

Chapter 2: Language use in a Karenni refugee camp

The main aim of the current study was to determine which languages are in use, spoken or written by whom, to whom and when, in a range of public settings in a Karenni refugee camp which contains an estimated three-quarters of the Karenni refugee population in Thailand¹.

The intention was to contribute to the creation of baseline data about language use in Karenni refugee society. The settings consisted of shops, public meetings, school classrooms, places of worship and health clinics; and the roles explored included shopkeeper and customer, leader and participant at public meetings and acts of worship, teacher and student in school classrooms, and patient and physician in out-patient clinic consultations.

Although the researcher had expectations about the use of Karenni, Burmese and English, especially in the education system where a lot of policy debate

¹ whether living in camps or elsewhere.

has taken place over the years, there was no hard data about this, nor was there about the use of lesser-used languages. It was expected, however, that lesser-used languages would find a community role in shops, places of worship and public meetings, though the degree of use was not known. All the anecdotal evidence, some of which is presented above in Chapter 1, suggested that the minor languages were under considerable pressure.

1. Research questions

- What are the languages used most frequently in school classrooms, shops, public meetings, acts of worship and out-patient health clinics in the northern Karenni camp?
- What other languages are used in these settings?
- What is the distribution of languages across roles (shopkeeper, customer, teacher, student etc) and across the categories of speaking and writing?
- Are any communication difficulties manifest in any of the settings? If so, how are these dealt with?
- Are there any signs of languages being used privately (eg for asides or other private communication) in these settings?

2. Participants

The refugee community is divided between two locations: a *northern camp* located about 15km west of Mae Hong Son town, and a *southern camp* located about 30km west of Mae Surin in Mae Hong Son province². The two locations have distinct ethnolinguistic profiles, reflecting the different waves

2 Until July 2003 the northern camp consisted of two separate camps, but to avoid confusion it is always referred to here in the singular, as 'the northern camp'.

of displacement from Burma. In the southern camp, more than half the population (54%) comes from Phasaung, a township³ in the southern half of Kayah state, a region where the Karen language predominates. In the northern camp exactly the same percentage comes from Shadaw, in the north-west of Kayah state, where the linguistic and ethnic mix is quite different⁴. The present research was carried out in the northern camp, which in June 2002 was home to 17,204 people or about 83% of the 20,693 camp-based Karenni refugees in Thailand.

Eighty-one percent of the camp population identified themselves as Kayah, and more than 40% followed traditional religious practices, with a further 28% Catholic, 20% Buddhist and 16% Baptist. Nine out of ten had grown up in the countryside, four out of five were farmers, and two thirds had had no education at all. Almost all (98%) claimed some oral proficiency in Karenni (ie Kayah) (Consortium-Thailand 2001; data for the northern camp disaggregated by the author). The full figures for language proficiency are shown in Table 1 below, and represent the only hard data on language proficiency collected in the Karenni camps before the current research.

³ ie a town plus surrounding villages.

⁴ See Dudley (2000) for a social-anthropological account of the many differences between the northern and southern camps.

Table 1: Language proficiency, Karenni northern camp

% of population claiming some proficiency* in	oral	reading & writing†
Karenni (ie Kayah)	98.0	36.2
Burmese	66.9	46.7
Karen	22.1	11.9
English	11.6	14.4
Shan	7.2	3.3

* 'easily' and 'with difficulty' responses summed

Consortium-Thailand (2001)

† reading and writing self-assessments averaged

3. Methodology

The approach adopted is based on the construct of 'societal domain' as developed by Fishman and others in the study of bilingualism and language maintenance. A domain 'represents a constellation of social situations, each defined by the intersection of role-relationship, locale and time. The situations comprising a domain are all constrained by the same set of behavioural norms' (Cooper 1989: 67). Examples are *education*, *neighbourhood*, *religion* and *home*, which were selected as hypothesised domains of interest in a study of bilingualism in Spanish children in Puerto Rico (Edelman, Cooper and Fishman 1968, reported in Cooper *op cit*).

These same domains were among the possible domains of interest for the current study. Although in refugee camps most people do not work, some are involved in activities which involve aid or development organisations, or local camp management, health and education committees. Then there are a number of indigenous cultural organisations such as the Kayan Society where people meet to celebrate and maintain their language and cultural identity.

There are also informal collections of people involved in activities such as hunting and gathering, sometimes illegally and sometimes crossing the border into Burma. Almost all children attend school, and many people participate in acts of worship at churches and other places.

Some of these 'possible domains' were deemed unreachable by the researcher, for example illegal activities, while others, such as *home*, were reachable but difficult to observe effectively⁵. Bearing this in mind, the following domains were chosen for investigation: *education, religion, health, and neighbourhood*. Education was examined quite intensively, with a focus on classroom activities throughout the range of education levels available; similarly, religion involved observations at a range of acts of worship, with a focus on the liturgical acts and participants' roles in them. Health and neighbourhood focused on particular accessible portions of those domains. In the case of health, outpatient clinics were targeted, with a focus on the physician-patient interaction, and for neighbourhood, the shopkeeper-customer interaction in local shops and the leader-participant relationship at local public meetings.

Data was collected by observation, except in the case of health, where clinic exit interviews with patients were used in order to protect the privacy of the physician-patient relationship⁶.

The observation design was a modified version of the *Communicative orientation of language teaching observation scheme* (COLT) (see eg Spada and Frohlich 1995), as used by Shameem (2002). Shameem observed multilingual classrooms in Fiji, with observers recording the frequency of use for different languages, and assigning instances of use to particular classroom functions.

