

**NANYANG**  
TECHNOLOGICAL  
**UNIVERSITY**

# **Assessing Language Vitality and Endangerment of Minority Communities in Northeastern Thailand: A Necessity for Visualizing Dynamic Language Shift**

*presented by*

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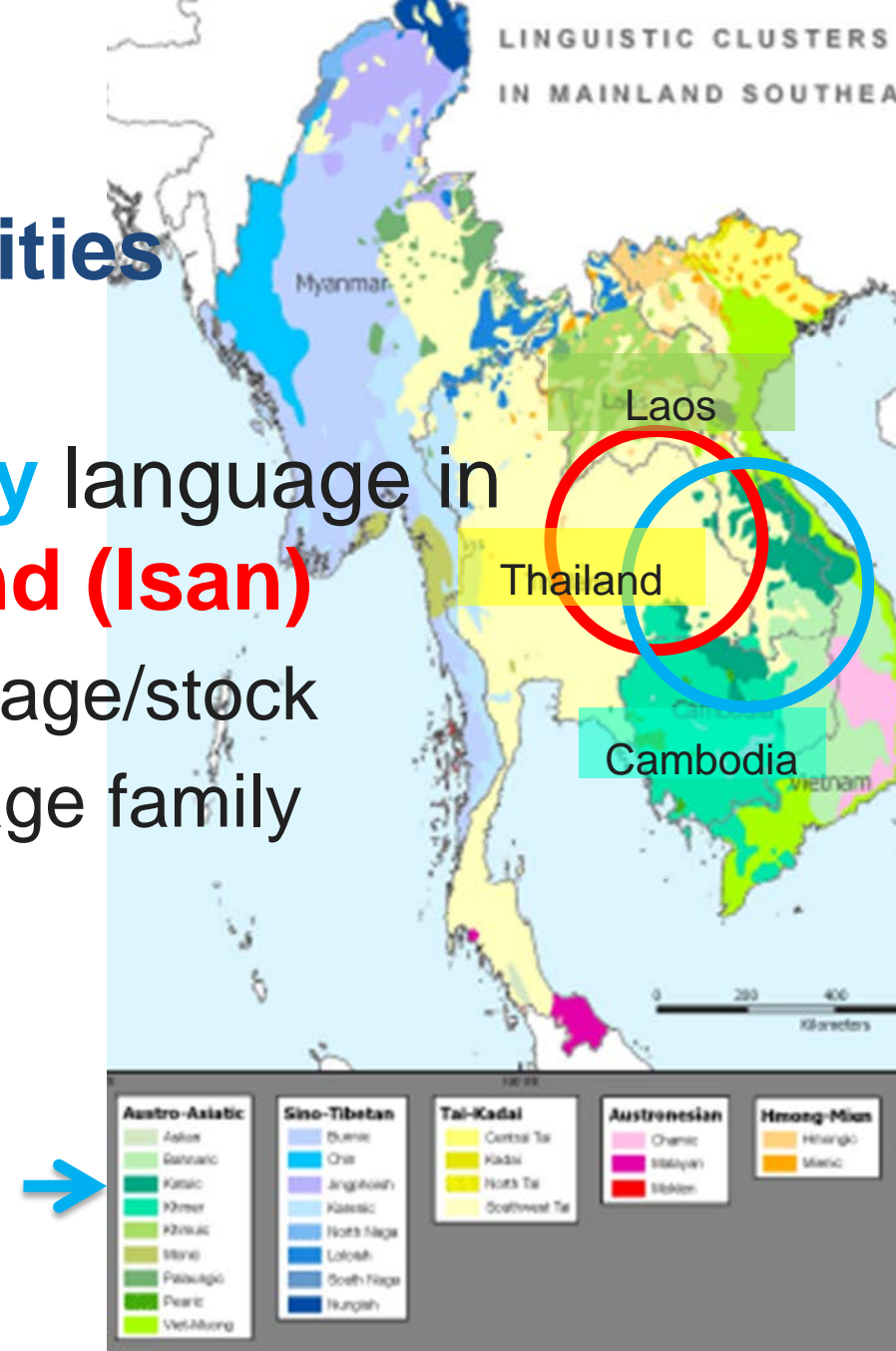
*Saturday, March 4, 2017*

# Objectives of This Paper

1. Introducing the brief results of language surveys in Northeastern Thailand (Isan)
2. Discussing the features and factors of language shift/maintenance at play in target communities
3. Illustrating the dynamics of language shift
4. Proposing some considerations regarding the assessment of ethnolinguistic vitality

# The Target Communities

- the **Bruu (Bru)** & **Kuay** language in **Northeastern Thailand (Isan)**
  - the Austroasiatic language/stock
  - the Mon-Khmer language family
  - the **Katuic branch**



# The Target Communities

Northeastern  
Thailand (Isan)

Central and  
Southern Laos

Northeastern  
Thai (Lao Isan)

Ta Klang (TK)

Western Bru

Kataang  
(Choo, 2012)

Woen Buek (WB)

Kuay, Kuy, or Suay

Khmer

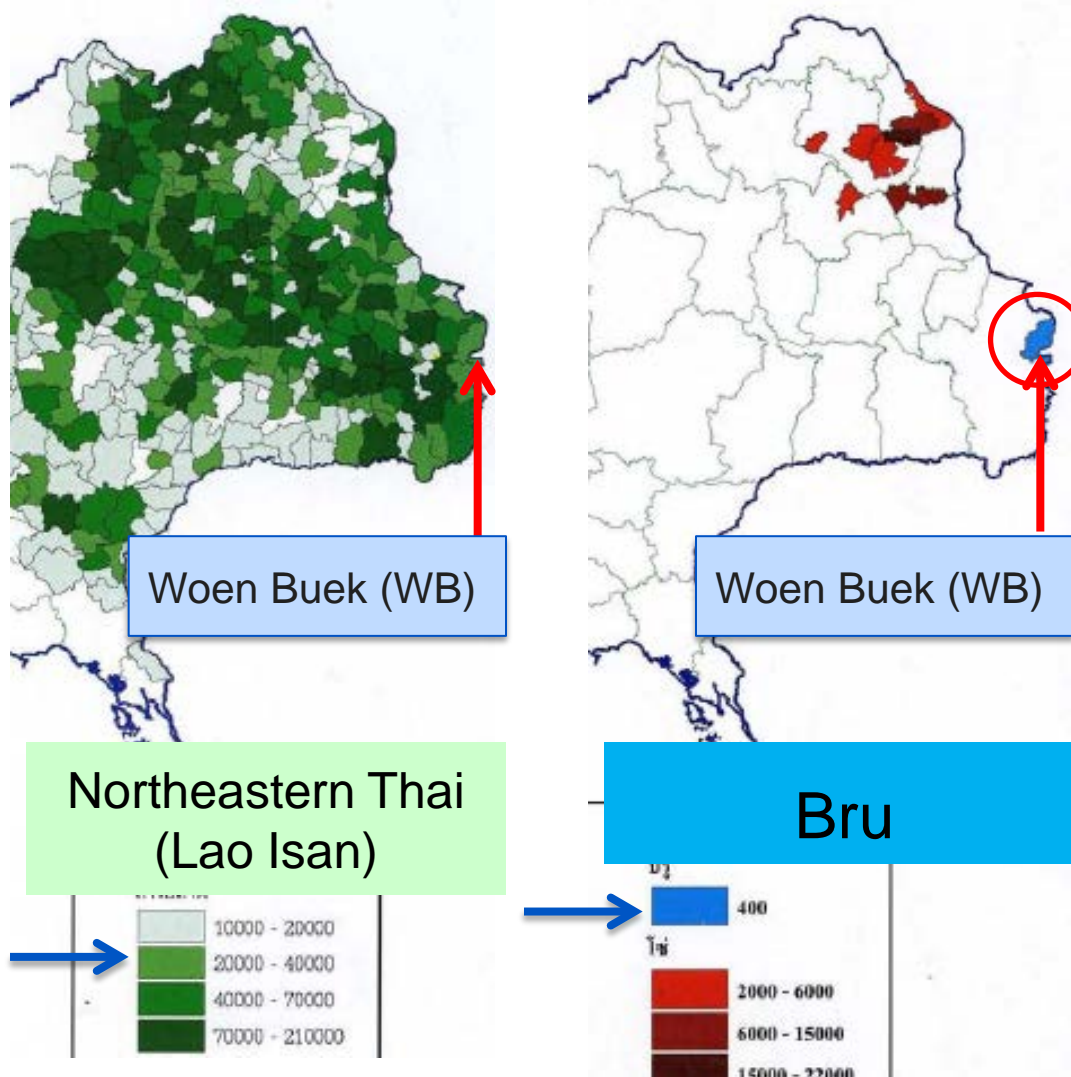
Cambodia



Tai-Kadai  
Languages

Austroasiatic  
Languages

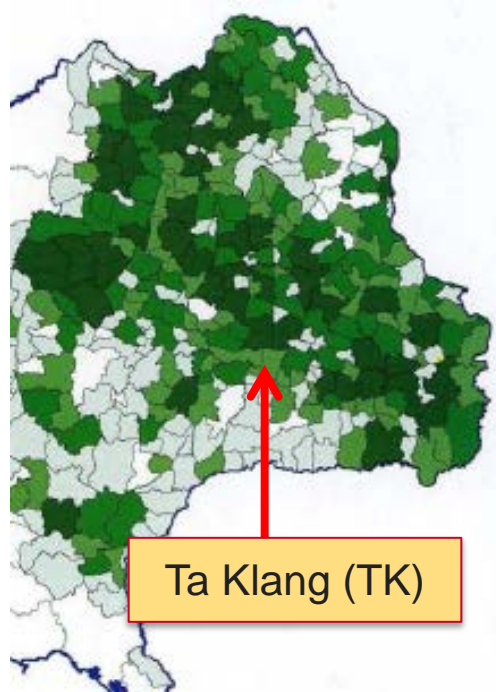
# The Target Community (WB Bru) Population & Distribution / District in Isan



From Premsrirat et al. (2003)

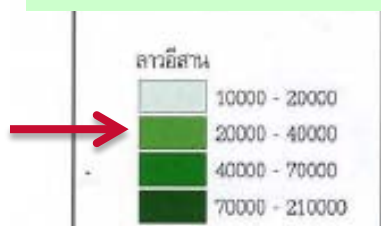


# The Target Community (TK Kuay) Population & Distribution / District in Isan



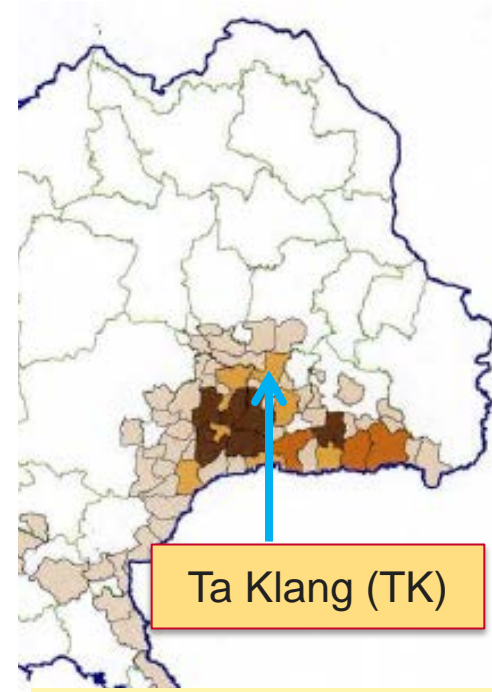
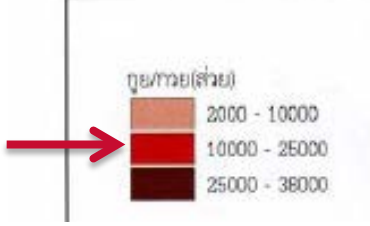
Ta Klang (TK)

Northeastern Thai  
(Lao Isan)



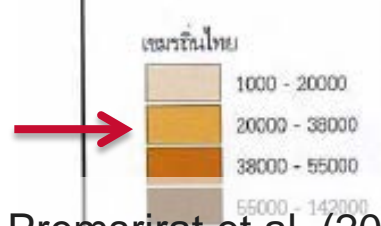
Ta Klang (TK)

Kuay (Kuy)



Ta Klang (TK)

Northern/Highland  
Khmer



From Premsrirat et al. (2003)

# The Target Community (WB Bru)

## Population & Background Information

	Ethnic Bru and Woen Buek (WB)
Population	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Western Bru: 20,000 in 3 Isan provinces,</li> <li>and <b>400 in Ubon (WB&amp;TL)</b></li> <li>➤ No mutual intelligibilities among them (Premsrirat et al., 2003)</li> <li>Kataang: 110,276 in Laos in 2005 (the National Statistics Centre, no date)</li> <li><b>WB: approx. 600 based on household registration</b></li> </ul>
Ethnonym	Exonym: Khaa 'slavic people;' Endonym: Bru (no meaning)
History	WB Bru ancestors immigrated from Laos about 100 years ago
Occupations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Swidden farming in the past,</li> <li>Fishing, Farming (very limited flatlands), Weaving basket, Working as a temporal labor, Work away from home</li> </ul>
Other Features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Exogamy was not freely allowed by their traditional rituals</li> <li>Buddhism was broadly accepted after the immigration to WB</li> <li>A paved road to town and electricity reached within 30 years ago</li> </ul>

# The Target Community (TK Kuay)

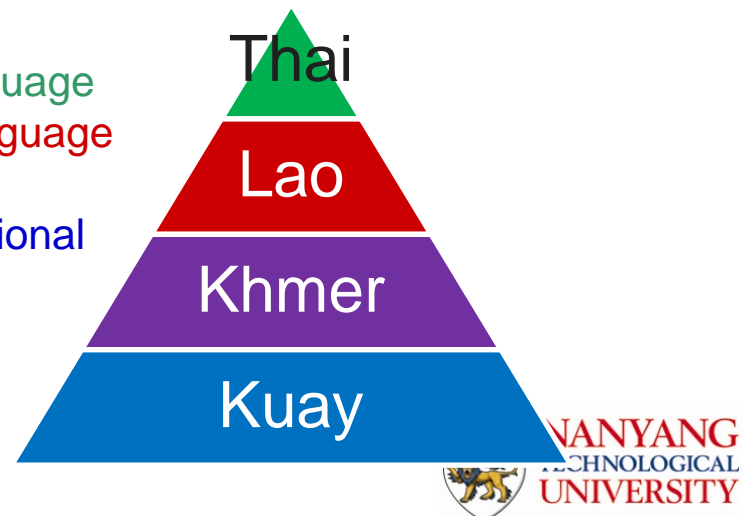
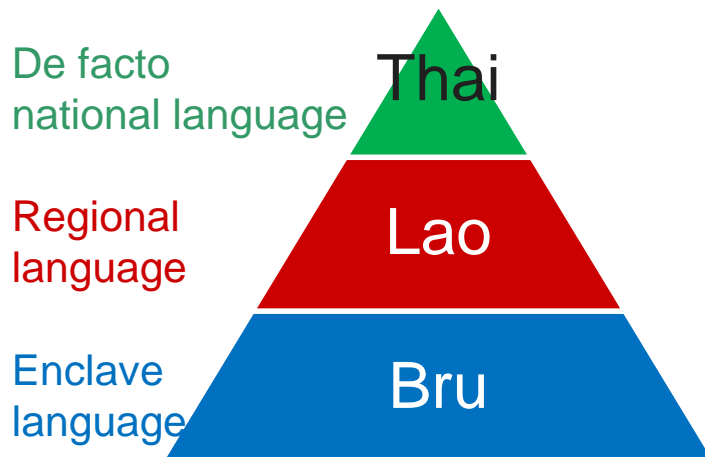
## Population & Background Information

