with a noun. The combined types of classifiers are found in G3 speakers the most and decrease in G2 and G1 respectively as seen in Table 4. In combined types of classifiers, speakers of all three generations use specific classifiers the most. Following specific classifiers are general classifiers and repeater classifiers respectively.

The Combined types of classifiers can be divided into two major groups based on the number of classifiers:

(1) Speakers use two classifiers with the same noun. Based on the types of classifiers, these combined classifiers are further divided into four groups as follows:

a) Speakers use two specific classifiers with the same noun. For example the classifier /bay^{33}/ and classifier /lu:k^{42}/ are used with the noun /k^{h}ay^{44}/ 'egg'.

b) Speakers use a specific classifier and a repeater classifier with a noun. For

Table 4 *The Combined Types of Classifiers Used in Three Generations*

Combined types of classifier	Frequency of classifiers used in each generation		
	G3	G2	G1
4. SPF CLS + SPF CLS	23	15	14
5. SPF CLS + RPT CLS	10	9	4
6. SPF CLS + GNR CLS	28	14	10
7. RPT CLS + GNR CLS	3	1	3
8. SPF CLS + SPF CLS + GNR CLS	7	5	1
9. SPF CLS + SPF CLS + RPT CLS	3	2	-
10. SPF CLS + RPT CLS + GNR CLS	1	-	-
Total	75	46	32

example, the classifiers /sa:y^{13}/ and /k^{h}ɔ:ŋ^{53}/ are used with the noun /k^{h}ɔ:ŋ^{53}/ 'canal'.

c) Speakers use a specific classifier and a general classifier with a noun. For example, the classifiers /bay^{33}/ and /ʔan^{33}/ are used with the noun /ka^{13}paw^{13}/ 'bag'.

d) Speakers use a repeater and a general classifier with a noun. For example, the classifiers /pi:p^{44}/ and /ʔan^{33}/ are used with the noun /pi:p^{44}/ 'kerosene can'.

(2) Speakers use three classifiers with the same noun. Based on the types of classifiers, these combined classifiers are further divided into three groups as follows:

a) Speakers use two specific classifiers and a repeater classifier with a noun such as /bɔ:n^{44}/, /mɔŋ^{22}/ and /wat^{44}/ for the noun /wat^{44}/ 'temple'.

b) Speakers use two specific classifiers and a general classifier with a noun such as the classifiers /dɔ:k^{22}/, /lem^{22}/ and /ʔan^{33}/ used for the noun /t^{h}u:p^{42}/ 'joss stick'.

c) Speakers use a specific, a repeater and a general classifier with a noun such as /bay^{33}/, /ca:n^{33}/ and /ʔan^{33}/ for the noun /ca:n^{33}/ 'dish'.

3.1.3 The Causes of the Combined Type Usage

Three causes of the combined types of classifier usage are as follows:

1) The components of the nouns used with classifiers share some semantic features. For example, /t^{h}æ:ŋ^{44}/ and /t^{h}ɔ:n^{44}/ are classifiers used with nouns having a long component but /t^{h}ɔ:n^{44}/ is used with sectioned objects. For some speakers the section component is not distinguished so they use both classifiers with nouns having long components.

2) The combined types of classifiers are caused by the influence of classifier use in Central Thai. Some classifiers are borrowed from Central Thai by the speakers in UB. For example, some informants, especially from the younger generation, use the Central Thai classifiers /bay^{33}/ /lu:k^{42}/, and /fɔ:ŋ^{53}/ for the noun /k^{h}ay^{44}/ 'egg' instead of the original UB classifier /nuəy^{33}/.

3) The combined types of classifiers are caused by different perceptions of the speakers towards objects. For example, the speakers use both classifiers /p^{h}uəŋ^{53}/ and /sa:y^{13}/ for the noun /pin^{44}to:^{33}/ 'tiffin carrier'[3]. The informants who use /p^{h}uəŋ^{53}/ perceive the entire shape of the /pin^{44}to:^{33}/ 'tiffin carrier' as a bunch of fruit so they use /p^{h}uəŋ^{53}/ which is a classifier for a bunch of fruit and its nominal meaning is 'bunch'. On the other hand, those who use /sa:y^{13}/ view the carrier part as prominent so the speakers use /sa:y^{13}/ which is used for long objects including tiffin carriers.