⁵ For further discussion of the challenges of observation, see Appendix 3.

⁶ For the merits of observation *versus* self-reported data, see Appendix 3.

Frequency was recorded by dividing an observation period into 5-minute time slices and for each time slice only the language most used was recorded.

In the Karenni modification, the observation scheme involved dividing an observation period into 3-minute time slices, with observers writing down every language used during the time slice, and optionally marking the language most used⁷. A time-slice of 3 minutes was chosen in order to provide as fine a granularity of data as possible, consistent with the ability of observers to record accurately. The recording of languages included information about aspects of the roles being investigated, and this varied slightly from situation to situation. These role-aspects, however, could all be brought under the following four broad headings: (1) public spoken language used by the leader(s) of the event; (2) public spoken language used by the participants; (3) public acts of writing or public use of written materials by the leader(s) of the event; and (4) any other speech or writing overheard or overseen by observers.

At all observations, observers kept additional notes covering overheard languages used just before and just after the event, any private asides heard, and so on.

There was no attempt to rate the proficiency of language users by observation. In Karenni camps up to 10 languages are in daily use, and it is impossible to find observers with proficiency in all of these languages. In any case, the rating of language performance is a skilled and time-consuming activity, and could not possibly be done in the framework of rolling 3-minute time-slices involving possibly many languages and participants. However, self-reported language proficiency data was collected as part of the clinic exit

⁷ This optional 'double marking' was done because it was felt that, if all languages were reported for each time slice without any attempt to distinguish most-used from lesser-used, languages used in secondary or supporting roles might be overreported.

interviews.

Health clinic structured exit interviews contained a range of questions about the consultation patients had just completed with the physician, including languages known by the respondent, languages used in the consultation, and any communication difficulties that occurred.

The different categories of data collected at each site are summarised in Table 2, and the data collection forms used are collected in Appendix 5.

Table 2: Observations and interviews used in the research

<i>site</i>	<i>observation or interview</i>	<i>data collected</i>
School classrooms	observation	<p>Every 3 minutes, language use in four role categories was recorded, with each language used marked, and the language most used optionally marked. The 4 role-categories were as follows:</p> <p>(1) Teacher's official oral output: usually speech, perhaps singing</p> <p>(2) Students' official oral output: usually speech, perhaps singing</p> <p>(3) Teacher's official writing, including display of previously written or prepared materials</p> <p>(4) Students' writing in exercise books or on blackboard</p> <p>Room on form for notes on other language phenomena, eg languages used before and after the class, language difficulties or any translation overheard.</p>
Public meetings	observation	<p><i>Same as for school classrooms, but using the following role-categories:</i></p> <p>(1) Leaders' official oral output: usually speech</p> <p>(2) Participants' official oral output: usually speech</p> <p>(3) Leaders' official writing, including display of previously written or prepared materials</p> <p>(4) Overheard private speech, usually by participants and usually within small groups</p> <p>Room on form for notes on other language phenomena, eg languages used before and after the meeting, language difficulties or translation overheard.</p>

Acts of worship	observation	<p><i>Same as for school classrooms, but using the following role-categories:</i></p> <p>(1) Leaders' official speech</p> <p>(2) Leaders' official chanting or singing</p> <p>(3) Participants' official speech</p> <p>(4) Participants' official chanting or singing</p> <p>Room on form for notes on other language phenomena, eg languages used before and after the act of worship, language of any printed materials or books used, language difficulties or translation overheard, any private speech.</p>
Shops	observations	<p>For every visitor or group of visitors to a shop:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - their apparent role (friend or relative of shopkeeper coming to socialise, customer, someone coming on business other than shopping) - languages used by the group including the shopkeeper, with language most used optionally marked - start and end time of the transaction <p>Room on form for notes on language difficulties or translations overheard.</p>
Health clinics	exit interviews	<p>9 groups of questions for patients emerging from out-patient consultations, covering the following topics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - languages used during the consultation, languages known by the patient, comprehension difficulties and any translation or assistance given by third parties, length of time spent in the consultation, and the language of visual publicity materials displayed at the clinic.

4. Length of study, hours of observation and number of interviews

The study was conducted intensively over 19 continuous days, using 5 observer/interviewers and 2 supervising research assistants. The Karenni Refugee Committee, responsible for day-to-day management of the camps, gave the researcher access to all of its schools and outpatient clinics in the camp, and the researcher was able to negotiate, on a one-by-one basis, access to all shops, places of worship, and public meetings for the period. A continuous period of data collection was dictated by the need to use limited resources efficiently, and the figure of 19 days was determined by

calculations for each site type which are detailed below. The intensive approach worked well in schools, clinics, shops and places of worship, with a large and varied quantity of relevant events recorded at many sites during the period. In the case of public meetings, however, where the number of events was not large, a longer period would have provided a more representative sample of events.

Schools: entire teaching periods were observed, usually of 45 minutes. These were usually led by a single teacher, and a single class of students would work with several teachers each day. The researcher took the view that what was being sampled was the population of school teaching periods, and therefore decided to collect a minimum sample of 30 periods per school level. There were 6 different levels, giving a total of 180 periods to be observed, or 135 hours⁸.

Shops: there were 90 shops in the camp, many of them very small, and the researcher made the assumption that in these it might be possible to observe minor languages in use; it was also suspected that some shops might even be monolingual in a lesser-used language, or nearly so. Consequently, a large sample of locations was aimed at, 30 or more, with a total observation time of 100 hours.