	Ethnic Kuay and Ta Klang (TK)
The population	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approx. 0.4 million in 4 Isan provinces (incl. Surin)</li> <li>• Lao Isan 14 million, Highland Khmer 1.4 million in Isan (Premsrirat et al., 2003)</li> <li>• TK: Approx. 1,200</li> </ul>
Ethnonym	<p>Exonym: Suay 'tribute (tax)' (paid tax by elephants);</p> <p>Endonym: Kuay or Kuy 'man'</p>
History	Immigrated from Southern Laos in the 17 to 18 <sup>th</sup> century
Occupations	Mahout, Farming, Working away from home (both as a mahout and as labor)
Other features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seen as the center of mahout culture of Kuay</li> <li>• Number of anthropological studies</li> <li>• Not all villagers have elephants</li> </ul>



# The Status of Languages in WB and TK

- Hierarchical relationship (Smalley, 1994; Premsrirat, 2007)
  - Standard/Central Thai (Thai)
  - Northeastern Thai/Lao Isan (Lao)
  - (Northern) Khmer (Khmer)
  - Bru / Kuay



# Methodology

- Field research
  - 3 months in 2014: preliminary surveys
  - 4 months in 2015: the 1st data collection
  - 4 months in 2016: the 2nd data collection
- Questionnaire
  - Personal information
  - Language Proficiency ('5-Excellent' to '1-Not at all')
  - Language Attitude ('5-Agree' to '1-Disagree')
  - Language Choice 5-level Likert scale
- Observation and interviews

# Methodology (cont.)

## Language Choice (LC)

- 33 domains (questions)

Q. Overall, what languages do you use when you are at home and talk with your mother?

5. Use **only** this language

4. Use **more frequently** than other languages

3. Use **as frequently as** other languages

2. Use **less frequently** than other languages

1. **Not** use this language **at all**

Kuay	1	2	3	4	5
Khmer	1	2	3	4	5
Lao	1	2	3	4	5
Thai	1	2	3	4	5

Bru	1	2	3	4	5
Lao	1	2	3	4	5
Thai	1	2	3	4	5

# Participants and Interviewees

## WB Bru: Total

### WB Participants

Age	Gender		Total
	Male	Female	
10~19	12	12	<b>24</b>
20~29	10	12	<b>22</b>
30~39	11	12	<b>23</b>
40~49	11	10	<b>21</b>
50~59	15	11	<b>26</b>
60~69	8	4	<b>12</b>
70~	4	6	<b>10</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>138</b>

### WB Interviewees

Age	Gender		Total
	Male	Female	
10~19	2	3	<b>5</b>
20~29	2	3	<b>5</b>
30~39	2	2	<b>4</b>
40~49	2	3	<b>5</b>
50~59	2	2	<b>4</b>
60~	2	3	<b>5</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>28</b>

# Participants and Interviewees

## WB Bru: Target of Analysis of This Paper

### Ethnic Bru Participants

Age	Gender		Total
	Male	Female	
10~19	10	8	18
20~29	8	11	19
30~39	10	9	19
40~49	10	8	18
50~59	12	10	22
60~69	6	4	10
70~	4	4	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>114</b>

- The data from all ethnic Bru participants were analyzed in this study



# Participants and Interviewees

## TK Kuay: Total

### TK Participants

Age	Gender		Total
	Male	Female	
~9	1	0	1
10~19	15	23	39*
20~29	13	11	24
30~39	12	12	24
40~49	10	16	26
50~59	10	14	24
60~69	6	6	12
70~	5	4	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>159</b>

\*1 participant did not answer his/her own gender.

### TK Interviewees

Age	Gender		Total
	Male	Female	
10~19	2	2	4
20~29	2	2	4
30~39	2	2	4
40~49	2	2	4
50~59	3	2	5
60~	2	2	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>25</b>

# Participants and Interviewees

## TK Kuay: Target of Analysis of This Paper

### Ethnic Kuay Participants of This Paper

Age	Gender		Total
	Male	Female	
~18	16	22	<b>39*</b>
19~25	10	9	<b>19</b>
26~45	3	15	<b>18</b>
46~	7	12	<b>19</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>95</b>

\*1 participant with no answer of gender

- Not all the participants from the 2<sup>nd</sup> data collection are included.
- However, all participants below 18 years old (secondary school students) are included.
- The classification is the same as Tomioka (2016b):
  - ~18 years old (children),
  - 19~25 (adolescents yet to have children),
  - 26~45 (parents), and
  - 46~ (grandparents)

# RESULTS

# PRELIMINARY RESULTS

## Bru (WB Bru)

- Tomioka (2016a)
- **Shifting**
  - bilingual of Lao and Bru
  - bilingual of Lao and Thai

## Kuay (TK Kuay)

- Tomioka (2016b)
- **Maintained (Kuay)**
- **Shifting** (Lao and Khmer)
  - quadrilingual of Kuay, Khmer, Lao, and Thai,
  - trilingual of Kuay, Lao, and Thai
  - bilingual of Kuay and Thai

# EGIDS (Lewis and Simons, 2010)

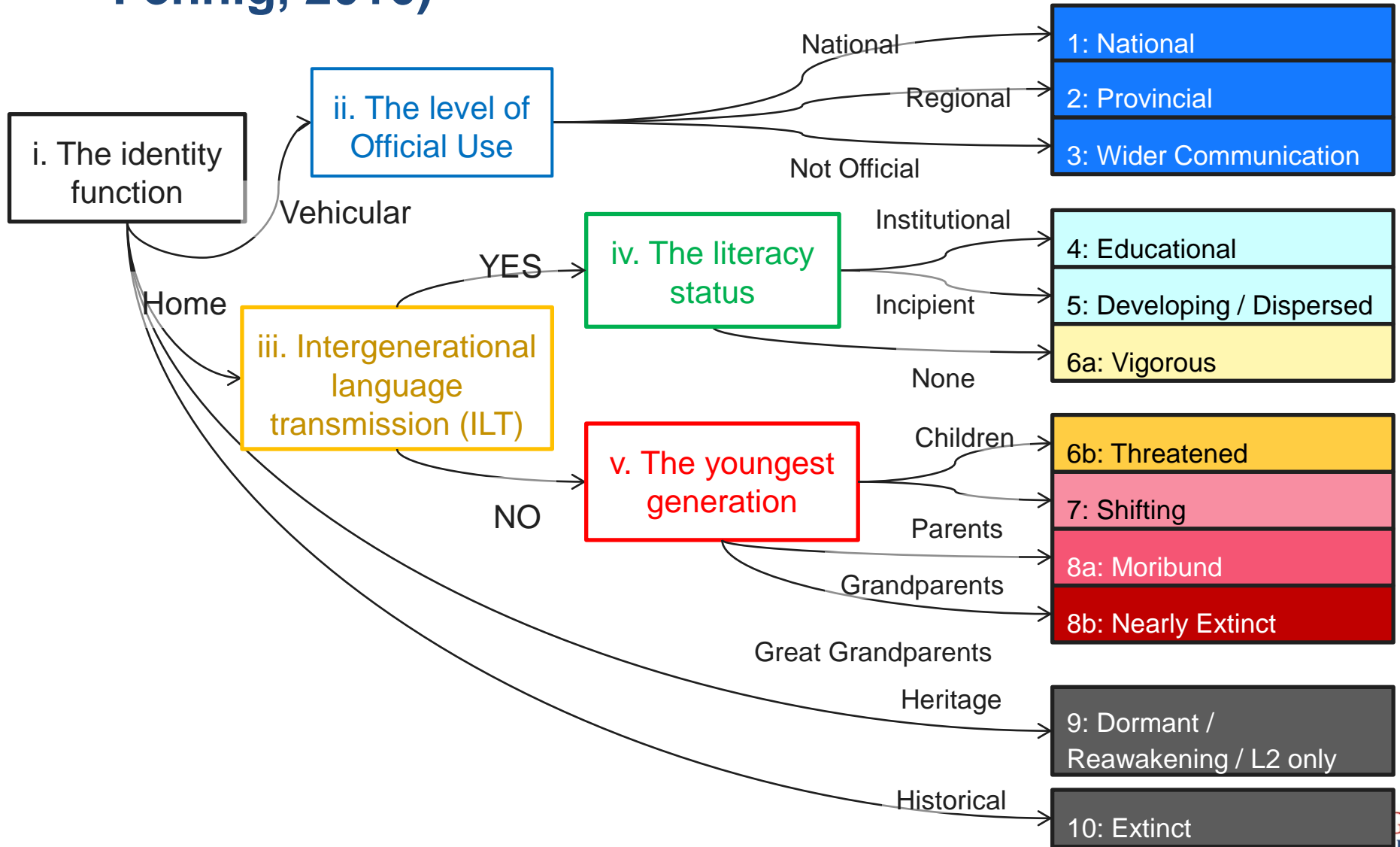
- EGIDS is a tool for quickly assessing language vitality and endangerment
- From only 5 key issues



# EGIDS (Lewis and Simons, 2010)

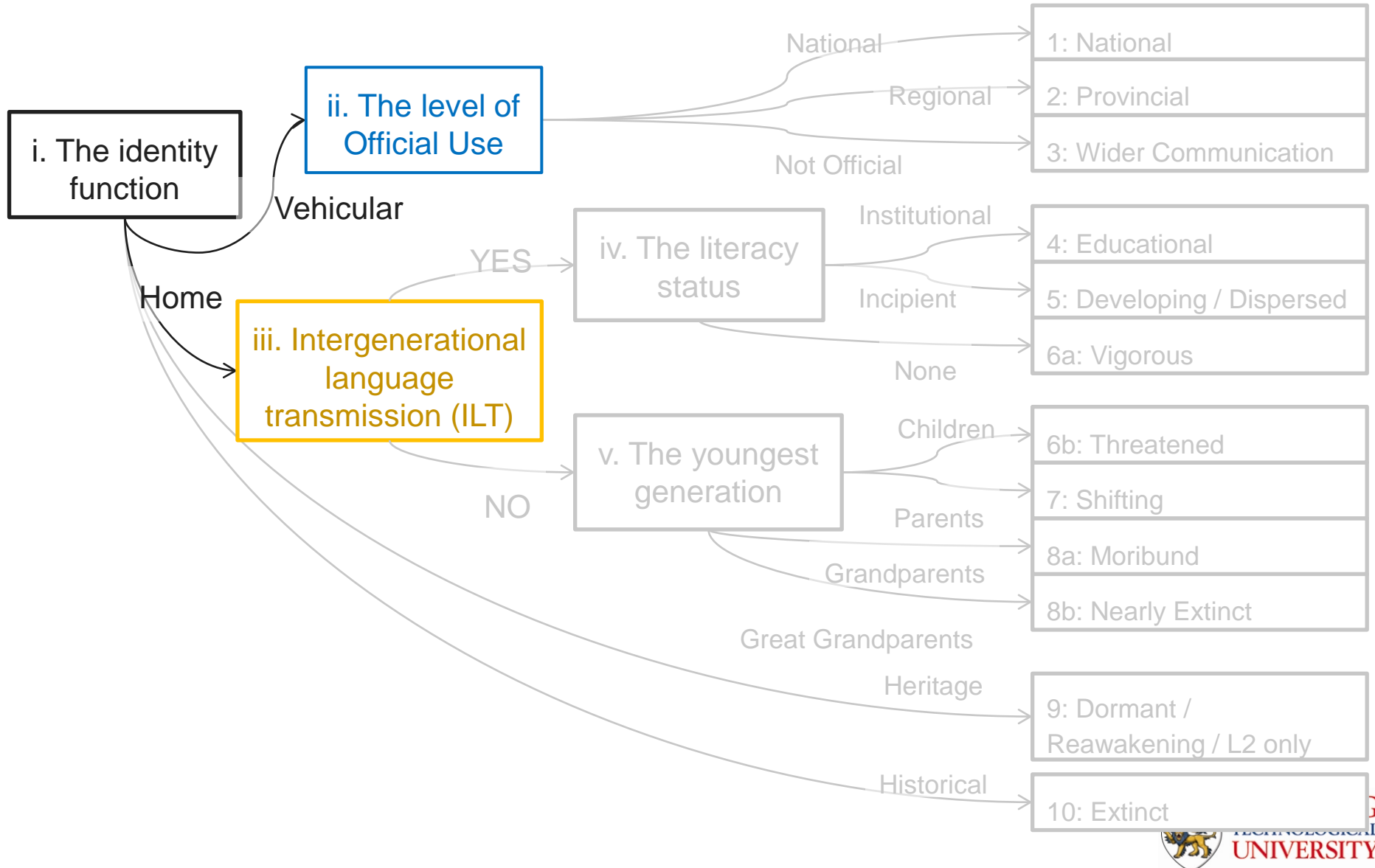
- i. The Identity Function
- ii. The Level of Official Status
- iii. Intergenerational Language Transmission (ILT)
- iv. The Literacy Status
- v. The Youngest Speakers with Some Fluent Speakers