Moreover, it is noticeable that speakers use the general classifier /ʔan^{33}/

with numerous nouns including new nouns. If the speakers are unable to match the specific classifiers with nouns, they will replace them with the general classifier /ʔan^{33}/. Moreover, the speakers tend to use the general classifier /ʔan^{33}/ with newly introduced items such as /sa^{13}no:t^{22}/ 'land title deed' and /bæŋ^{53}/ 'a banknote'.

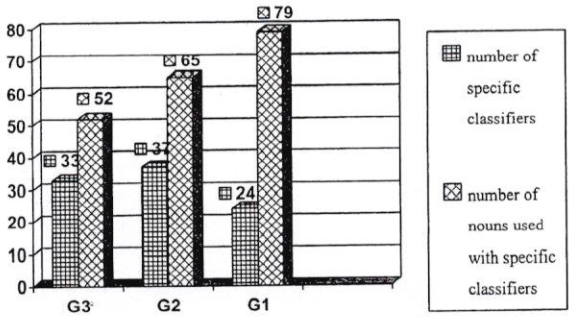
3.1.4 The Total Usage of Single Type and Combined Types of Classifiers

Combining the single type of classifiers with combined types of classifiers, it has been found that the number of classi-fiers found in G3 is the most because G3 speakers use a lot of repeater classifiers and general classifiers with numerous nouns. The combination of the single type of classifiers and combined types of classifiers yields a different result from section 3.1.1 as discussed below.

(a) Specific classifiers

Including all types of classifiers, the number of specific classifiers used by G2 is the highest as illustrated in Graph 1. This may be because G2 speakers use, not only specific classifiers in Ubon Ratchathani sub-dialect, but also specific classifiers from Central Thai. The different usages between G2 and G1 speakers suggest that both new and original classifiers are used by G2 speakers. Classifiers used in G2 are influenced by Central Thai more than those used in G1 speakers, e.g., G2 speakers use the classifier /bay^{33}/ with a glass and a dish as in Central Thai whereas G1 speakers use the classifier /nuəy^{44}/, which is extended from round shaped objects, with those nouns.

The specific classifiers are used least by G1 speakers as Central Thai classifiers are rarely added to their classifier system. However, G1 speakers use the specific classifilers with a large number of nouns. This indicates that G1 speakers relate the specific classifiers with which they are familiar, with other nouns by recognizing the semantic components of the nouns.

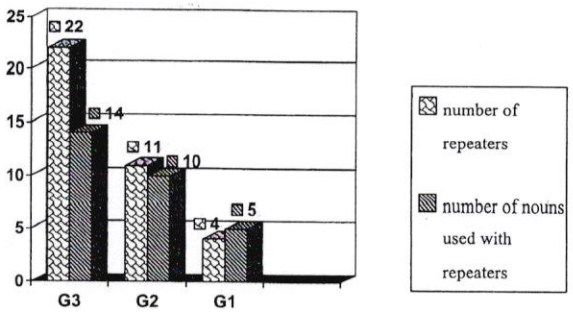


Graph 1 *The Percentage of Specific Classifiers Used with Nouns in Each Generation*

(b) Repeater classifiers

Graph 2 presents the repeaters and the nouns used by each generation. Repeaters are used most by G3 speakers and less by G2 and G1 speakers respectively. The number of repeaters used by G3 and G2 speakers is more than the number of nouns used with repeaters because G3 and G2 speakers use repeaters both from Central

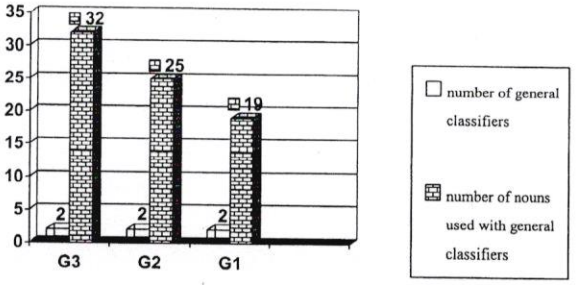
Thai and UB sub-dialect. For example G3 speakers use the Central Thai repeater /cap^{13}/ and the UB classifier /tiw^{42}/ with /cap^{13}k^{h}a:w^{22}pun^{42}/ 'a handful of boiled rice flour in noodle form'. The repeaters used by G1 speakers are less than the nouns used with the repeaters because the repeaters are extended to be used with other nouns sharing the same semantic components. For example, the partial repeater /ton^{42}/ is used with the noun /ton^{42}may^{42}/ 'tree', and /ton^{42}/ is extended to be used with /k^{h}ɔ:n^{13}/ 'log' which shares long and inflexible components as trees.