Public meetings and acts of worship: the aim here was to observe all public meetings taking place during the 19-day data collection period, and to observe as many acts of worship as could be covered by the observers available. The acts of worship all took place on Sundays. There was no target of hours, but it was expected that 30 or more might be observed in each of the two categories. The shortness of the data collection period meant that the

⁸ A summary of the Karenni school system, including the different school types, levels, and subjects studied, is given in Appendix 2.

sample of events observed was unlikely to be representative. On the other hand, the researcher took the view that liturgical acts were likely to be very similar linguistically from month to month, and therefore the sample obtained would be linguistically representative. However, the one Shan Buddhist monastery in the camp conducted no public liturgical act during the data collection period, and so that assumption can be questioned.

Health clinics: there were two outpatient clinics in the camp⁹. The aim was to interview more than 250 patients, and after trials it was calculated that this would take about 30 hours.

The above target hours were in addition to any hours spent training observers, or conducting controlled observations for the purpose of measuring observer variability.

Table 3 summarises target hours of observation and numbers of interviews:

Table 3: Target hours of observation and numbers of interviews	
<i>Site type</i>	<i>Target hours</i>
schools	135
public meetings	as many as poss in 19 days*
places of worship	as many as poss in 19 days*
shops	100
clinics	250 interviews

*the period of data collection

5. Data collection: procedures and reliability

Data collection by community members

Following restrictions on access to refugee camps, all observations and

⁹ There were also in-patient facilities.

interviews were conducted by refugee community members, with the researcher remaining outside the Karenni northern camp. Observers were trained and managed by two research assistants who were able to travel outside the camp and liaise with the researcher.

There are theoretical arguments for using researchers or research assistants who are members of the community and culture being investigated; see, for example, Shameem (2002). The need for observers to be able to recognise, if not understand fully, all of the 10 languages used in Karenni northern camp, made the use of local observers virtually unavoidable in the current study. For further discussion of the use of community members as observers, see Appendix 3.

The researcher gave the two research assistants a detailed theoretical and procedural orientation, in English, which they then used to create practical training sessions for the five observers, in Burmese, one of the camp lingua francas. In addition, a supervisory system was set up to help maintain the quality of the data collected and to deal with any problems. Further details of the training of observers and daily procedures for both observers and research assistants are contained in Appendix 3.

Approach to sampling

A set of procedures were followed by research assistants and observers to ensure sampling was random; these are described in Appendix 3.

Quality of the data

Data from multiply-recorded observations and interviews were used to investigate inter-observer reliability. The approach taken was as follows: if an independent researcher R were to be given the data which each pair of observers O_i and O_j recorded at events which they jointly observed, would R

conclude that O_i and O_j were observing the same event? and if so, what degree of statistical significance could R attach to such a claim?

For observations based on time slices, the procedure adopted was as follows. For the data from each observer pair O_{ij} , Pearson product moment correlation coefficients r_{ij} were calculated for each category of observation, for example *Leaders' oral output*. The correlations were then assembled into tables and each r_{ij} was examined for significance, at both the 5% level and the 1% level, and this examination formed the basis for a conclusion about the degree of reliability of the observers. As a result of this investigation, the observation data (but not the interview data) for one of the 5 observers, observer *b*, was excluded from the study.

A similar approach was taken in the case of interviews.

A detailed account of the rationale, procedures followed and results of the analysis of inter-observer reliability is given in Appendix 4.

Table 4 shows target and actual observation hours, plus hours accepted for data analysis following the analysis of inter-observer reliability and the exclusion of the observer *b*'s data:

Table 4: Target and actual data collection, and data discarded

Site type	Target hours	Actual hours*	Hours used in analysis
schools	135	190	161
public meetings	as many as poss in 19 days†	63	27
places of worship	as many as poss in 19 days†	37	33
shops	100	114	114
clinics	250 interviews	303 interviews‡	299 interviews

*total hours of data recorded on observers' sheets, including monitoring and other duplicate observations

†the period of data collection

‡of which 15 multiply-recorded

7. Results

Schools

Records for a total of 3807 3-minute slices were obtained, of which 3221 were used, as shown in Table 5¹⁰.

Table 5: Hours of data collection at each school type

<i>school type</i>	<i>slices</i>	<i>aprox hours</i>
nursery	599	30
primary	1358	68
middle	476	24
high*	213	11
post-10	317	16
accelerated	258	13
total	3221	161

* Low numbers because almost 8 hours of observations were among discarded data. The plan to collect at least 30 teaching periods (about 22 hours) per school type failed through inadequate monitoring.

¹⁰ A summary of the Karenni school system is given in Appendix 2.

The notional size of the observation sample, as a percentage of all classroom activity during the 13 days of the school observations, was 0.53%¹¹.

The most obvious feature of the data, as summarised in Figure 1 below, is that language use in schools is dominated by Karenni, Burmese and English, with other languages hardly featuring. Karenni, Burmese and English accounted for more than 99% of all language use¹² in school classrooms, and if student writing is excluded for reasons of caution¹³ the figure is 98.5%. Karenni and Burmese dominate oral communication in the classroom, while Burmese and English dominate writing. Languages such as Karen, Shan and other lesser used languages feature in Figure 1 as barely visible black bars, mostly student speech, but to some extent teacher speech.