# EGIDS Diagnostic Decision Tree (Lewis & Simons, 2010) for Ethnologue 19th ed. (Lewis, Simons, & Fennig, 2016)



# Assessing WB Bru and TK Kuay's Level of EGIDS

## i. The Identity Function

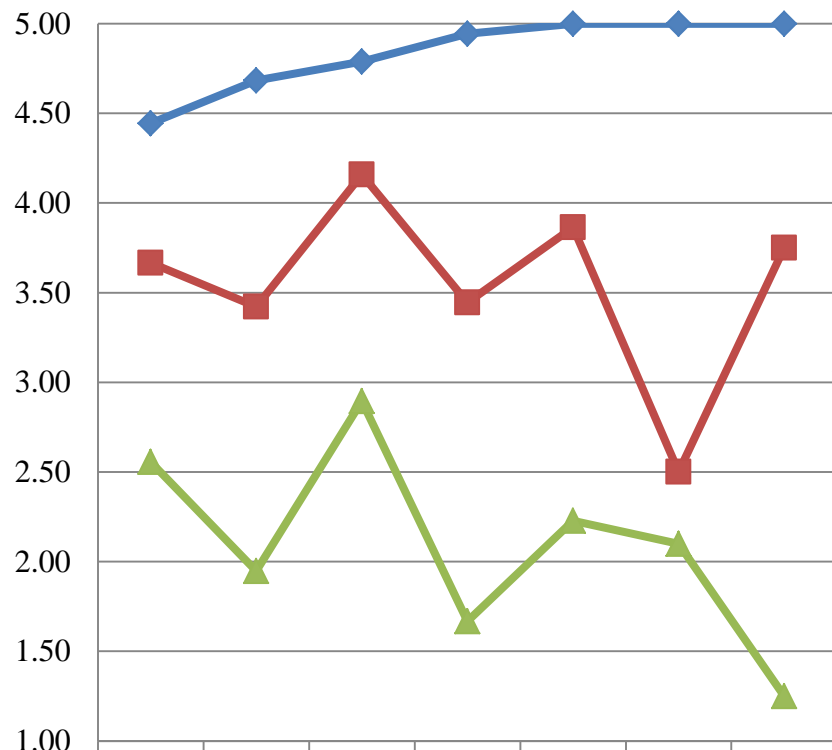


# i. The Identity Function

(LA1) This language fosters intimacy with

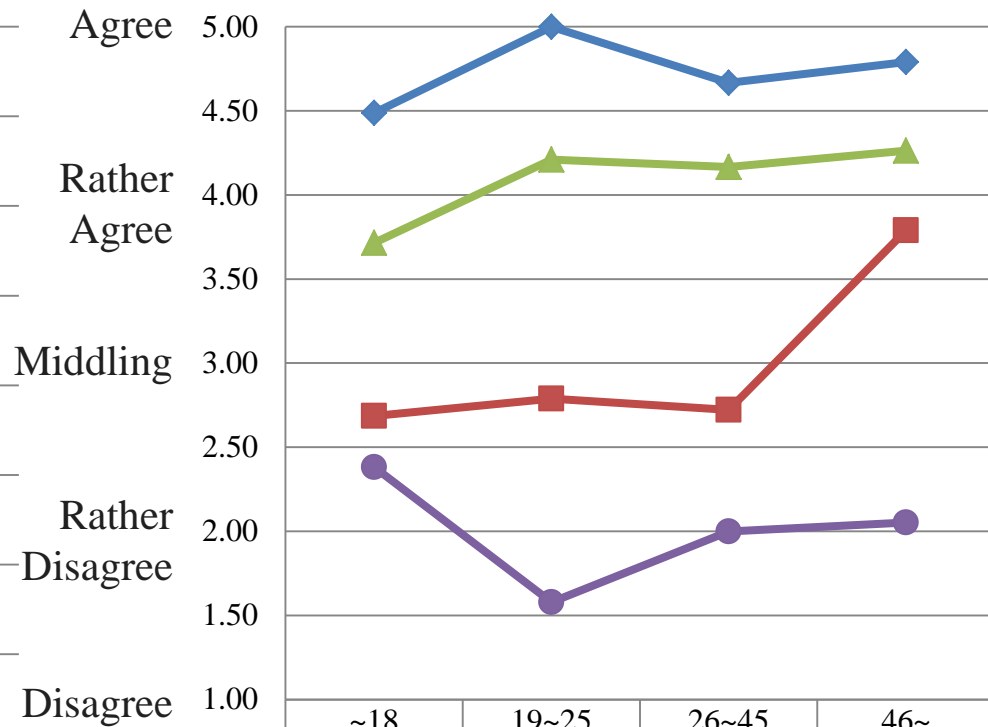
**Bru/Kuay people in WB/TK**

## Bru (WB): Bru



	10~19	20~29	30~39	40~49	50~59	60~69	70~
Bru	4.44	4.68	4.79	4.94	5.00	5.00	5.00
Lao	3.67	3.42	4.16	3.44	3.86	2.50	3.75
Thai	2.56	1.95	2.89	1.67	2.23	2.10	1.25
N	18	19	19	18	22	10	8

## Kuay (TK): Kuay (&Thai)

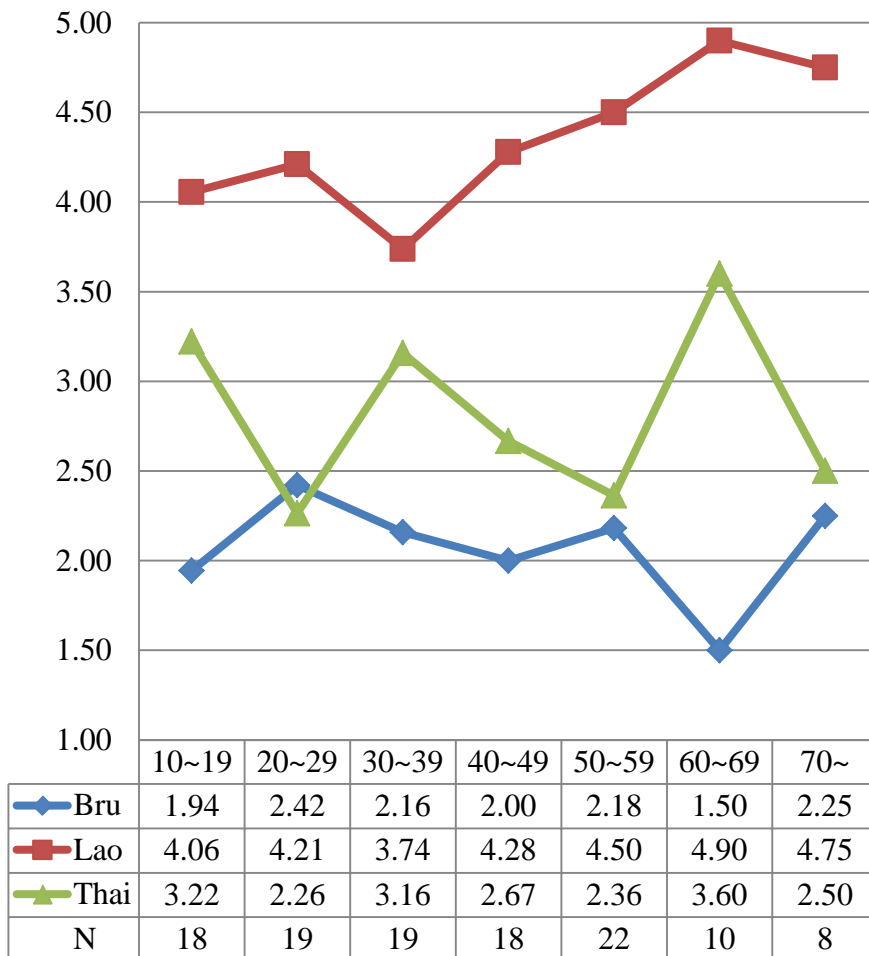


	~18	19~25	26~45	46~
Kuay	4.49	5.00	4.67	4.79
Lao	2.69	2.79	2.72	3.79
Thai	3.71	4.21	4.17	4.26
Khmer	2.38	1.58	2.00	2.05
N	37	19	18	19

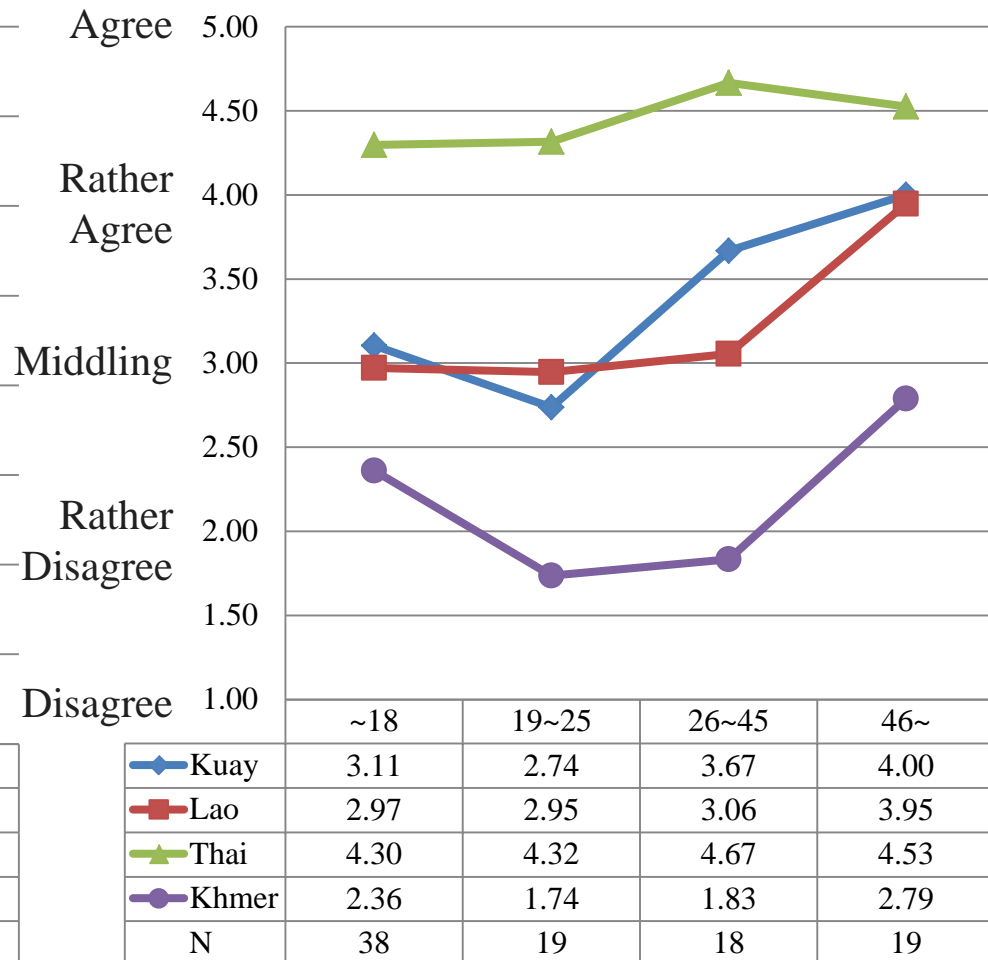
# i. The Identity Function

(LA3) This language fosters intimacy with  
**Non-Bru/Kuay people living in WB/TK**

## Bru (WB): Lao



## Kuay (TK): Thai (+Kuay & Lao)





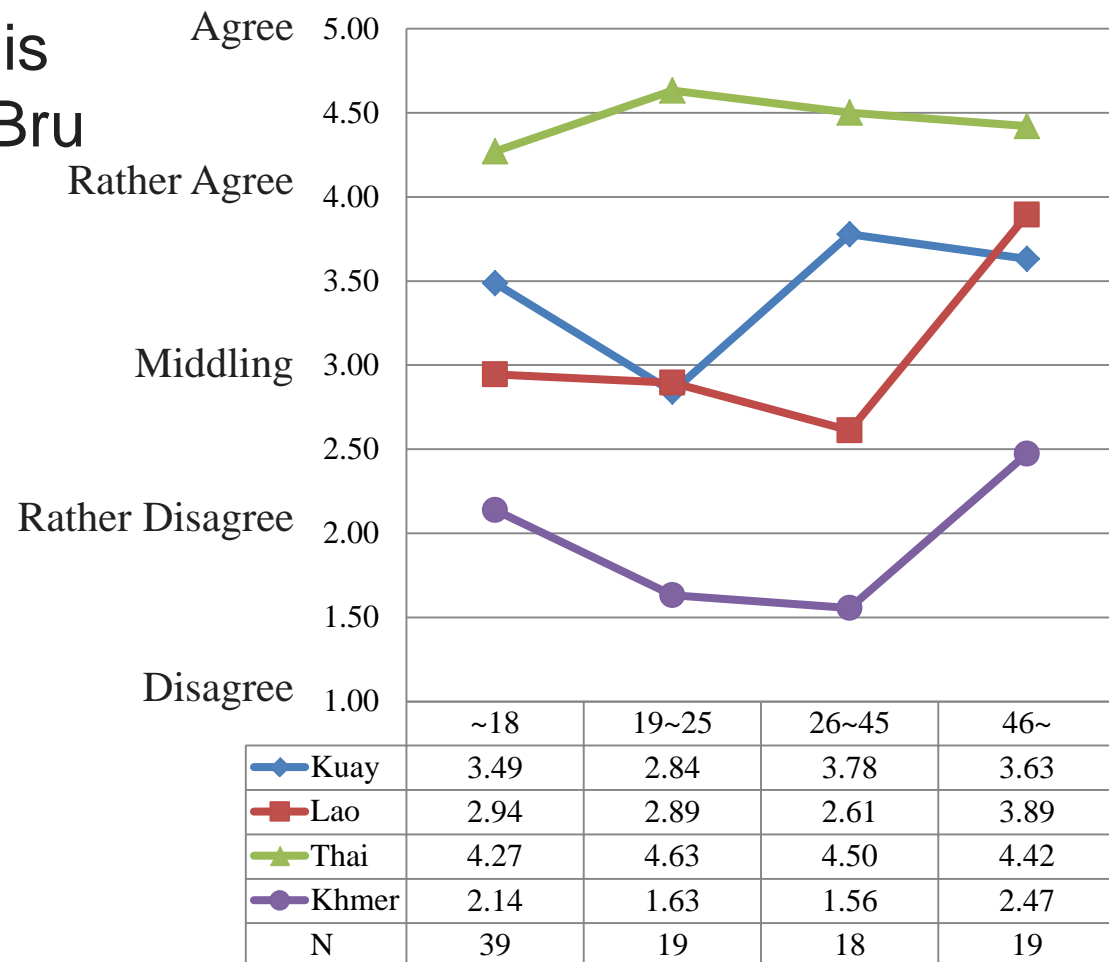
# i. The Identity Function

## (LA4) This language fosters intimacy with outsiders

### Bru (WB):

- The identity function is limited within ethnic Bru people
  - Not “Vehicular,”
  - but “Home”