Graph 2 *The Percentage of Repeaters Used with Nouns in Each Generation*

(c) General classifiers

Graph 3 shows the use of the general classifiers /ʔan^{33}/ and the animal classifier /to:^{33}/ which has been generalized and used with newly introduced items. They are used with nouns mostly by G3 speakers and less so by G2 and G1 respectively. It is noticeable that the use of general classifiers among three generations affects the use of specific classifiers. The more the speakers use general classifiers, the less they use specific classifiers.



Graph 3 *The Percentage of General Classifiers Used with Nouns in Each Generation*

3.2 Comparison of Classifiers Used in UB Sub-Dialect and Other Sub-Dialects

This section presents a comparison of classifier usage in Ubon Ratchathani sub-dialect (UB), Nakhon Ratchasima sub-dialect (NR), Khonkaen sub-dialect (KK) and Lao language. The information on classifier usage in the last three locations is from previous studies by Naruemon (นฤมล 2528), Arunee (อะรุณี 2529) and Somsonge (2000) respectively. The UB classifiers which are compared with other sub-dialects are used by speakers of all three generations.

As the nouns or wordlists which were used in each study differ, the comparison of classifier use in the four sub-dialects can only apply to those nouns appearing in all four studies. This section presents the classifiers which are used with the same nouns.

Table 5 *The Twenty Classifiers Used in All Aub-Dialects*[4]

No.	Classifiers	Samples of entities used with classifiers
1.	/ʔoŋ^{33}/	sacred entities such as a king, a monk, a Buddha image
2.	/k^{h}on^{53}/	human beings such as a child, a policeman
3.	/sa:y^{13}/	river
4.	/sen^{22}/	hair, rope, necklace, belt
5.	/ton^{42}/	tree
6.	/ka^{13}bɔ:k^{22}/	gun
7.	/da:ŋ ^{33}/	mosquito net
8.	/p^{h}ɨ:n^{13}/	mat, towel
9.	/hua^{13}/	cabbage
10.	/nuəy^{44}/	fruit
11.	/met^{44}/	grain, seed, button
12.	/bay^{33}/	dish
13.	/k^{h}an^{53}/	car
14.	/dɔ:k^{22}/	flower, flower-like objects
15.	/laŋ^{13}/	house
16.	/wi:^{13}/	a bunch of banana
17.	/to:^{33}/ (UB, KK, Lao) /tuə^{33}/ (NK)	animals
18.	/do:n^{42}/ (UB, NK, Lao) /dun^{42}/ (KK)	firewood
19.	/t^{h}uŋ^{13}/ (UB, KK, NK) /t^{h}oŋ^{24}/ (Lao)	bag
20	/p^{h}uəŋ^{53}/ (UB, KK, NK) /p^{h}uə^{34}/ (Lao)	bunch of flowers

There are twenty classifiers which are used with the same nouns in all four sub-dialects. Sixteen classifiers are similar, both in form and meaning in all sub-dialects, and the other four classifiers have the same meaning but their forms or pronunciations differ in all sub-dialects. The twenty classifiers which are used in all four places are used with the same entities as listed in Table 5.

Classified by their semantic components, these twenty classifiers will be discussed in detail below.

3.2.1 Animacy

The classifiers used for animate objects in the four dialects are almost the same. /k^{h}on^{53}/ is a classifier for humans. UB and KK sub-dialects mainly use this classifier for all humans whereas NR sub-dialect also has classifiers deriving from occupation terms such as /mɔ:^{13}/ for 'doctor', /k^{h}u:^{53}/ for 'teacher'. In addition to /k^{h}on^{53}/, Lao also use partial repeaters such as /p^{h}u:^{22}/ for /p^{h}u:^{22}ŋiŋ^{24}/ 'woman' and /na:y^{34}/ for /na:y^{34}tam^{21}luət^{42}/.

/to:^{33}/ is used with all kinds of animals in all four sub-dialects. It has the nominal meaning 'body'. The NR sub-dialect uses this classifier with different form, i.e., /tuə^{33}/ which is borrowed from Central Thai. In the same way as Central Thai, /to:^{33}/ has undergone a metaphorical extension to be used with objects perceived as having limbs like animals, such as tables, chairs. At a later stage, this classifier is further extended to be used with newly-introduced items such as televisions or radios.