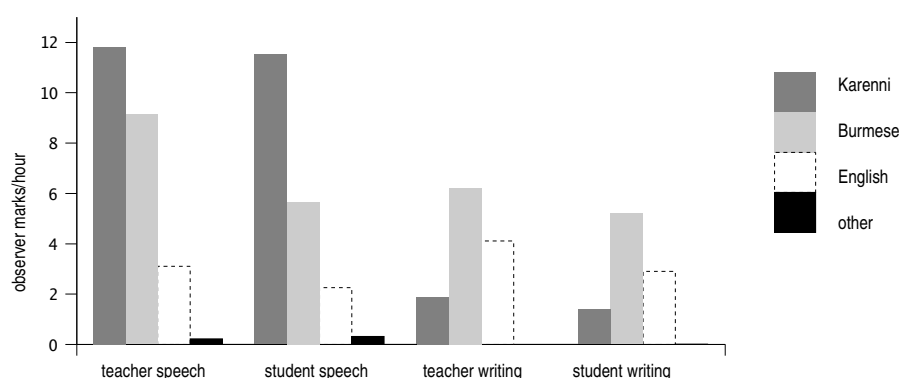


Fig 1: Teacher speech & writing, student speech & writing, all Karenni northern camp schools: means of total recorded language occurrences, all school types, weighted by numbers of classrooms of each type

Note on figures: a recorded language occurrence is a mark made by an observer to record any language use, including repeated language use, by a teacher, student, meeting participant etc, in a particular category (eg speaking, writing, public, private etc) in a

11 based on numbers of teachers and students, average class sizes and number of hours studied per week, not actual data for the period; takes no account of cancelled classes or other irregularities.

12 In the text the looser term *language use* is sometimes used instead of the more precise *recorded language occurrences*. The assumption is made that the sampling of teaching periods etc was representative.

13 See the note accompanying Fig 1; also Appendix 4, *Quality of the data*.

particular language during a 3-minute observation time slice. A recorded language occurrence may be primary (marked as the only language used or the one most used in a time slice) or secondary (all others). Total language occurrences sum primary and secondary occurrences for a language. The scale for most of the figures is observer marks/hour, which allows comparison from figure to figure, for example teachers' speech with the speech of leaders at public meetings. However, caution should be used in interpreting the meaning of observer marks as they do not translate straightforwardly into quantity of speech. For further details, see section Methodology, above. Caution is also needed in interpreting both the information on writing, due to variation in recording practices, and also overseen writing and overheard speech, which may vary according to the position of observers.

The change in the use of languages in the classroom as students progress through the school system can be seen clearly in Figures 2-5, which each combine data for a single observation category, for example *Teacher speech*, across all school levels. In teacher speech Karenni gives way to Burmese through the school years, with a collapse in the use of Karenni after middle school; English follows a perhaps unexpected pattern of falling after nursery, then rising but only very gradually and more slowly than Burmese¹⁴. The near-demise of Karenni in the post-10 school, the highest point in the Karenni education system, is noteworthy, as is the only very moderate use of English by teachers there in comparison with Burmese. The black step on the left of the figure is the use of minor languages by teachers in nursery schools, and it is interesting that minor languages feature virtually nowhere else.

14 The use of English in nursery schools is confined to the teaching of the alphabet and the singing of songs; there is very little, if any, real communication using English. Not too much, therefore, should be read into the fall in use of English between nursery and primary school. Karenni educators were unaware of the fall, and sceptical of its significance when it was pointed out to them.

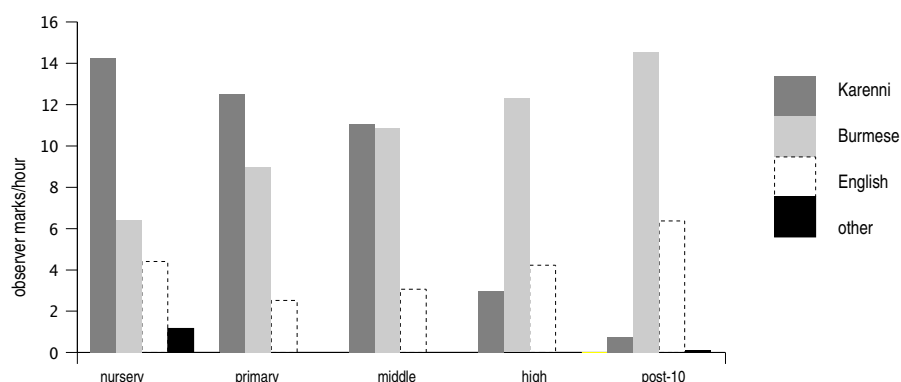


Fig 2: Teacher speech in the average Karenni northern camp classroom: *total recorded language occurrences - means for each classroom type*

Student speech, shown in Fig 3, broadly follows the same pattern as teacher speech through the school levels, except that there is more variety, especially in post-10 where use of Karen equals the use of English. The continued use of Karenni by students in post-10 contrasts with its almost total non-use by teachers.

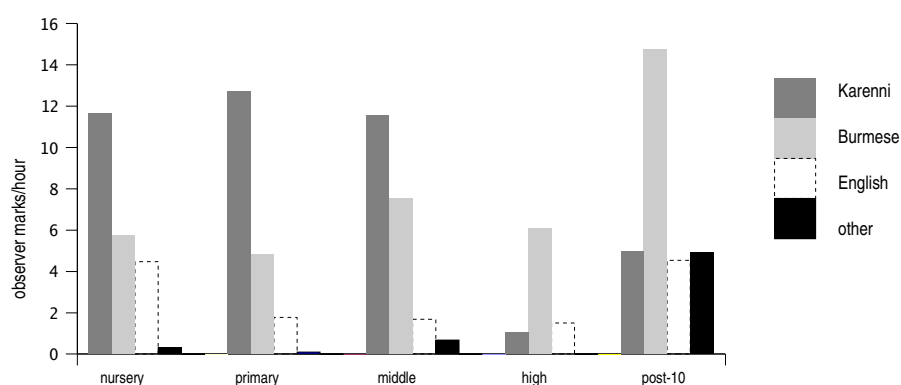


Fig 3: Student speech in the average Karenni northern camp classroom: *means of total recorded language occurrences for each classroom type*

Both teacher and student writing (Figs 4 and 5), which follow similar patterns of change through the school levels, are dominated by Burmese and English, with English predominant at the highest levels. Karenni features only very weakly, and not at all in the post-10 school. The increase in student writing between high and post-10 is notable.