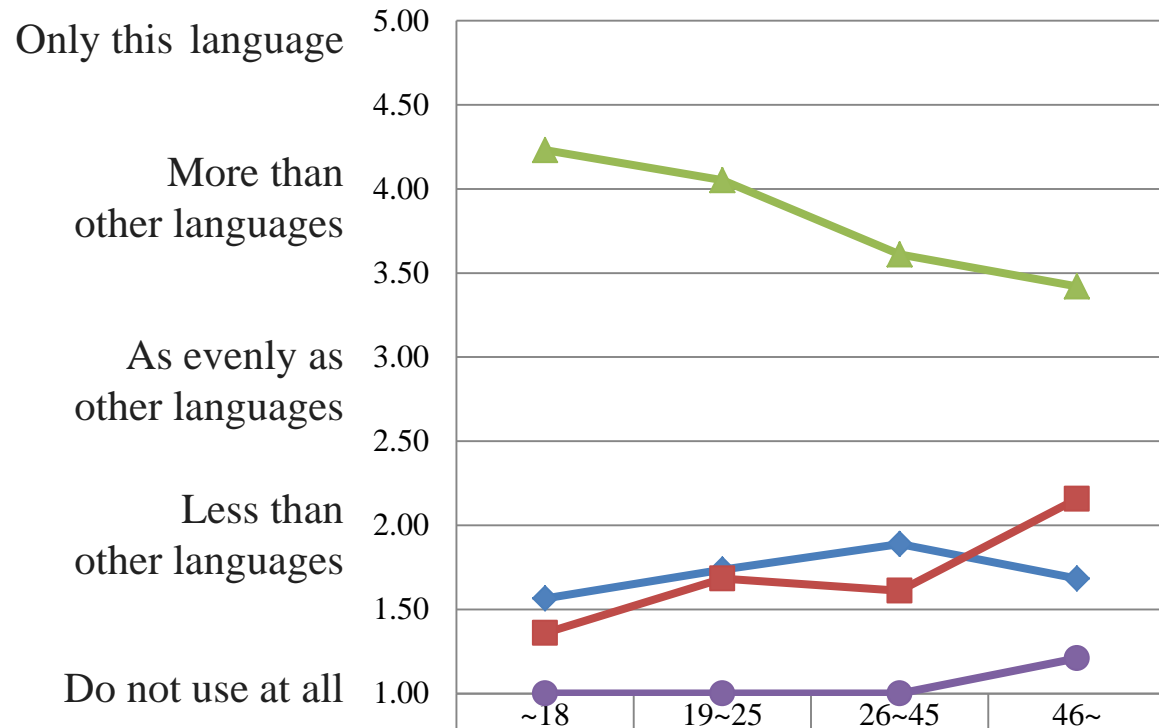
### Kuay (TK): Thai (+Kuay & Lao)



# i. The Identity Function

## (LC2) Language Choice at **Market** with **Sellers** regarding **Shopping**

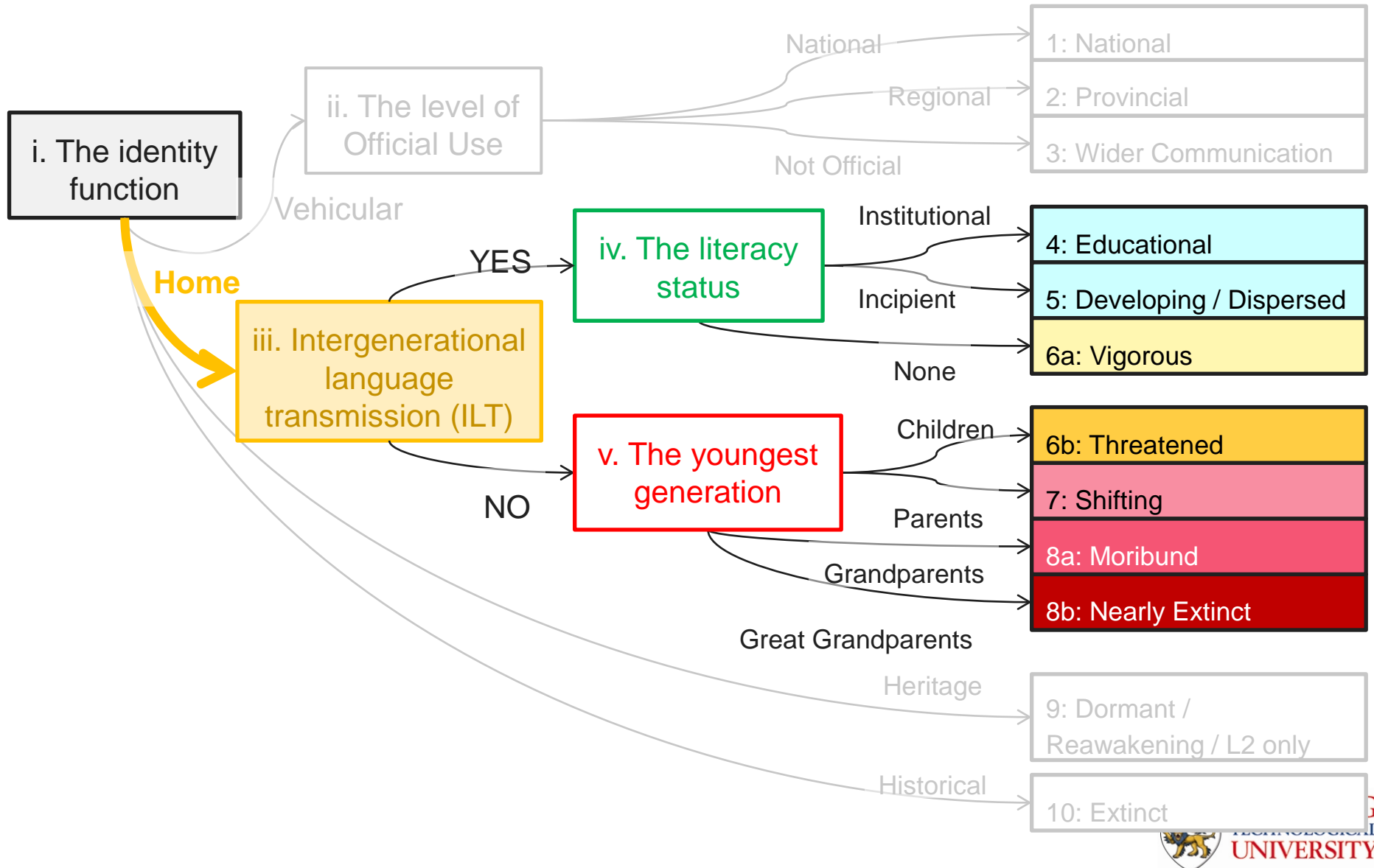
### Kuay (TK): Thai



—◆— Kuay	1.56	1.74	1.89	1.68
—■— Lao	1.36	1.68	1.61	2.16
—▲— Thai	4.23	4.05	3.61	3.42
—●— Khmer	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.21
N	39	19	18	19

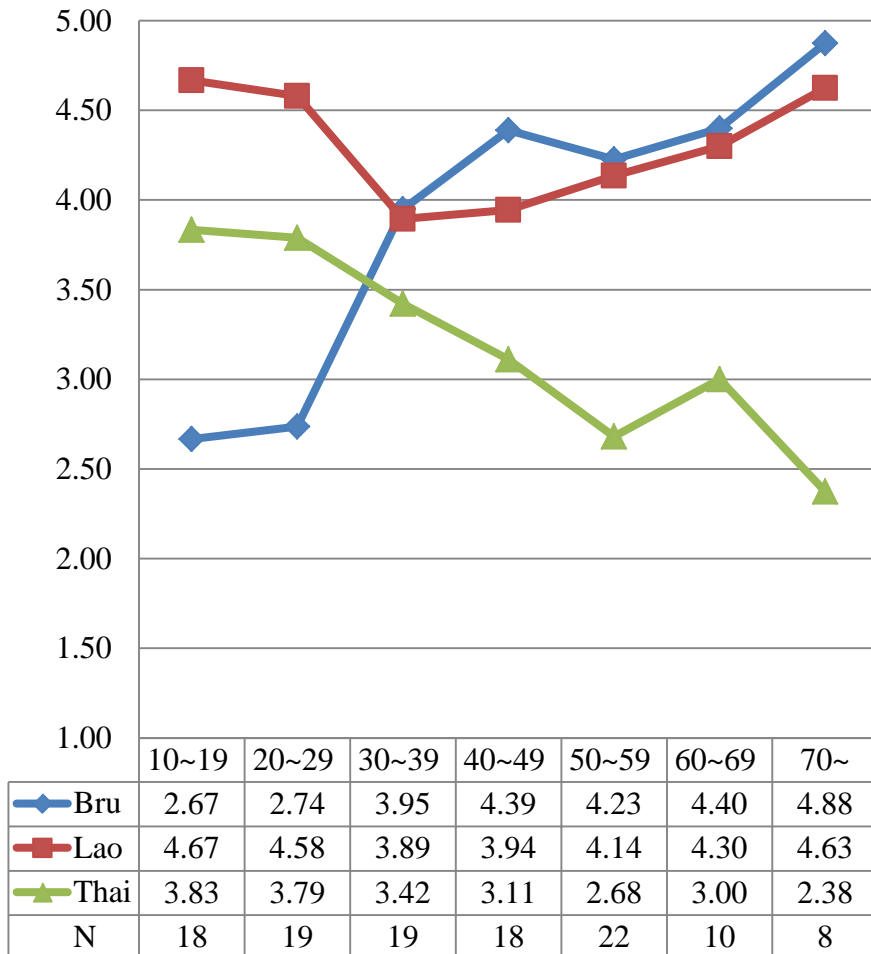
# Assessing WB Bru and TK Kuay's Level of EGIDS