/ʔoŋ^{33}/ is used by speakers of all four sub-dialects with entities, both animate and inanimate, that are considered sacred or having high status, such as monks and Buddha images.

3.2.2 One-dimension

/sa:y^{13}/ and /sen^{22}/ are used with long and flexible objects. In all four sub-dialects, the use of these two classifiers does not overlap when used with some entities. For example /sa:y^{13}/ is used with /mæ:^{44}na:m^{42}/ 'river' and /sen^{22}/ is used with /p^{h}om^{13}/ 'hair', /sɨək^{42}/ 'rope', /luət^{42}na:m^{13}/ 'wire', /sɔ:y^{22}/ 'necklace' and /k^{h}em^{13}k^{h}at^{13}/ 'belt'. This may be because these entities posses dominant semantic features which are easily identified. On the other hand, the classifiers /sa:y^{13}/ and /sen^{22}/ are interchangeable in all four sub-dialects when they are used with entities such as /t^{h}a^{13}non^{13}/ 'road'. The combined type of classifiers is found when the speakers have a different perception of entities. As exemplified in section 3.1.3, when the carrier of tiffin is perceived as dominant, the long classifier /sa:y^{13}/ is used. And when the tiffin carrier is viewed as a stack, the classifier /p^{h}uəŋ^{53}/ 'bunch of fruit' is used.

/da:m^{42}/ and /duəŋ^{33}/ are used for long tools with a shaped edge or holder. These two classifiers are interchangeable in UB and Lao while NR speakers use only /lem^{44}/ and KK speakers use only /duəŋ^{33}/.

/lem^{44}/ is used for long and sharp-edged objects /k^{h}iəw^{53}/ 'sickle' in North-eastern sub-dialects whereas Lao uses only /da:m^{42}/ and /duəŋ^{21}/. The use of /lem^{44}/ in NR is more frequent than in other sub-dialects.

/si:^{44}/ is used for teeth. It is borrowed from Central Thai. It is used in UB and NR sub-dialects. KK and Lao speakers perceive teeth as long and sharp-edged, hence, they classify teeth with /lem^{44}/.

/ka:n^{42}/ has the nominal meaning 'stem'. It is used with spoons in Lao and UB whereas other sub-dialects use /k^{h}an^{53}/. Moreover, /ka:n^{42}/ is also used with /may^{42}k^{h}i:t^{22}/ 'matches' in all sub-dialects

except KK which uses /$t^ha:ŋ^{53}$/.

/$t^hæ:ŋ^{44}$/ is used with long, inflexible objects such as pens and pencils. This classifier is used interchangeably with /$da:m^{42}$/ in UB and NR. Lao uses only /$ka:n^{42}$/ for such objects. KK speakers use /$duəŋ^{33}$/ with /$pa:k^{22}ka:^{33}$/ 'pens' but /$t^hæ:ŋ^{44}$/ with /$din^{33}sɔ:^{13}$/ 'pencils'.

/ton^{42}/ is used with trees and tree-like objects in all fours sub-dialects. It is used interchangeably with /kok^{13}/ in UB and Lao and with the repeater /saw^{13}/ 'pole' in NR and KK.

/$ka^{13}bɔ:k^{22}$/ is used for long and cylindrical objects. It is used with guns and torches in all four sub-dialects except NR which uses /law^{53}/ with torches. The classifier /law^{53}/ was originally used for only flutes in Northeastern sub-dialects. NR people have extended the classifier /law^{53}/ to be used with torches.

/k^han^{53}/ classifies vehicles such as cars in all sub-dialects.

/lam^{53}/ was originally used for objects possessing long and hollow properties such as sections of bamboo. It has been extended to be used with objects sharing similar properties such as boats, in all sub-dialects. UB and KK sub-dialects also use /lam^{53}/ with airplanes whereas NR sub-dialect and Lao use /k^han^{53}/.

/$do:n^{42}$/ and /dun^{42}/ are variants of the same classifier used with firewood. The form /$do:n^{42}$/ is used in UB, NR and Lao whereas /dun^{42}/ is used in KK.

/fak^{13}/ classifies fruits having a long shape such as ears of corn, tamarinds. Some speakers may classify ears of corn with the three-dimensional classifier /$nuəy^{44}$/.