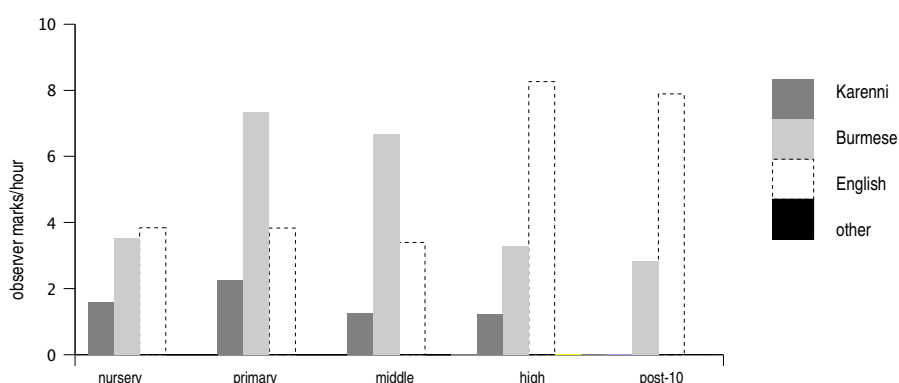


Fig 4: Teacher writing in the average Karenni northern camp classroom: *means of total recorded language occurrences for each classroom type*

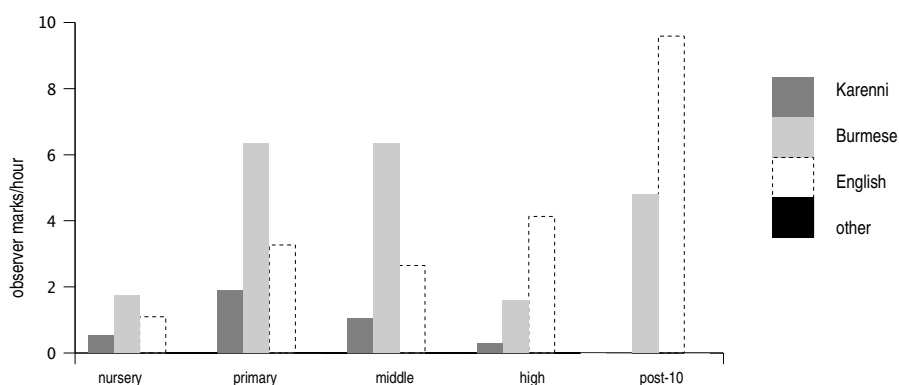


Fig 5: Student writing in the average Karenni northern camp classroom: *means of total recorded language occurrences for each classroom type*

The above figures show total recorded language occurrences during observed classes. Charts for *primary language occurrences* (where a single language is

used during a time-slice in a particular observation category, or is used with others but marked as the most used in that time-slice) have the same shape as the figures above.

Secondary language occurrences (where a language is used during a time-slice alongside others but is not primary) are in most cases the same languages as in the other charts but at lower frequency and perhaps with a different distribution. In other words, if a particular distribution of Karenni-Burmese-English occurs in a chart showing primary occurrences, in most cases it is the same languages that appear in the chart of secondary occurrences. The same three languages are being used, possibly with code-switching taking place within a time-slice, or a longer chunk of one language giving way to a longer chunk of another in the time-slice in which they both appear. In other words, classroom discourse in almost all cases consists only of these three languages.

There is what might be called a micro-discourse in other languages, which in most cases consists of fragments of use, usually by students, but which in one or two situations is a more extended discourse. For example, in nursery schools teachers micro-use a range of languages alongside the Big 3 of Karenni, Burmese and English; in post-10 the use of Karen by students equals their use of Karenni and English alongside the predominating Burmese; and in the accelerated school, a small school for some usually older students who have missed education, and for which no figure is shown here, there is a considerable student discourse in Shan. The pattern is often seen of a limited teacher discourse together with a richer student discourse, and in these cases it is likely that students are together clarifying the teacher's discourse, which for them will be in a second, third or even fourth language. In the post-10 school this is almost certainly happening; it houses boarders from the southern Karenni camp, where Karen predominates over Karenni. It is likely

that Karen-speaking students from the southern camp find it harder than their northern cousins to handle post-ten teachers' extended discourse in Burmese¹⁵.

Fig 6 shows an example of such a student micro-discourse, from a single session of teacher training, totalling just 2.5 hours. Similar examples can be seen in the following section.

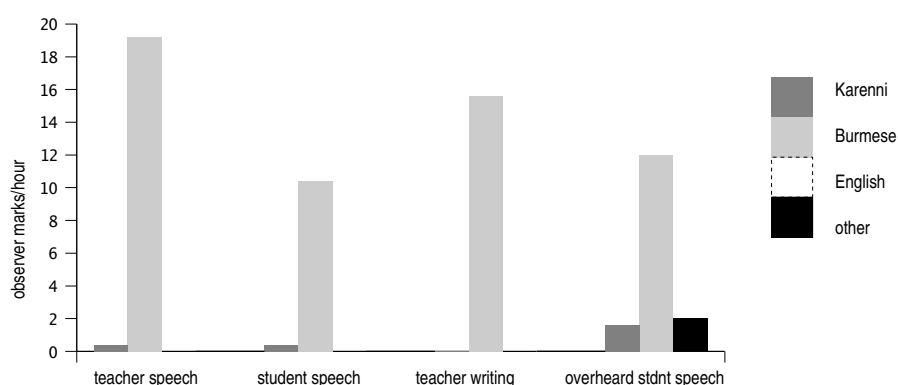


Fig 6: A single teacher training session in the Karenni northern camp: total recorded total language occurrences

Note: the rightmost observation category is *overheard student speech*, not student writing.