## ii. Intergenerational Language Transmission

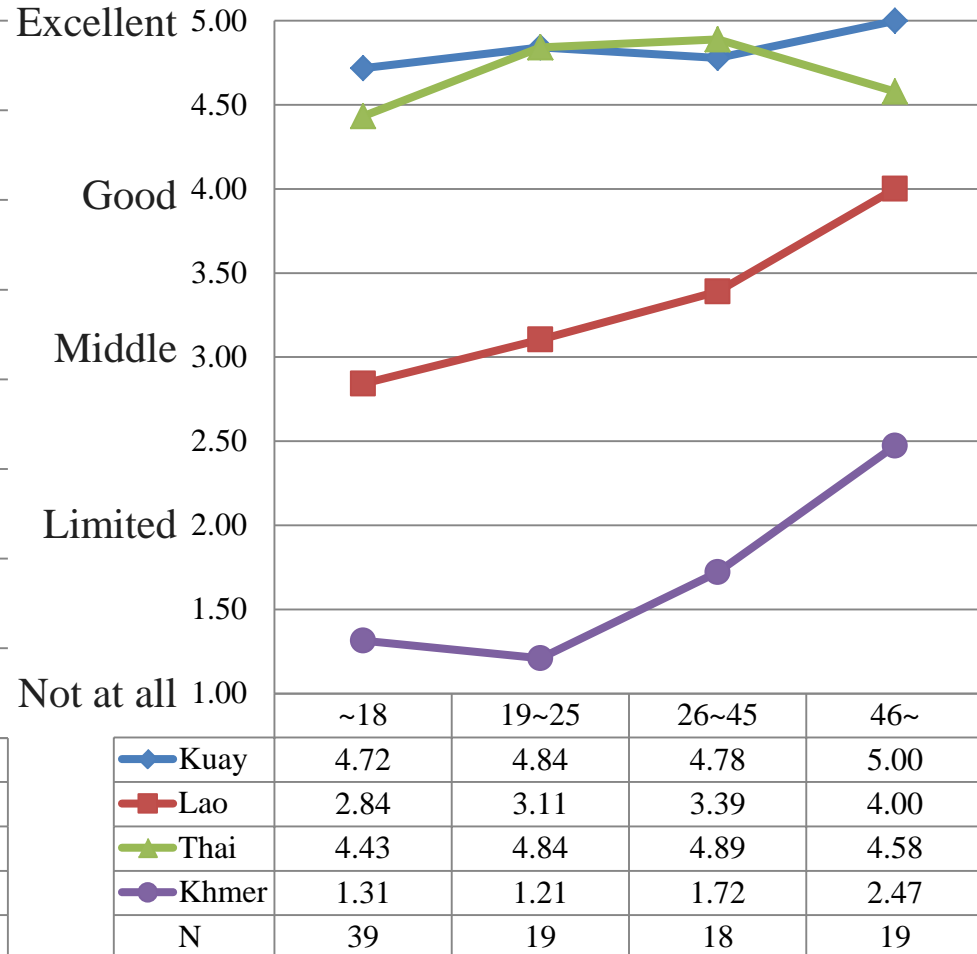


# iii. ILT: (LP1) Language Proficiency: Speaking

## Bru (WB): Decreasing

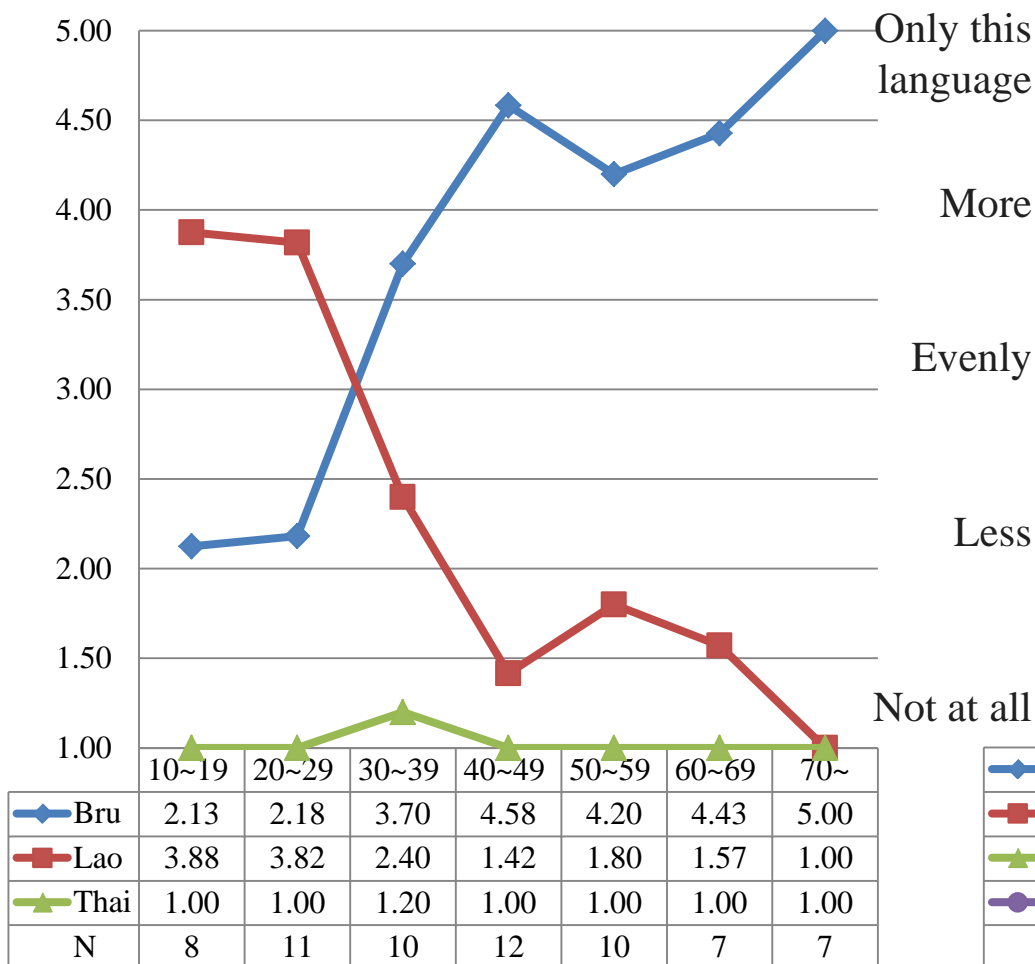


## Kuay (TK): Maintained

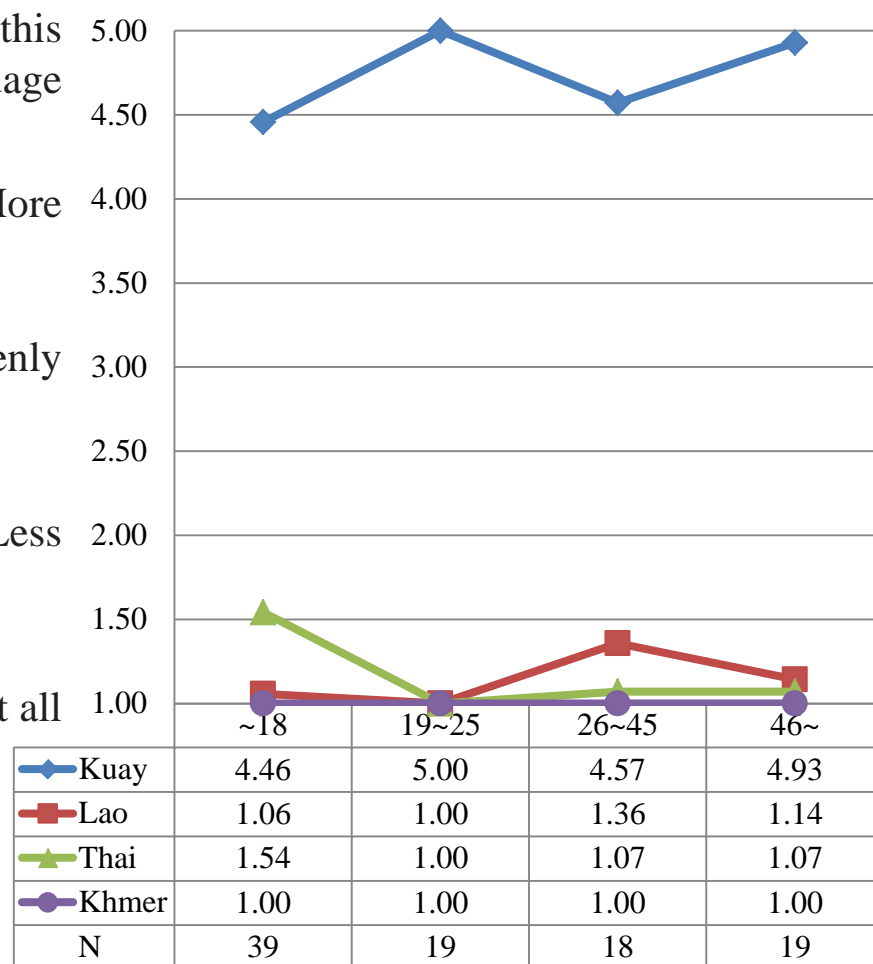


# iii. ILT: (LC3) Language Choice at Home with **Maternal Grandparents**

## Bru (WB): Shifting



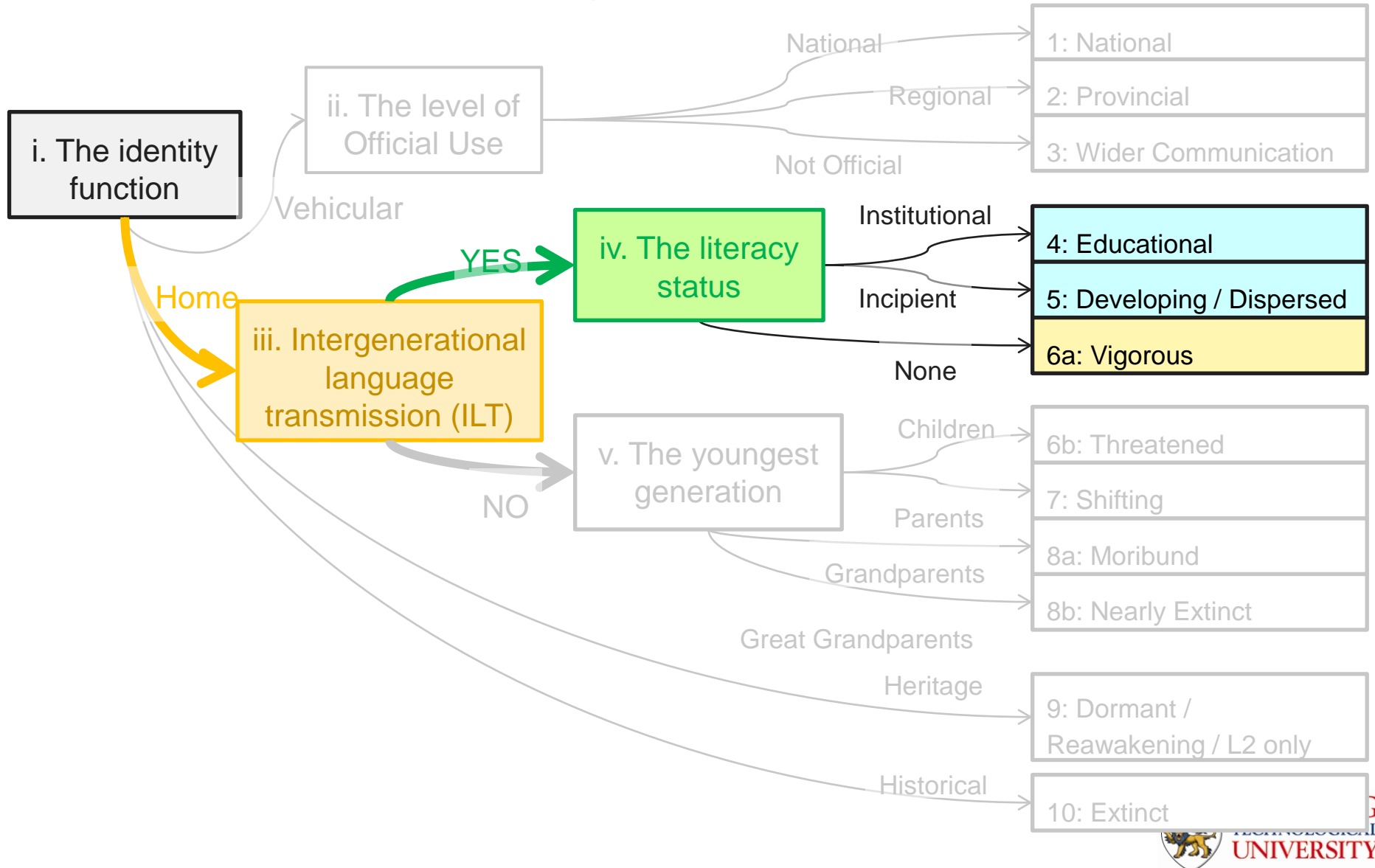
## Kuay (TK): Maintained





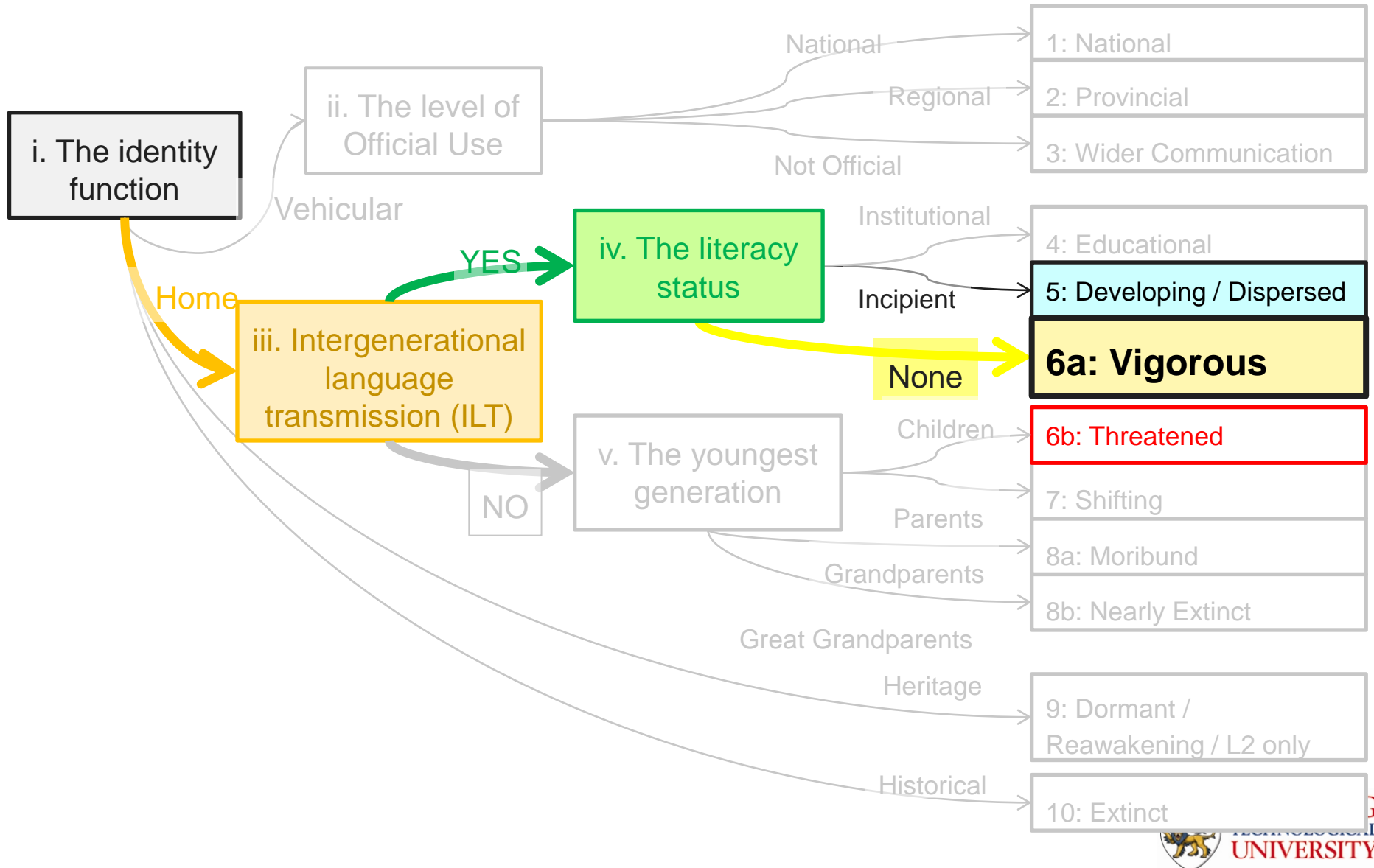
# Assessing TK Kuay's Level of EGIDS

## iv. The Literacy Status

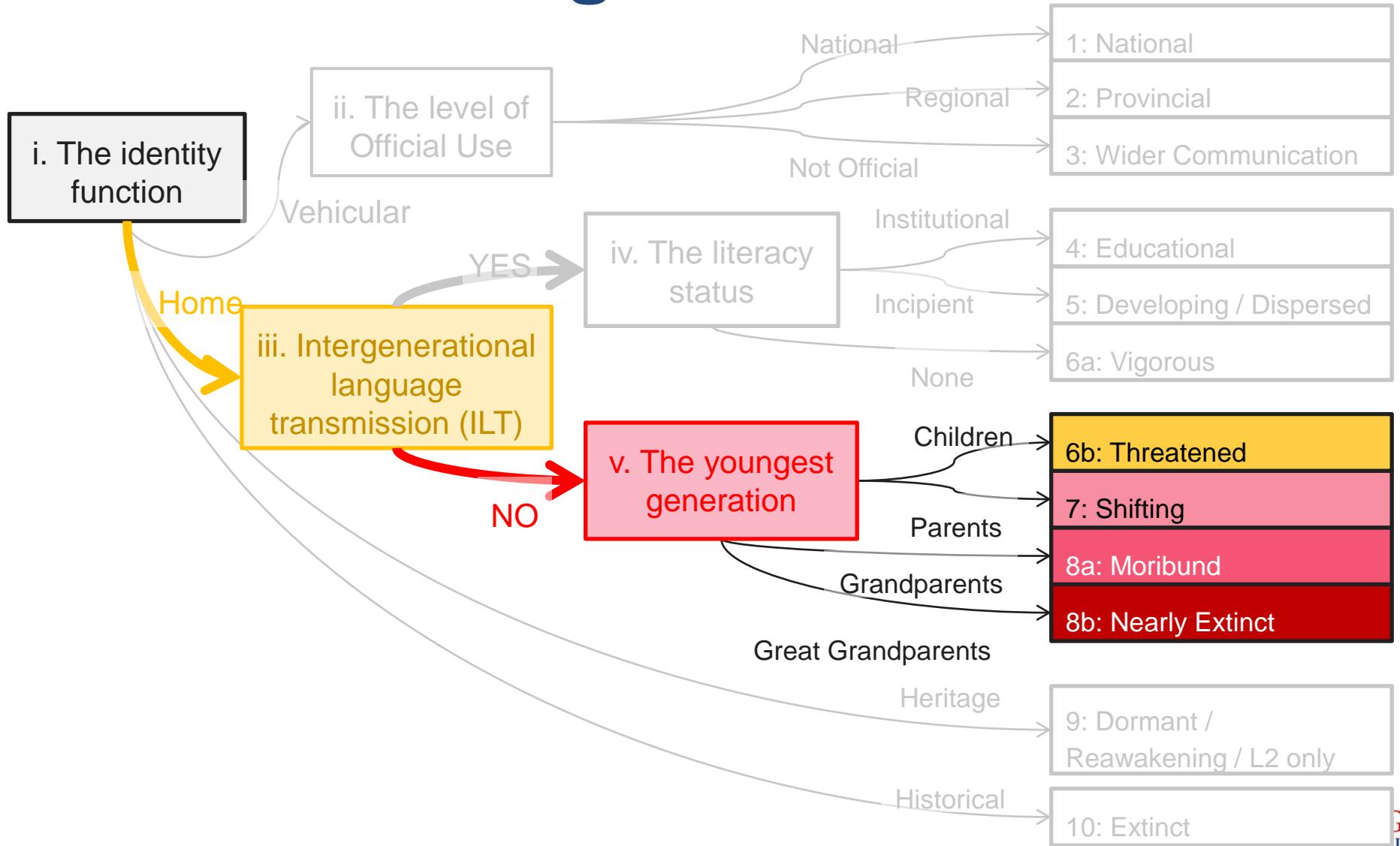


# Assessing TK Kuay's Level of EGIDS:

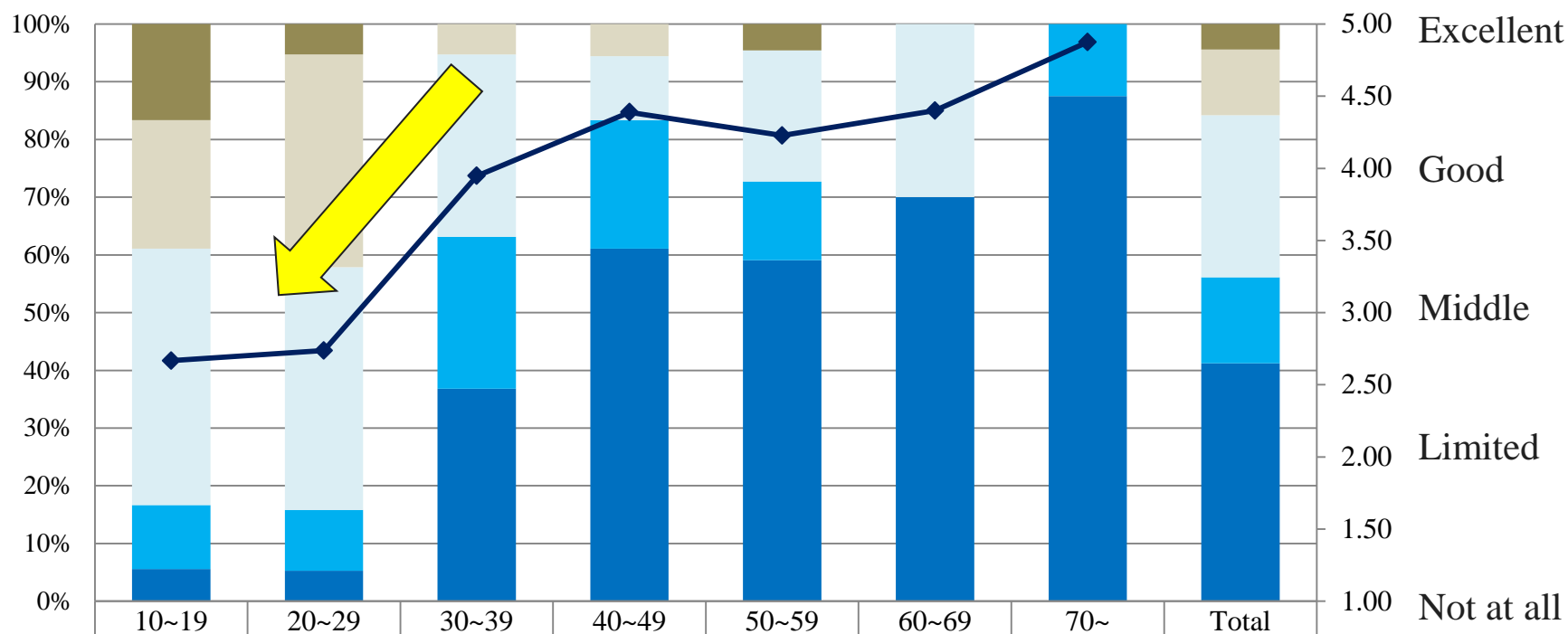
## The Result



# Assessing WB Bru's Level of EGIDS v. The Youngest Generation



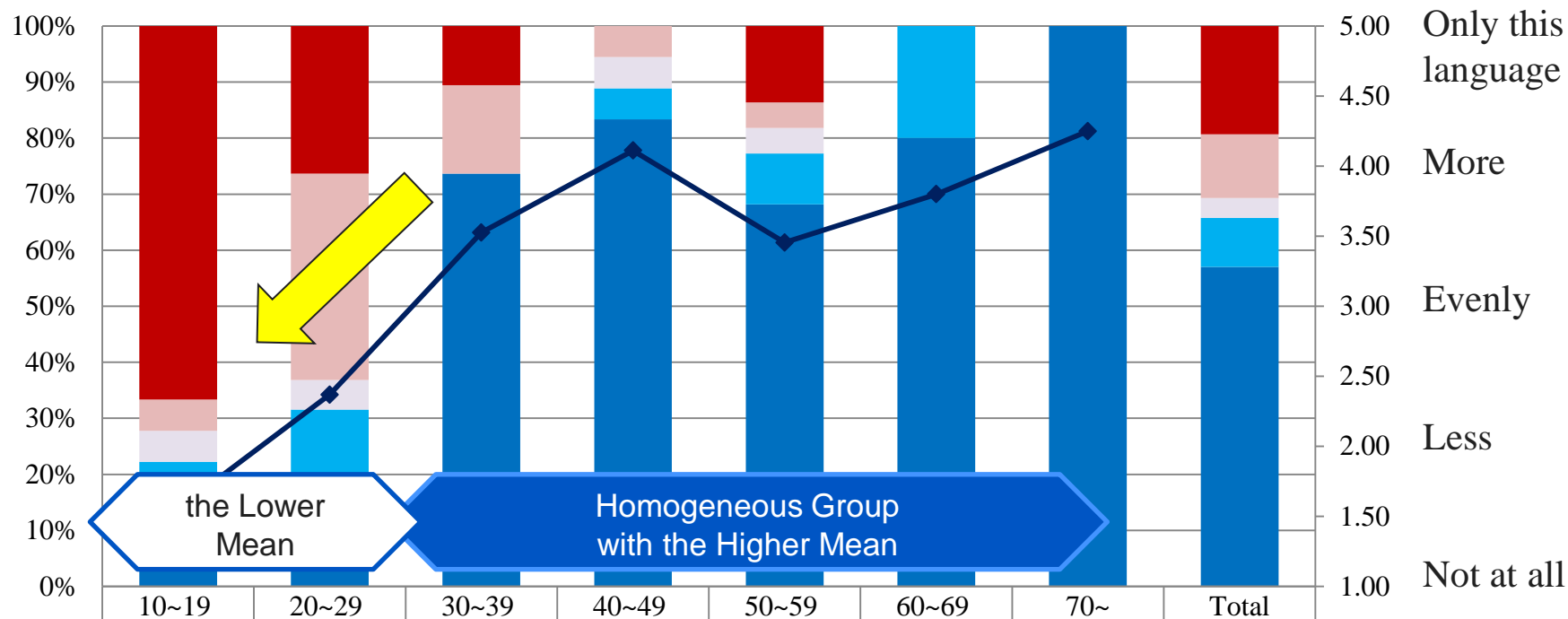
## v. The Youngest Generation with Some Fluency: (LP1) Proficiency of **Speaking Bru**



1-Not at all									
2-Limited									
3-Middle									
4-Good	2								
5-Excellent	1								