3.2.3 Two-dimension

/bay^{33}/ is used with flat and flexible objects such as tickets and banana leaves in all sub-dialects except Lao which uses /$pi:^{42}$/ for small pieces of paper. The classifier /bay^{33}/ is extended to be used with flat and inflexible containers such as plates and then with other containers of all shapes such as bowls, basins, sinks and baskets. The extension of this classifier causes an overlapped use of /bay^{33}/ and the flat inflexible classifier /$phæ:n^{44}$/.

/$sa^{13}bap^{13}$/ is used with written papers in Northeastern sub-dialects whereas Lao uses /$ka:n^{42}$/ 'stem'. The classifier /$ka:n^{42}$/ is originally used as a classifier for objects having stems such as banana leaves. It is extended to be used with objects such as spoons and papers especially by Lao speakers.

/$p^hɨ:n^{13}$/ is used with flat and flexible objects such as mats and towels in all sub-dialects. For ready-made clothes such

as shirts and trousers, /p^hi:n^{13}/ is used interchangeably with /to:^{33}/ in KK and Lao whereas UB and NR use only /to:^{33}/ and /tuə^{33}/ respectively. Lao also uses /p^hɨ:n^{13}/ with sarongs[5] while other sub-dialects use the classifier /t^hoŋ^{13}/ 'bag'. In addition, /p^hɔʔ^{44}/ 'blanket' is used as a classifier for /p^ha^{22}hom^{44}/ 'blanket' in KK while other sub-dialects use /p^hɨ:n^{13}/.

/to:^{33}/ and /tuə^{33}/ are variants of the same classifier. The form /tuə^{33}/ used in NR is from Central Thai. It is originally used with animals and then extended for use with clothes which are perceived as having limbs as animals.

/t^ho:ŋ^{13}/ and /t^hoŋ^{13}/ are regional variants of the same classifier. This classifier has the nominal meaning 'bag'. It is used with bag-like apparels such as sarongs in Northeastern sub-dialects, whereas Lao speakers use the classifier /p^hɨ:n^{13}/ with sarongs as well as /sɨə^{22}/ 'shirt' and /kaŋ^{33}ke:ŋ^{33}/ 'trouser'.

/da:ŋ^{33}/ is used with mosquito nets in all four sub-dialects. In UB and NK, this classifier is used interchangeably with the Central Thai classifier /laŋ^{13}/ which is used for houses. Speakers who also use /laŋ^{13}/ perceive mosquito nets as having shapes like houses.

/ba:n^{33}/ is used for windows in Northeastern sub-dialects whereas /po:ŋ^{33}/ 'hole' is used in Lao and KK. The use of each classifier depends on different perceptions of the speakers of each sub-dialect. The speakers who use /ba:n^{33}/ view windows as flat and inflexible objects but those who use /po:ŋ^{33}/ perceive windows as holes which are non-dimensional.

3.2.4 Three-dimension

/bay^{33}/ was originally used with flat and flexible entities such as leaves and papers but it has been extended to be used with flat and inflexible entities such as dishes in all sub-dialects. At a later stage, it crossed the flat domain into the three-dimensional domain to be used with three dimensional entities such as containers and hats. Consequently, there is an overlapping use of the three dimensional classifiers /bay^{33}/, /lu:k^{42}/, and /nuəy^{44}/. For example Lao and UB use both /bay^{33}/ and /nuəy^{44}/ with bowls, sinks, and baskets. UB uses both /lu:k^{42}/ and /nuəy^{44}/ for hills and mountains.

/lu:k^{42}/ is usually used with three dimensional entities such as fruits in NR and KK. It is extended for use with other three-dimensional entities such as balls and mountains. The classifier /lu:k^{42}/ can interchange with /nuəy^{44}/ in UB.

/nuəy^{44}/ is used for three dimensional objects especially fruits in all four sub-dialects. Lao speakers extend /nuəy^{44}/ to be

used with other objects such as rocks, soap bars and balls. In Northeastern sub-dialects, /kɔ:n^{42}/, /met^{44}/ and /lu:k^{42} / are also used for three dimensional objects. /kɔ:n^{42}/ is used for small, round and inflexible objects such as rocks, soaps. /met^{44}/ has a nominal meaning 'seed'. It is used as a classifier for seeds or seed-like objects such as grains and is also extended to be used with very small round shaped objects such as buttons. In Lao, /met^{21}/ is used interchangeably with /nuəy^{33}/ for such items as buttons and rice grains.