Meetings

¹⁵ See section *Participants*, above. On why Karenni students are better at Burmese than Karen students, Thein Lwin et al (2001b); see also Chapter 1, section *Language policy of the Karenni National Progressive Party*, esp fn30.

It was not known how many public meetings would take place during the 19 days of data collection, and the expectation was that the quantity of data collected might be quite small. In fact, observers attended 17 meetings totalling 43 hours, 6 of them with 2 or more observers present. The total amount of data recorded on observation forms amounted to 63 hours. Of the 17 meetings, however, no fewer than 7 were excluded on grounds of reliability¹⁶, and this has left a data sample too small to be representative. The data is presented below, and a comparison is made with the excluded data.

For each of the 6 multiply-observed meetings, a single observer's record was chosen at random; the total number of slices used in the analysis was 535 (almost 27 hours).

Given the limited range of the meetings, the data has simply been amalgamated into a single chart of total language occurrences, shown in Fig 7. Note that the 4 observation categories are different from schools and include *overheard speech*. The data is noteworthy for the duopoly of Karenni and Burmese in the acts of public participation, for the dominance of leaders over participants in official speech production, and for the quantity and diversity of other languages heard informally. 27% of informal overheard speech was in languages other than Karenni and Burmese: the list includes the expected Karen (3% of overheard speech recorded) and Shan (4%), but also Kayaw (9.6%), Kayan (6.4%), Manaw (3.9%) and Bre (0.5%). It is interesting that use in unofficial speech of two of the lesser-used languages exceeded that of the more widely used Karen or Shan. However, as Fig 7 makes clear, Karenni and Burmese predominate: the percentage of total language use in Karenni, Burmese and English¹⁷ was 88%; this compares with

16 All observed by observer *b*. See section *Data collection: procedures and reliability*, above.

17 no English spoken, but used in written materials.

97% for these languages in schools¹⁸. However, 43% of total recorded language occurrences for speech were overheard participant speech, ie unofficial language use, and if this is excluded on the grounds of subjectivity due to the observer's arbitrary position at the meeting, the percentage of 'official' language use conducted in Karenni and Burmese at public meetings is 98.6%.

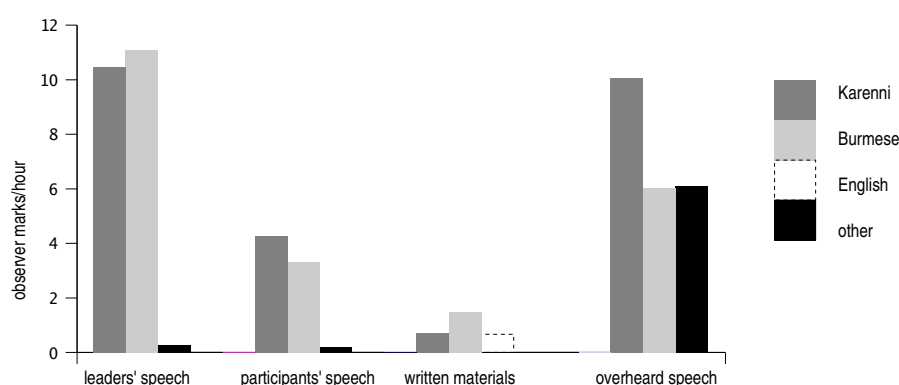


Fig 7: Language use at sampled public meetings in Karenni northern camp, July 2003: total recorded language occurrences

Since the included sample of meetings was small (10), the language profile presented was compared with that from the 7 excluded meetings. The excluded meetings in fact presented a profile quite different from that shown above. The main differences were a halving in the use of Karenni across all categories except participant speech, a halving in the amount of overheard speech, and a great increase in the official use of Other languages¹⁹ (mostly Kayan and Thai, reflecting the particular meetings observed). The main conclusion to be drawn is that a larger good-quality sample over a longer

¹⁸ although in schools only 'official' speech was systematically recorded; overheard speech was left to observers' notes.

¹⁹ ie not Karenni, Burmese, English, Karen or Shan. 'Other' is a language category on the data collection form.

period might reveal a picture showing a greater variety of language use, in particular of lesser-used languages, than can be seen elsewhere in this survey.

Places of worship

Although Camp 1 contains both Christian churches and a Shan monastery, data was collected only from churches, as there was no public event at the monastery during the data collection period²⁰.

Six hundred and fifty-eight slices of data, equal to about 33 hours, were accepted following analysis of quality. Data was collected from 19 services, including 7 Catholic (214 slices), 11 Baptist of which 4 were described as Karen Baptist (151 slices) and 7 Kayah Baptist (255 slices), and 1 non-denominational service conducted at the post-10 school (38 slices).

Catholic services were dominated by the official use of Karenni, as Fig 8 shows. Burmese appears to be used in fragments, but in fact in two out of the three Catholic churches observed Burmese was not used at all. Note that the 4 observation categories are different from both schools and public meetings.