N	18								
mean	2.67								
the Lower Mean									
Homogeneous Group with the Higher Mean									
		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.			
		Between Groups	68.022	6	11.337	11.887	.000	7	47
		Within Groups	102.048	107	.954			8	114
		Total	170.070	113				4.88	

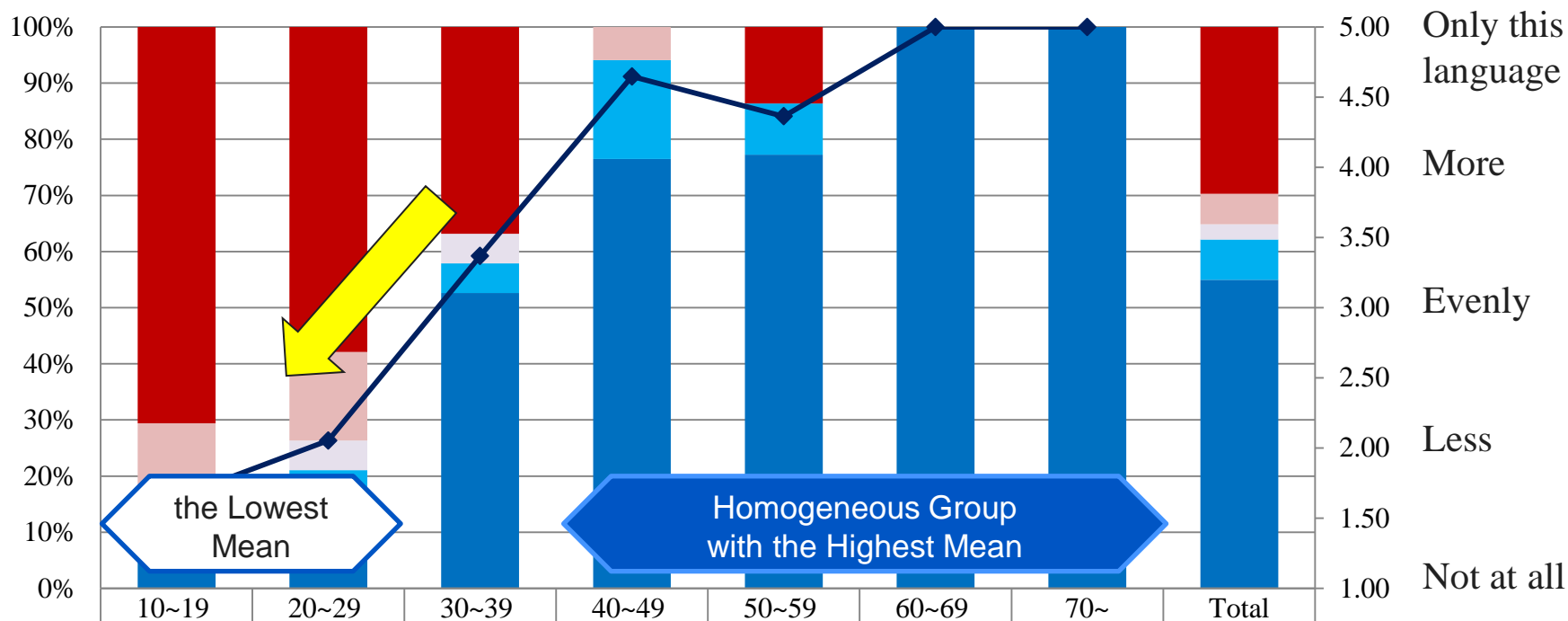
# v. The Youngest Generation with Some Fluency: (LC4) Language Choice

at **WB** with **Bru People**



1-Not at all	12	5	2	0	3	0	0	22
2-Less	1							13
3-Evenly	1							4
4-More	2							10
5-Only	2							65
N	18							114
mean	1.56							4.25
Sum of Squares df Mean Square F Sig.								
Bru Between Groups 137.364 12 11.4476.675 .000								
Within Groups 173.206 101 1.715								
Total 310.570 113								
Lao Between Groups 137.364 12 11.4476.675 .000								
Within Groups 173.206 101 1.715								
Total 310.570 113								

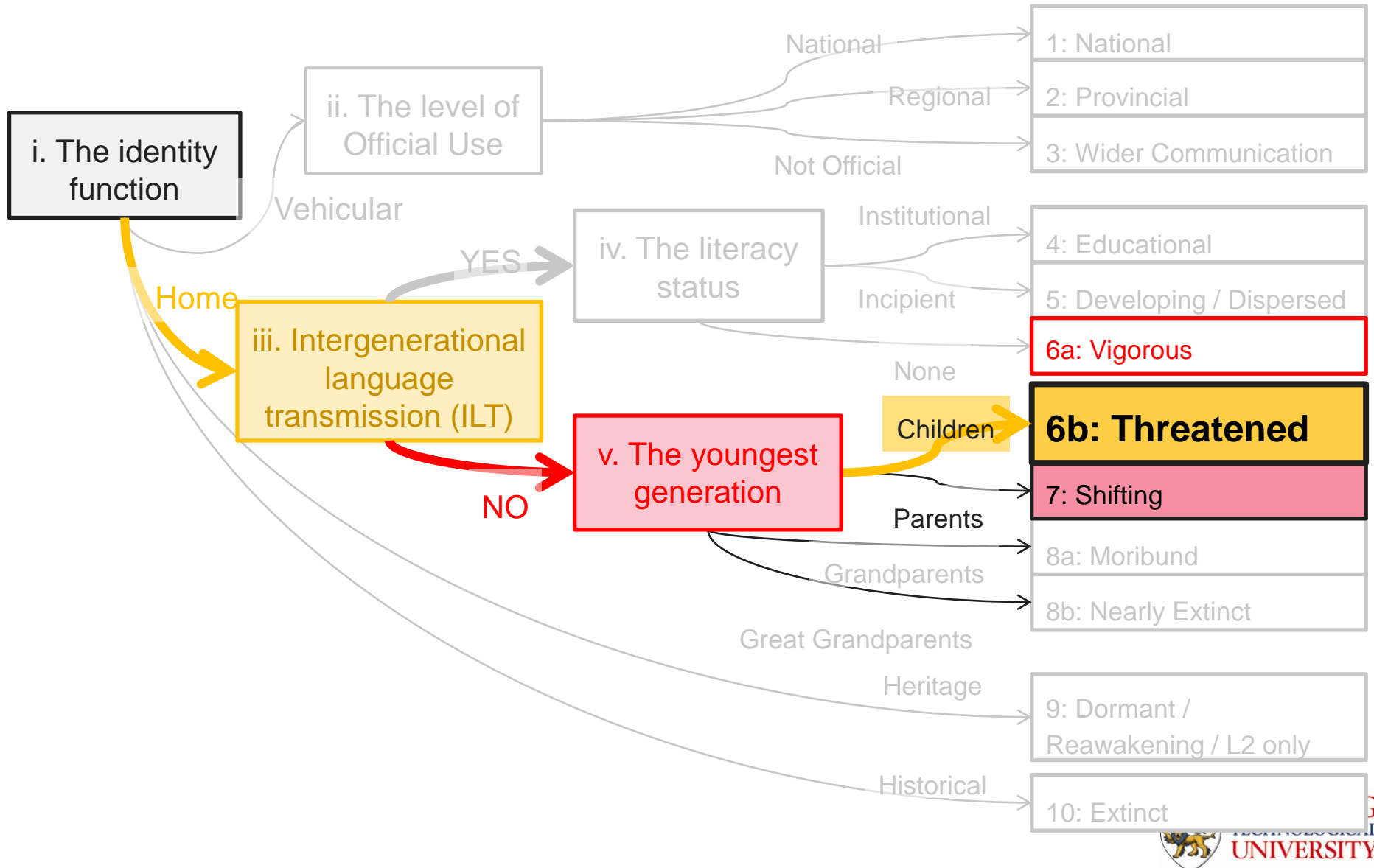
# v. The Youngest Generation with Some Fluency: (LC5) Language Choice at Home with **Mother**