/hua^{13}/ has the lexical meaning 'head'. It is used as a classifier for round objects, especially for vegetables in the bean family, and is used in all four sub-dialects. Lao uses this classifier with hats whereas the other sub-dialects use /bay^{33}/.

/k^{h}i̶ə̶ŋ^{44}/ has the lexical meaning 'machine'. This classifier is used with electronic appliances such as televisions and radios in NR and KK. It is used interchangeably with /laŋ^{13}/ in NR. The animal classifier /to:^{33}/ is generalized to be used with electronic appliances in UB whereas the three-dimensional classifier /nuəy^{44}/ is generalized to be used with the same items in Lao.

/li̶ən^{53}/ and /ri̶ən^{53}/ are variants of the same classifier. The initial consonant /l/ corresponds to /r/ in Central Thai. This classifier is used with /na:^{53}li^{44}ka:^{33}/ 'watch' in all Northeastern sub-dialects whereas Lao uses the classifier /nuəy^{33}/ with watches.

3.2.5 Non-dimension

/woŋ^{53}/ has the lexical meaning 'circle'. It is used as a classifier in all four sub-dialects for round, annular and hollow objects, especially for rings, and has been extended for use with ring-like entities including entities appearing ring-shaped such as music bands, or orchestra.

3.2.6 Location

/laŋ^{13}/ was originally used with houses in all sub-dialects and extended in NR sub-dialect for use with entities perceived as having house-shape such as mosquito nets, radios, and televisions.

/bɔ:ŋ^{44}/ and /mɔŋ^{22}/ 'place' are interchangeable. They are used as classifiers for locative nouns such as markets, buildings and fields. In addition to these two classifiers, there are a large number of locative nouns which are classified with repeaters such as /bo:t^{22}/ for churches, /wat^{44}/ for temples, and /sa^{13}p^{h}a:n^{53}/ for bridges.

3.2.7 Arrangement

/kɔ:k^{22}/ and /muən^{53}/ are derived from verbs. They are used with cigarettes. The lexical meaning of /muən^{53}/ is 'roll'. The

classifier /kɔ:k^{22}/ is a repeater of the word /kɔ:k^{22}ya:^{53}/ 'pipe'. It is found in all sub-dialects except NK where /muən^{53}/ is found. The classifier /muən^{53}/ is used interchangeably with /kɔ:k^{22}/ in UB and Lao.

3.2.8 Quantity

/phuəŋ^{53}/ or /phuə^{34}/ in Lao has the lexical meaning 'bunch'. It classifies objects arranged in a bunch such as bunches of flowers in all four sub-dialects.

/sæ:ŋ^{53}/ and /t^{h}a^{44}la:y^{53}/ are used with bunches of nut-bearing trees such as bunches of coconuts. /sæ:ŋ^{53}/ appears in all sub-dialects. /t^{h}a^{44}la:y^{53}/ is used in Central Thai and NR.

/k^{h}a:ŋ^{22}/ and /kiŋ^{44}/ are used with a part of a pair such as a single shoe. /kiŋ^{44}/ is used in UB and Lao. It is used interchangeably with /k^{h}a:ŋ^{22}/ in UB. /k^{h}a:ŋ^{22}/ is used in KK whereas the general classifier /ʔan^{33}/ is used in NK.

/wi:^{13}/ is only used with bunches of bananas in all sub-dialects.

/k^{h}a^{13}buən^{33}/ is used with entities arranged in long or line-like shapes, especially for trains. They are used in all four places.

3.2.9 Repeater

The four sub-dialects also use repeaters, some of which are extended to classify entities having similar shapes. For example, /dɔ:k^{22}/ is a repeater classifier for /dɔ:k^{22}may^{42}/ 'flower'. This repeater has undergone a metaphorical extension to be used with other objects such as /het^{13}/ 'mushroom' /kun^{33}cæ:^{33}/ 'key' and /ta^{13}pu:^{33}/ 'nail' in all sub-dialects.