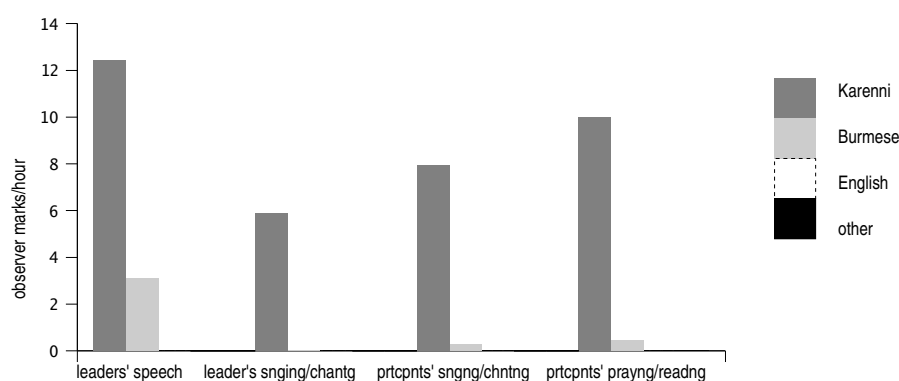


Fig 8: Language use at sampled Catholic church services, Karenni northern camp, July 2003: total recorded language occurrences

Language use in Baptist churches was totally different, as shown in Fig 9.

²⁰ Theravadin monasteries, with their focus on the spiritual development of resident monks, conduct public ceremonies only on key calendar days.

Speech was dominated by the pastor, in Karenni and Karen, with fragments in Burmese and English, whereas there was considerable singing participation by the congregation, mostly in Karen.

The non-denominational service at the post-10 school (not shown) followed a variant of the Catholic language pattern, but with a high count of minor languages (Kayan, Kayaw and Manaw) all recorded as secondary occurrences.

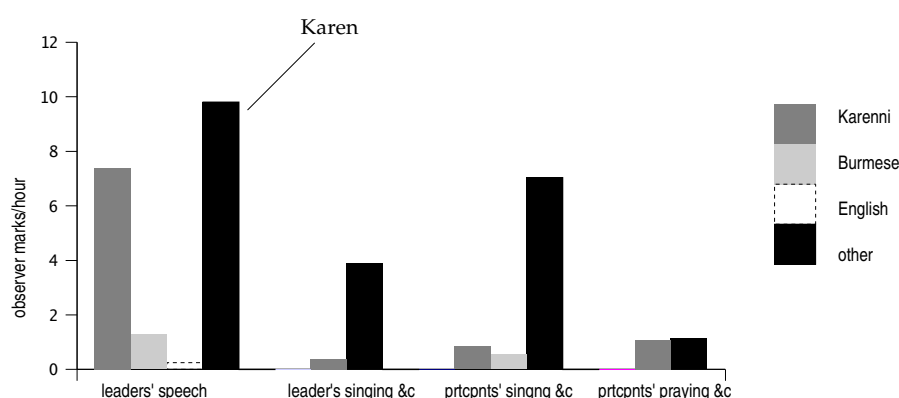


Fig 9: Language use at sampled Baptist church services, Karenni northern camp, July 2003: total recorded language occurrences

Figs 8-9 are an over-simplification of a rather complex picture, whose complexity has already been suggested in the section *Karenni scripts* in Chapter 1. Participants use different official languages at different points in the services, but it appears that at crucial points they pray, and perhaps chant, in their own languages. This participation has been recorded in observers' notes as overheard private speech²¹. However, such use of own language for praying is in fact official participation, not an aside, and the fact of many participants using different tongues at key moments is interesting.

²¹ Not a detailed time-slice record, just a short note for the event as a whole.

Apart from Karenni, which was used everywhere, the following other languages featured in 'quiet official' use: in Catholic services, Kayaw, Manaw, Burmese and Kayan; in Karen Baptist services, Karen, Manaw, Burmese and Bre; and in Kayah Baptist services, Karen and Burmese. Texts used were as follows: in Catholic services, Karenni roman script, with some Burmese texts; in Baptist services, Karen, with some texts available in Burmese and also Karenni²².

Finally, informal interaction before and after Catholic services tended to be in Karenni, with some Kayaw, Manaw and Kayan heard; and for Baptist services, Karenni, Burmese and Karen.

Shops

1008 transactions were recorded over 114 hours of observation at 43 of the 90²³ shops in the northern camp. More sites were observed than intended, with samples of transactions in some cases smaller than intended: the plan was to observe at 30 sites, with observation periods of 3 hours, but observation periods averaged just over 2.5 hours, generating a mean of 23 transactions per site. Records for 44 transactions were rejected as incomplete in some important respect; most of these consisted of part-records of transactions underway but not completed at the end of observation sessions; and a further 45 were excluded from the data analysis of customer numbers and types because a part of their information was missing²⁴.

For the 964 retained transactions, the mean time spent in the shop by each group of visitors was 4.7 minutes (SD 6.17), and the number of visitors in each

22 The Karenni script used was not indicated in records.

23 The observers counted 90 shops, but the camp is so sprawling it is possible they missed one or two.

24 The latter were observer *b*'s.

group was 1.29 (SD 0.63). 77.8% of visitors were customers, 18.9% were friends or relatives of the shopkeeper, and 3.3% had come to the shop to do business other than shopping. The mean number of visitors per hour per shop was 15, and the mean number of transactions per hour per shop was 9.