1-Not at all	12	11	7	0	3	0	0	33
2-Less	2							6
3-Evenly	1							3
4-More	1							8
5-Only	1							61
N	17							111
mean	1.65							
Sum of Squares df Mean Square F Sig.								
Bru Between Groups 175.470 6 29.245 16.510 .000								
Within Groups 184.224 104 1.771								
Total 359.694 110								
Lao Between Groups 182.236 6 30.373 17.402 .000								
Within Groups 181.512 104 1.745								
Total 363.748 110								

# Assessing WB Bru's Level of EGIDS:

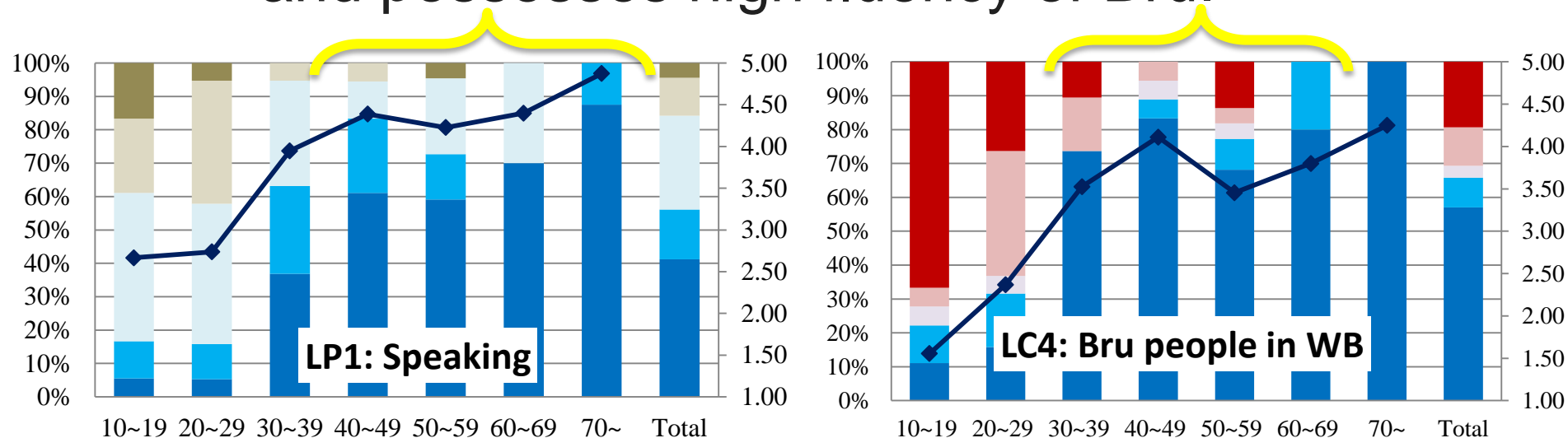
## The Result



# The Feature of LS in WB Bru

- 2 Phases

- (1) There are people who lack Bru proficiency or use Lao even when the use of Bru is expected; the majority uses Bru and possesses high fluency of Bru.

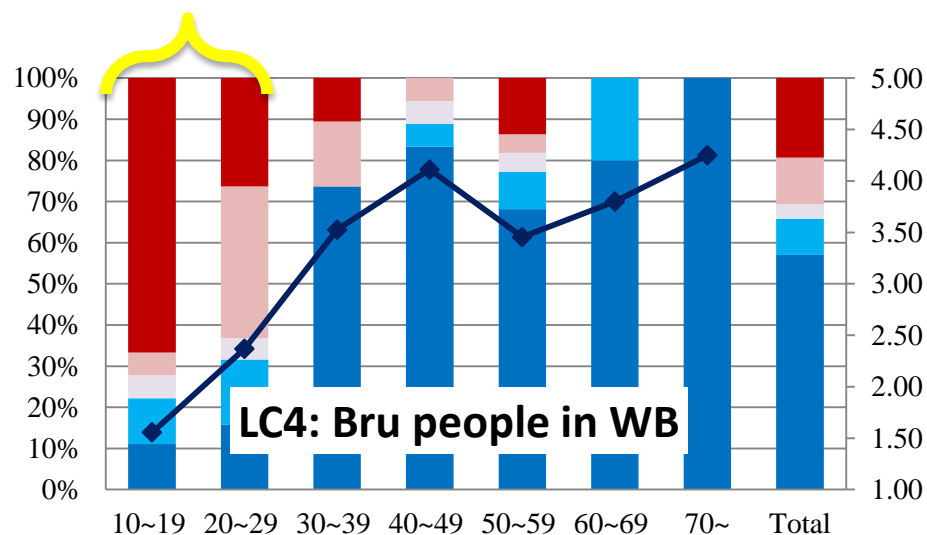
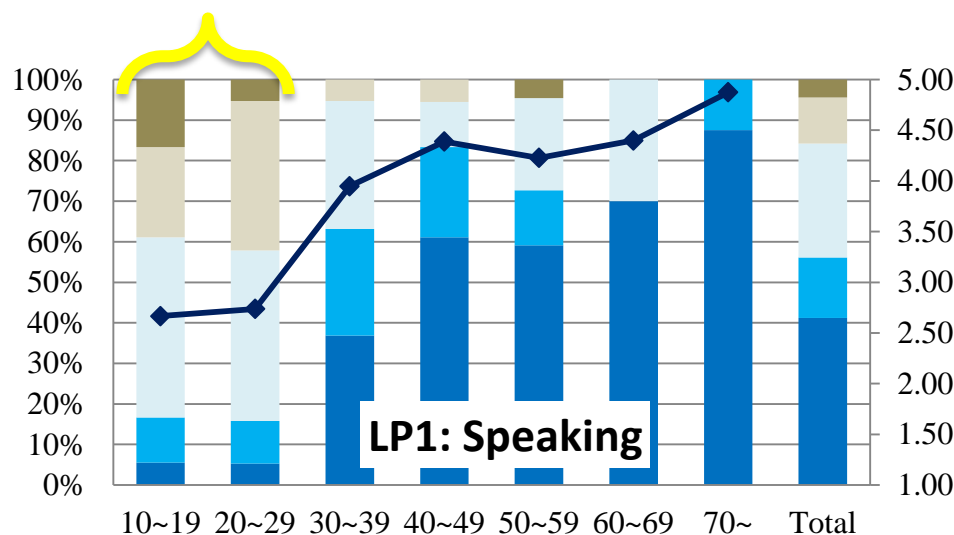




# The Feature of LS in WB Bru

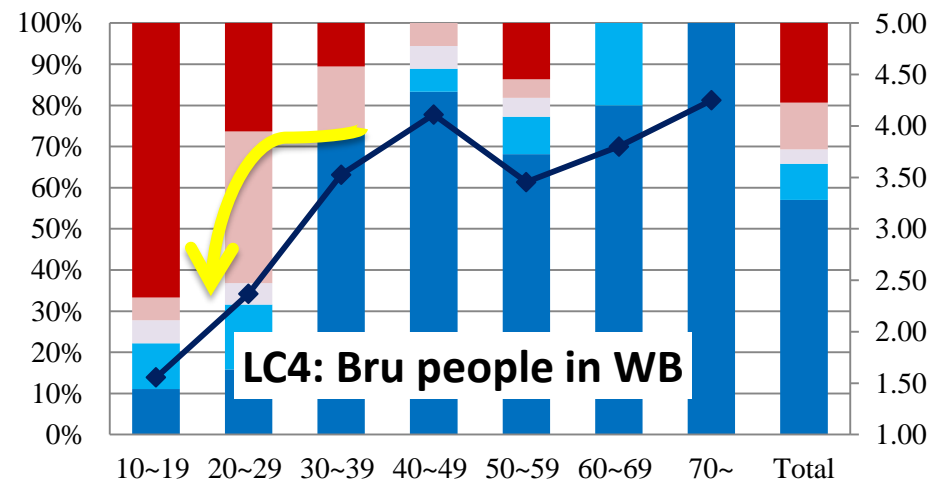
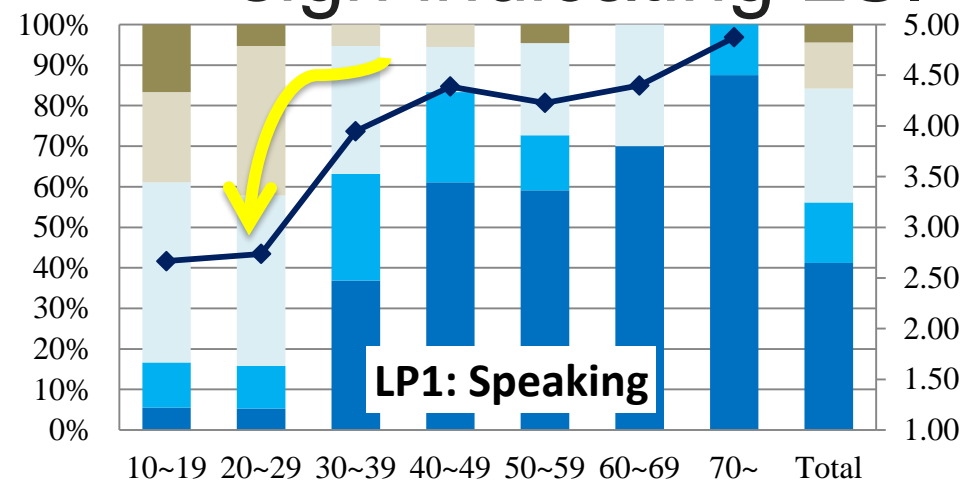
- 2 Phases

- (2) The majority of younger people no longer possesses high enough proficiency, so that they use Lao even when the use of Bru is expected in case among older people.



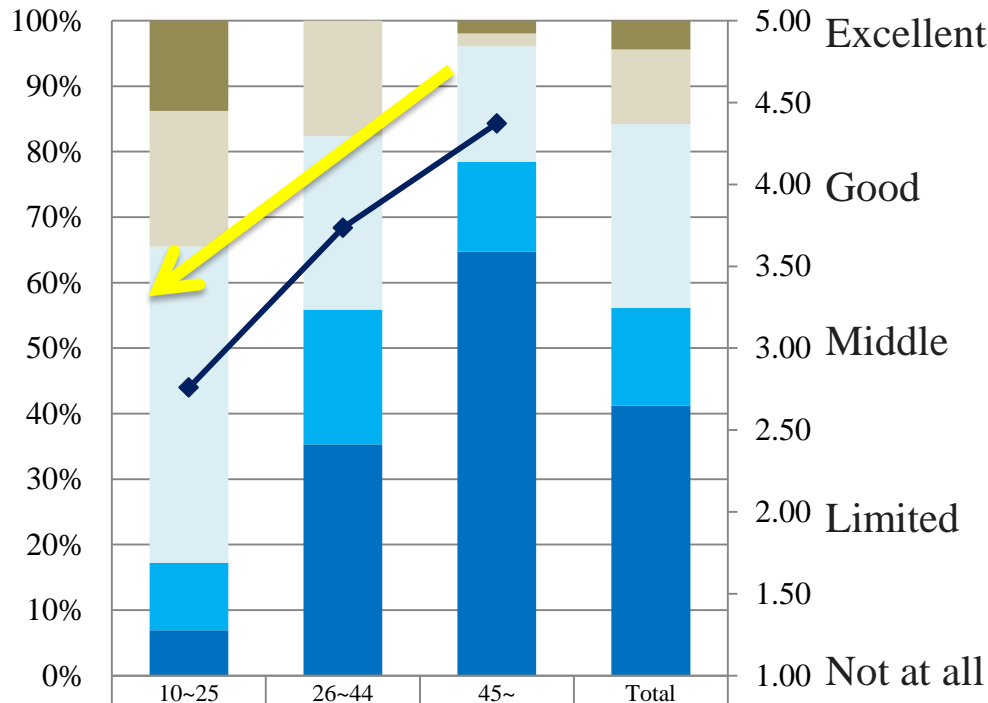
# The Feature of LS in WB Bru

- In WB, the second phase had rapidly progressed.
- For the purpose of language conservation, we should not overlook a sign indicating LS.



# Consideration Regarding Assessment (2): Detailed Classification (LP1: Speaking Bru)

**Children ~ Adolescents,  
Parents, and Grandparents**

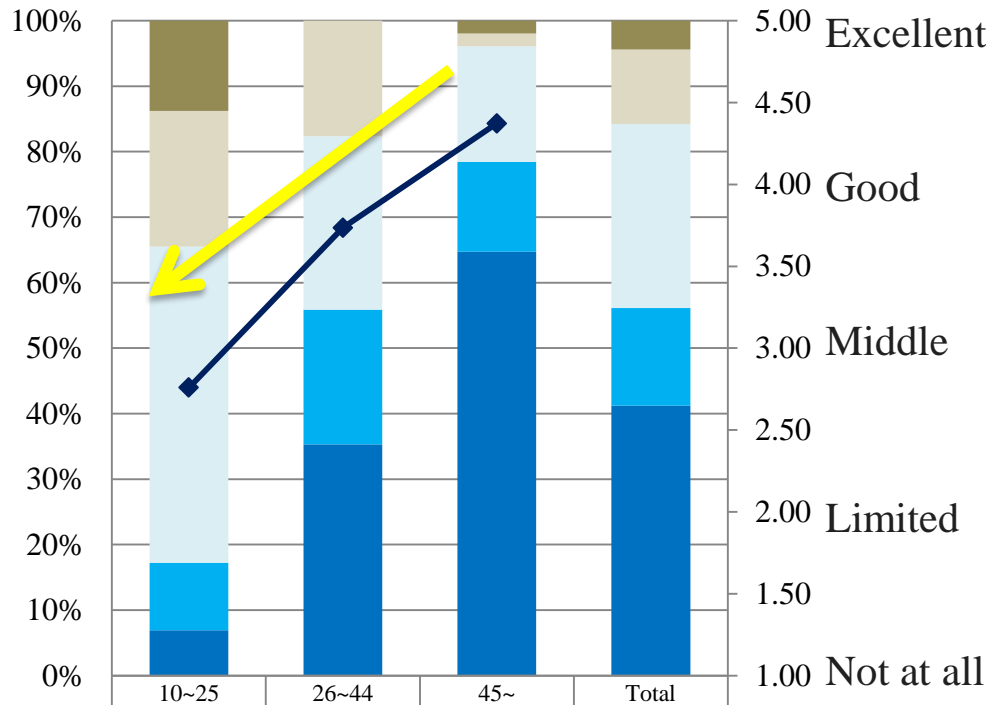


1-Not at all	4	0	1	5
2-Limited	6	6	1	13
3-Middle	14	9	9	32
4-Good	3	7	7	17
5-Excellent	2	12	33	47
N	29	34	51	114
mean	2.76	3.74	4.37	