Finally, the comparison of four sub-dialects reveals that the number of classifiers used in Lao is fewer than in other sub-dialects. This may be because Lao speakers use the existing classifiers with new entities. Similar to the UB sub-dialect, the three-dimensional classifier /nuəy^{33}/ becomes generalized in Lao. Lao speakers use it with objects having three-dimensional components such as watches. They also use other general classifiers such as /ʔan^{33}/ and /to:^{33}/ with numerous nouns. The classifiers which seem to be typical of Lao are /hua^{24}/ 'classifier for hats', /ka:n^{42}/ 'classifier for spoons, pens, pencils, letters', /pi:^{42}/ 'classifier for tickets'.

4. Discussion

This study shows that the age of the speakers is a social variable that causes language variation and language change in the society. Classifiers used among three generations in UB are compared. Based on the single type of classifier used by the three generations, it is found that the number of specific classifiers used by G1 speakers or the older generation is the most and the

number of specific classifiers used has decreased in G2 and G3 respectively.

This finding supports the hypothesis that the number of specific classifiers used in the society has decreased because the younger generation tends to use some classifiers more broadly, such as general classifiers and repeater classifiers because it is easier than using specific ones. The older generation tends to use original classifiers. The borrowed classifiers from Central Thai dialect and new classifiers are rarely used by G1 speakers. The G1 speakers use specific classifiers with most nouns when compared to the other generations. In other words, the frequency in the use of specific classifiers is highest for G1 speakers compared to the other generations. This means that the speakers in G1 can preserve the original classifiers. Even though they encounter new objects, they will classify these objects according to the existing classifiers. G1 speakers rarely create new classifiers and hardly use repeater classifiers and Central Thai classifiers. In contrast with the older generation, the younger generation uses repeaters and general classifiers with many nouns, so specific classifiers are used less by G3 speakers.

On the other hand, when the combined types of classifiers are considered, the number of specific classifiers used by G3 has increased significantly due to the fact that G3 speakers use all types of classifiers, that is, UB specific classifiers, specific classifiers borrowed from Central Thai as well as new classifiers created for some nouns. Even though Ban Thabo is the oldest settlement village of Ubon Ratchathani Province and the language usage in this village has been little influenced by other dialects, it is situated in Muang District where there are many influences from the Central Region of Thailand due to language contact and mass media. UB people have been influenced by Central Thai both in culture and the spoken language. The Central Thai dialect is spoken in UB province along with UB sub-dialect. Consequently, G3 speakers have been exposed to Central Thai mostly through media such as television and schools where Central Thai is used as a medium of instruction, and have added Central Thai classifiers to their classifier system.

With regard to repeaters and general classifiers, G3 speakers use them most in combined types of classifiers as it is easier for them to use repeaters and general classifiers than specific classifiers. It may be said that they pay less attention to the use of classifiers and simply complete numeral phrases by using repeaters and general classifiers to classify nouns. The use of unsuitable classifiers is not corrected by the listeners who know the right usage.

The classifier usage of G2 speakers seems to fall between the younger and older generations since G2 speakers learn original specific classifiers from the older generation and also borrow new classifiers from Central Thai. Both new and original classifiers are used by G2 speakers, for example, for the noun /ya:^{53}su:p^{22}/ 'cigarette', speakers in G2 use both /muən^{53}/ and /kɔ:k^{22}/. The classifier /muən^{53}/ is from Central Thai. The classifier /kɔ:k^{22}/ is an original classifier for /ya:^{53}su:p^{22}/ 'cigarette' but only /kɔ:k^{22}/ is used by G1. Classifiers used by G2 are influenced by Central Thai more than those used by G1 speakers, e.g., G2 speakers use the classifier /bay^{33}/ with glasses and dishes as in Central Thai whereas G1 speakers use the classifier /nuəy^{44}/ with these items.

In comparing the classifier usage in the four sub-dialects; UB, NR, KK and Lao, as noted, the wordlists used in each study are different. So, there are twenty classifiers which appear with the same nouns. Some are similar in both form and meaning, some are similar in meaning but different in form. Others differ from sub-dialect to sub-dialect. The classifiers used in NR seem to differ from the other three sub-dialects.[6] They are similar to those used in Central Thai both in form and meaning. This means that classifier usage in NR province has been influenced by Central Thai due to its geographical proximity. Even with the same classifiers that are different in pronunciation such as /tuə^{33}/ (Central Thai) and /to:^{33}/ (Northeastern Thai), speakers in NR use the Central Thai classifier.