Contrary to the researcher's expectation that in shops there would be widespread use of lesser-used languages, use of Karenni and Burmese accounted for almost 93% of all recorded language use, as shown in Fig 10. This compares to 88% at public meetings and 77% in schools (97% at schools when English is included as one of the Big 3). The data for primary and secondary occurrences add nothing to the picture. Lesser-used languages were as follows: Shan (3% of all language use recorded), Kayaw (1.7%), Kayan (1.2%), Karen (0.7%) and Thai (0.4%); with Manaw, Pa-0 and English just appearing on the scale of detectability, each with under 0.1%, representing a single occurrence or one observer mark recorded each out of a total number of more than 1,100 observer marks made at shops.

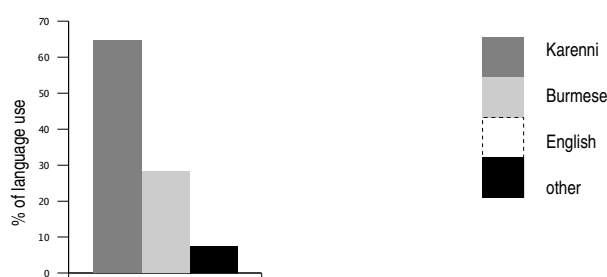


Fig 10: Language use in shops in Karenni northern camp, July 2003:
total recorded language occurrences

Clinics

Data from 303 respondents were collected over a total interviewing period of

63 hours spread across 3 weeks, at 6 locations outside the 2 outpatient health clinics in the northern camp. 4 completed questionnaires were excluded because of gaps in information, and a further 2 respondents did not answer questions and indicated they were deaf.

The mean number of people at each consultation investigated was reported to be 2.58 (SD 0.72), and respondents reported spending a mean of 6.4 minutes (SD 2.5) with the physician. On the validity of this and other data collected via the questionnaire, see Appendix 4 *Quality of the data*.

74% of respondents claimed Karenni as their first language, with the remainder spread across 7 languages, including Kayaw with 6% and Kayan with 5.6% of responses, as shown in Fig 11. Burmese accounted for only 3.3% of responses.

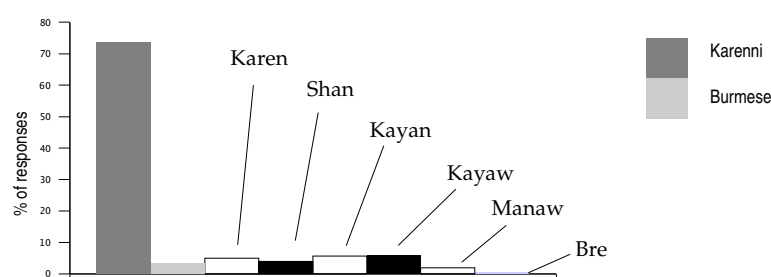


Fig 11: First language reported by patients leaving clinics in Karenni northern camp, July 2003

In a multilingual setting such as Karenni northern camp, second and other languages are as important as mother tongue, and these are shown in Fig 12. Burmese and Karenni accounted for 72% of responses for other languages known, leaving lesser-used languages with a higher overall share than that seen elsewhere in this dissertation. Karen and Shan were the most popular of

8 other choices, with 9% and 6.8% respectively. In contrast to the pervasive use of English in schools at all levels, outside clinics knowledge of English was claimed by just 1.1% of respondents.

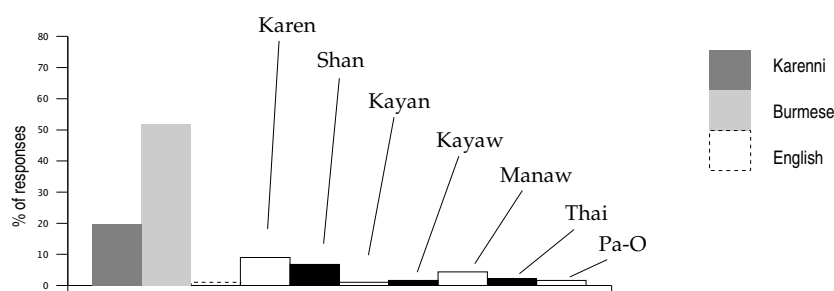


Fig 12: Second and other languages reported known by patients leaving clinics in Karenni northern camp, July 2003

Combining responses for first language with those for second or other languages produces a total competence spread for the Karenni language of 97% of respondents, and Burmese 67%²⁵. However, in the consultation 84% of patients used Karenni, with only 16% using Burmese, as shown in Fig 13. These two figures are respectively 10% and 12.7% higher than the percentages of respondents claiming Karenni and Burmese as first languages. Karen, a language available for use in consultations, is on the edge of detectability, with a single response out of 299.

²⁵ For a further discussion of this, see Chapter 3.

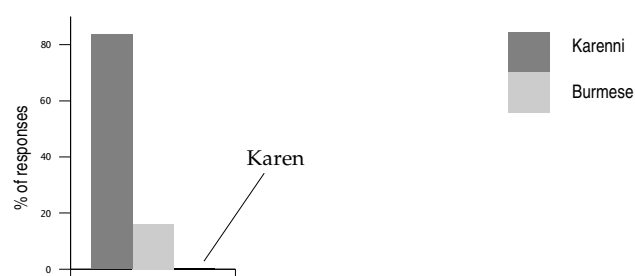


Fig 13: Languages reported used in outpatient consultations in Karenni northern camp, July 2003

Finally, of the 299 respondents, when asked whether there were any communication difficulties during the consultation, and if so what they were and if anyone helped, all but 3 replied *No* to all questions, with 2 of the 3 others recording that they did not remember, leaving just a single respondent to refer to problems with words connected with a particular physical complaint²⁶.

²⁶ The validity and meaning of this part of the data is discussed in Appendix 4 *Quality of the data*.