

A Study of Language Choice and Use among Young Thai in Malaysia

Authors : Din Eak Arathai

Abstract : The purpose of this research report is to investigate the language choice and use among the young generation of Malaysian Thais community. Besides that, it aims to investigate if there is a difference in language choice across the different domains. It will also examine if there has been a language shift from Thai to other languages by the young generation of Thai community in Malaysia. First the study focuses on the proficiency of Thai and other languages used by hundred (100) respondents belonging to young generation of Malaysian Thais aged range from 18-35. Next, language use and choice will be presented with a focus on the domains of family, friendship, entertainment and social. Finally, based on the findings and data collected, we will be able to see if language shift from Thai to other languages has occurred among the young Thai generation in Malaysia. The instrument used in this study was a 30-item questionnaire and the findings of the data analysis were presented in the form of frequency counts and percentages. The findings found that Thai language remains the most preferred language of choice among young Malaysian Thais but usage of other languages, such as Malay, English and Mandarin has increased and begun to influence the language choice of young Malaysian Thais and their proficiency of their mother tongue. In all the domains studied, Thai is almost exclusively the preferred language used when communicating with family. Malay is the most preferred language in communicating with friends while English is the most preferred language when communicating with colleagues. With regards to social and entertainment activities, young Malaysian Thais show great affinity for entertainment in the Thai language. In conclusion, the result of the study showed the beginning of young Malaysian Thais shifting to other languages, especially English and Malay through their daily choices when communicating with friends and family and especially through their language preferences in entertainment.

Keywords : language choice, language use, language shift, language maintenance, young Malaysian Thais, code switching, code mixing

Conference Title : ICB 2015 : International Conference on Bilingualism

Conference Location : London, United Kingdom

Conference Dates : August 20-21, 2015