In addition, since UB borders Laos, the classifiers used in UB are closely related to those used in Laos. It is noticeable that the number of classifiers used in Laos is the least compared to the other sub-dialects. Lao speakers rarely create new classifiers and are hardly influenced by other sub-dialects. They will assign existing classifiers to new entities. For example, Lao has a very widely-used classifier /nuəy^{33}/ which originally categorized fruit. This classifier has become a powerful class as it encompasses a large domain of objects. Balls, mountains, containers, furniture are all examples of /nuəy^{33}/ class. Newly introduced items are classified by either /nuəy^{33}/ or /ʔan^{33}/ so the widely-applicable classifier /nuəy^{33}/ has a strong tendency to be a generalized class (Somsonge, 2007).

Language use in society reflects the perceptions of the speakers and affects language variation. Some specific classifiers such as /nuəy^{44}/ which was originally a classifier for round objects and /to:^{33}/ which is a classifier for animals[7] have undergone a metaphorical extension to be used with

entities sharing similar physical characteristics. The variation of classifier usage is also dependent on how a speaker perceives the semantic components of entities. This agrees with the studies of Suwattana and Kantima (สุวัฒนาและกันทิมา 2536) and Arunee (อะรุณี 2529). They have found that the uses of classifiers in different places are both similar and different depending on the dialect and the perception of the speakers.

Enfield (2004: 123) studied numeral classification in Lao and found that "there are many cases of inter- and intra-speaker variation in choice of numeral classifier for certain nouns, depending on a range of factors." The sources of variation are as follows:

a) The interaction of numeral classifiers with speech level phenomena

b) New words for culturally non-traditional objects have no conventionalized classifier, resulting in various different classifiers being equally applicable on the basis of semantic appropriateness

c) What aspect of the entity being counted is focused on by the speakers

In conclusion, classifier usage in UB sub-dialect has been changing. The age of the speakers is a social variable of language change in society. The result of this study suggests that the use of classifiers in the society remains but the forms of classifiers used in the future may differ from those used in the past. New classifiers are created due to social changes both culturally and technologically and the influences of classifiers used in Central Thai, as a standard form or standard language, are factors affecting classifier usage. Some classifiers used in the past or used by older speakers may eventually disappear and be replaced by Central Thai classifiers. Language contact plays an important role in classifier replacement.

End Notes

1. This paper is originally an M.A. thesis entitled "A comparison of classifier usage among three generations in Thai dialect of Ubon Ratchathani"(2008) submitted to Mahidol University by the second author and supervised by the first author. It has been revised for a journal publication by the first author. We thank Sujaritlak Deepadung and Suwattana Liamprawat for their comments and suggestion and Megan Sinnott for the English edition of the early draft of the paper. Our special thank is extended to Richard Hiam for editing the final draft of the paper.

2. The transcription of consonants and vowels follows Songgot (2001). The tones are marked by numbers. The following tone box is based on the work of Gedney (1972) and the tone values are from Achara (อัจฉรา 2531).

	Live syllables			Dead syllables	
Proto-consonants	A	B	C	DL	DS
Class 1	13	44	22	22	13
Class 2	33	44	42	22	13
Class 3	33	44	42	22	13
Class 4	53	44	42	42	44

3. A stack of cylindrical vessels, strung one above another by metal strips which also form a handle, used for carrying food

4. The tone transcription of sub-dialects spoken in the northeastern region is based on UB tones. The tone transcription of Lao is adapted from Brown (1965) as follows:

	Live syllables			Dead syllables	
Proto-consonants	A	B	C	DL	DS
Class 1	24	33	22	22	32
Class 2	21	33	42	22	32
Class 3	21	33	42	22	32
Class 4	34	33	42	42	21

The tonal transcription of Central Thai is as follows:

	Live syllables			Dead syllables	
Proto-consonants	A	B	C	DL	DS
Class 1	25	22	42	22	22
Class 2	33	22	42	22	22
Class 3	33	22	42	22	22
Class 4	33	42	55	42	55

5. A long strip of cloth worn round the middle of the body and tucked round the waist

6. Vichin (วิจินตน์ 2531) has found two major dialects spoken in Nakhon Ratchasima, that is, Northeastern Thai dialect and Thai Korat dialect which is similar to Central Thai.

7. The metaphorical extension of this classifier is similar to the cognate /tua^{33}/ in Central Thai. This Central Thai classifier has become generalized as found in the work of Sujaritlak (1997).

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