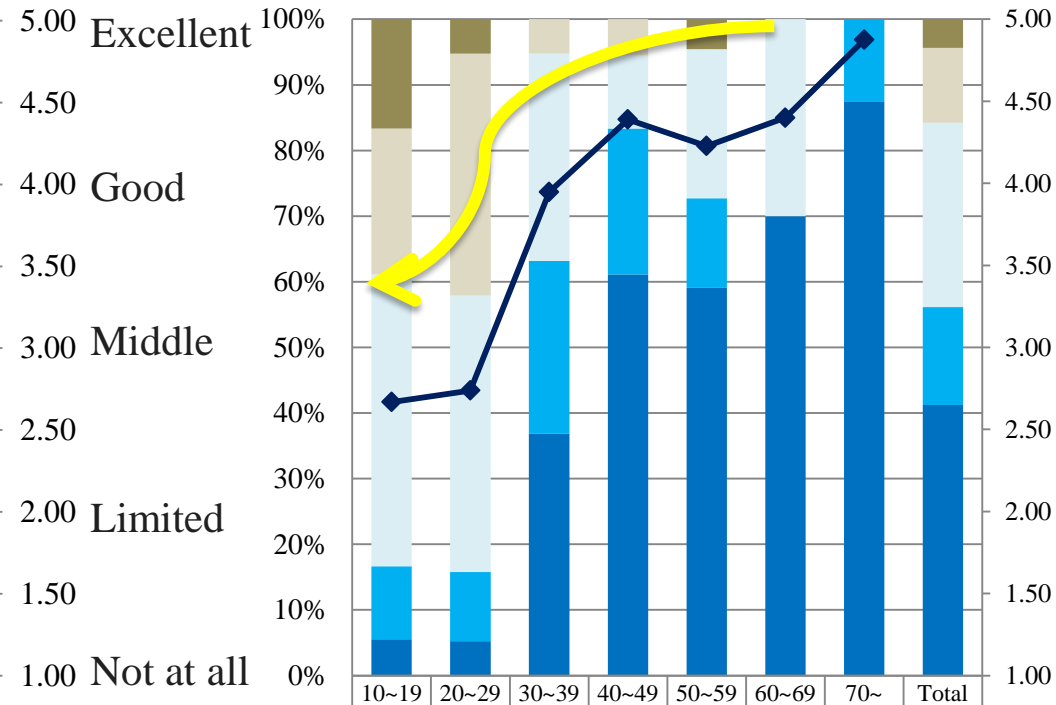
# Consideration Regarding Assessment (2): Detailed Classification (LP1: Speaking Bru)

Children ~ Adolescents,  
Parents, and Grandparents

Every 10-year age group



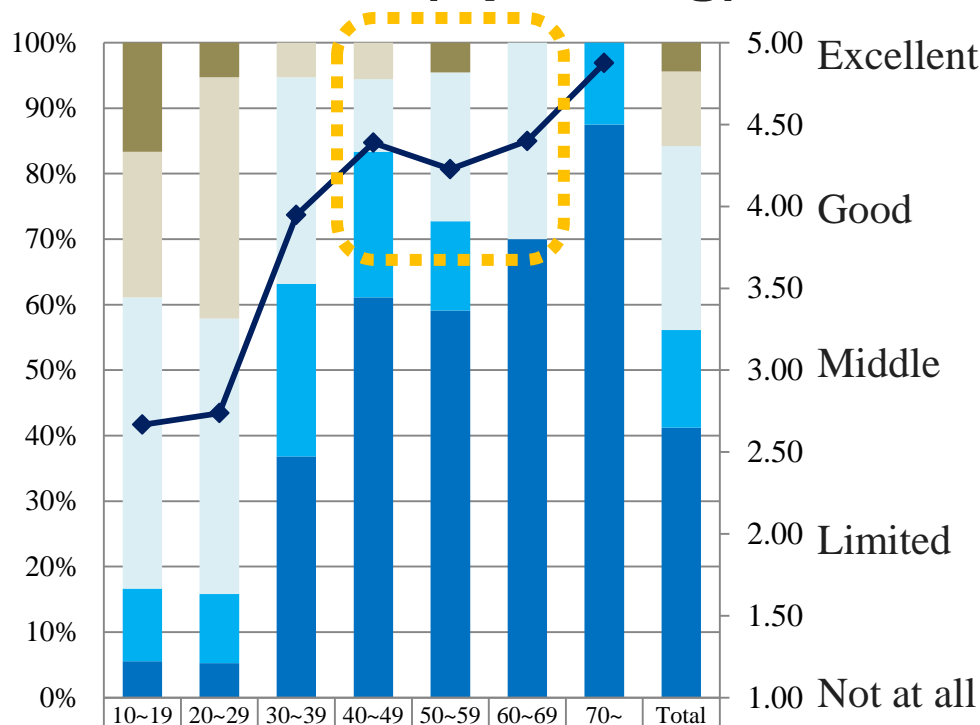
1-Not at all	4	0	1	5
2-Limited	6	6	1	13
3-Middle	14	9	9	32
4-Good	3	7	7	17
5-Excellent	2	12	33	47
N	29	34	51	114
mean	2.76	3.74	4.37	



1-Not at all	3	1	0	0	1	0	0	5
2-Limited	4	7	1	1	0	0	0	13
3-Middle	8	8	6	2	5	3	0	32
4-Good	2	2	5	4	3	0	1	17
5-Excellent	1	1	7	11	13	7	7	47
N	18	19	19	18	22	10	8	114
mean	2.67	2.74	3.95	4.39	4.23	4.40	4.88	

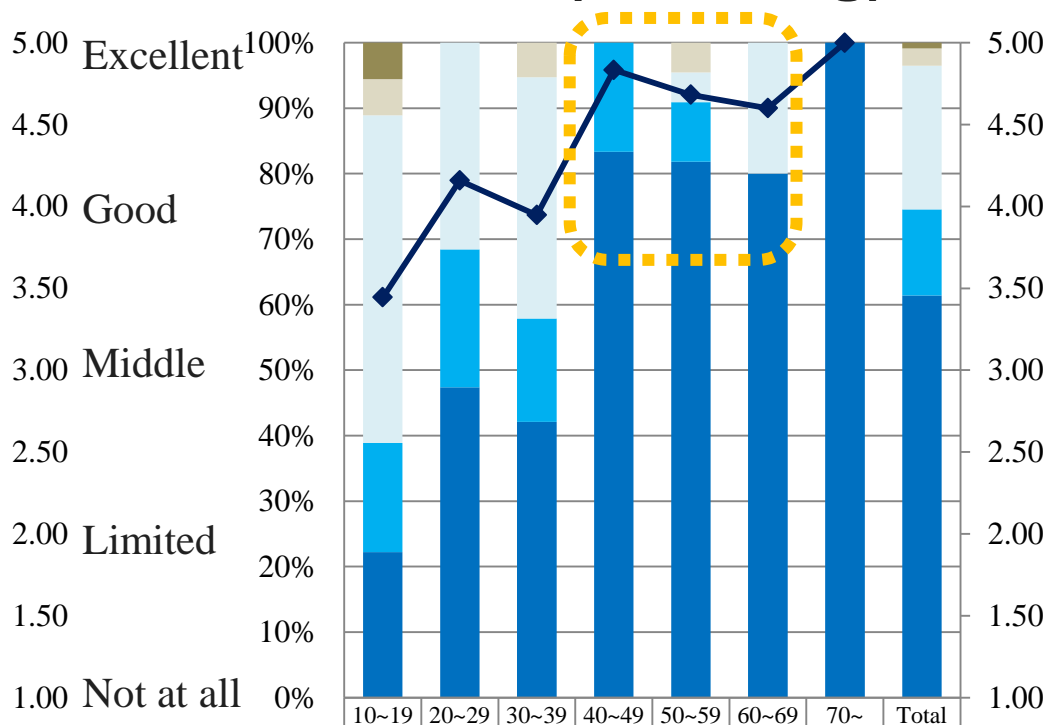
# Consideration Regarding Assessment (3): Emergence of Passive Speakers (WB)

## WB Bru: LP1 (Speaking)



1-Not at all	3	1	0	0	1	0	0	5
2-Limited	4	7	1	1	0	0	0	13
3-Middle	8	8	6	2	5	3	0	32
4-Good	2	2	5	4	3	0	1	17
5-Excellent	1	1	7	11	13	7	7	47
N	18	19	19	18	22	10	8	114
mean	2.67	2.74	3.95	4.39	4.23	4.40	4.88	

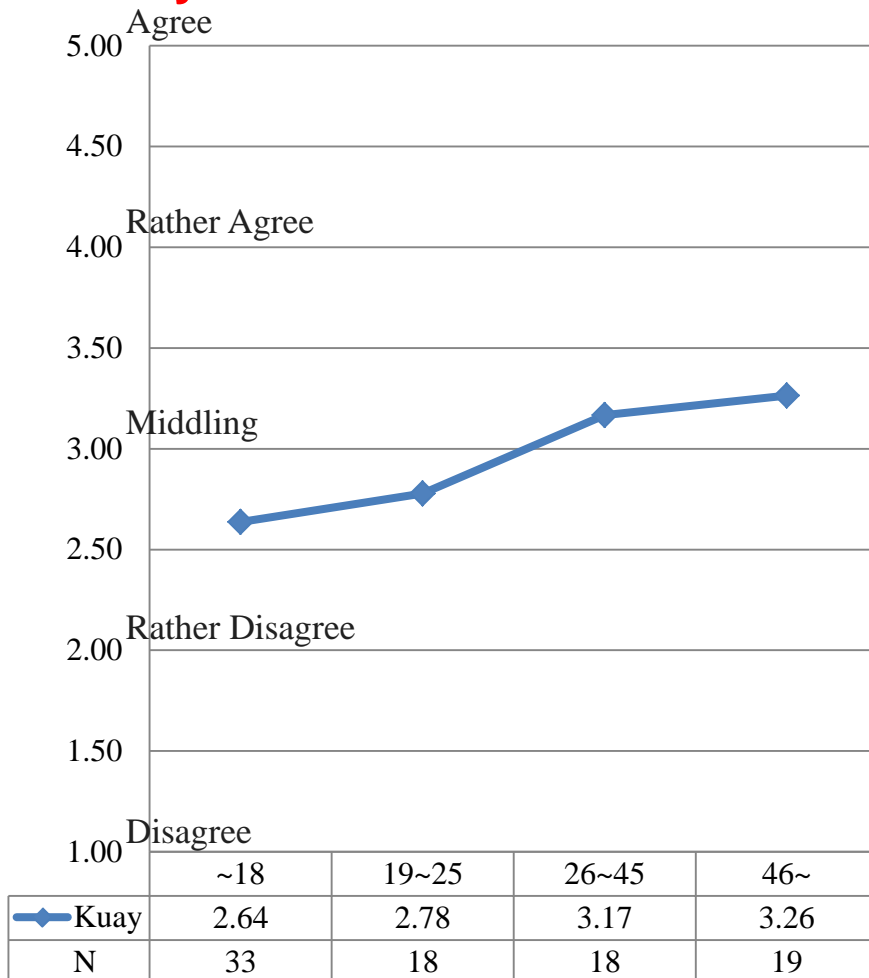
## WB Bru: LP2 (Listening)



1-Not at all	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
2-Limited	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	3
3-Middle	9	6	7	0	1	2	0	25
4-Good	3	4	3	3	2	0	0	15
5-Excellent	4	9	8	15	18	8	8	70
N	18	19	19	18	22	10	8	114
m	3.44	4.16	3.95	4.83	4.68	4.60	5.00	

# Consideration Regarding Assessment (3): Emergence of Passive Speakers (TK)

(LA6) There will be **no speaker of Kuay** in Thailand in the future



## Interviews in TK (1)

- Grandchildren go to a primary school in non-Kuay area, so **they understand but do not reply** in Kuay. [A female in her 50s]

# Consideration Regarding Assessment (3): Emergence of Passive Speakers

## Interviews in TK (2)

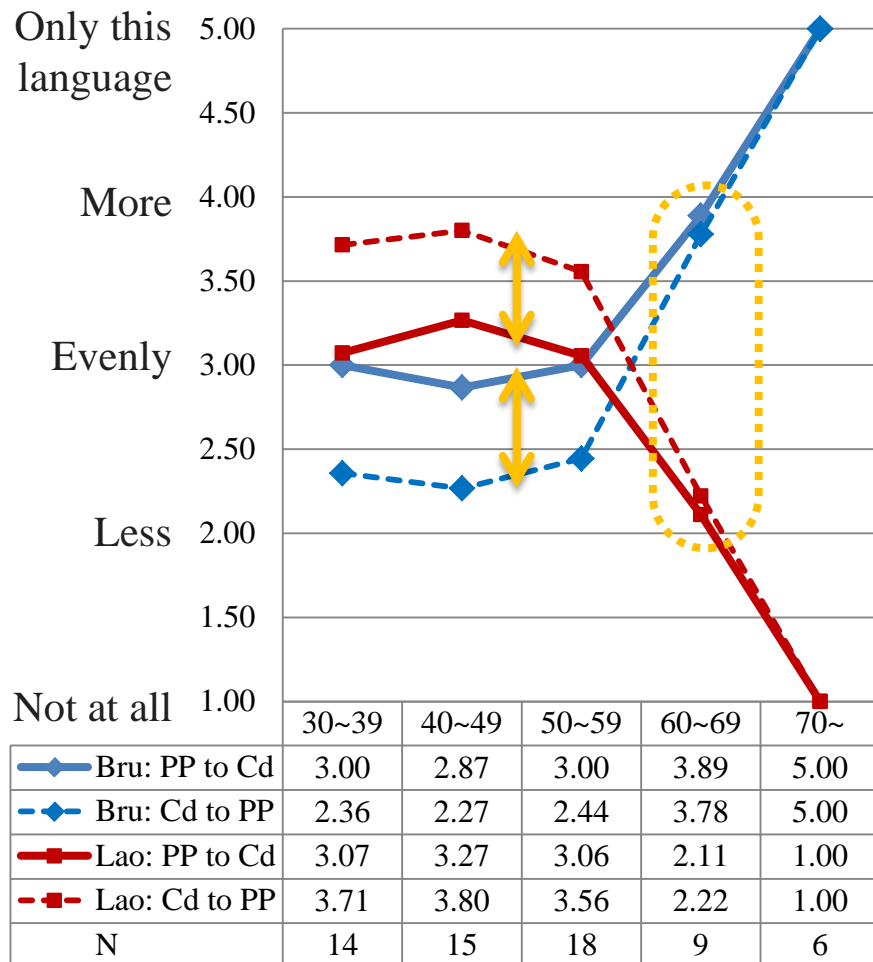
- A Kuay-Lao mixed nephew and niece grew up in southern Thailand until kindergarten or early primary school, and now they go to an int'l primary school in the Buri Ram city (Lao, otherwise Khmer, is/are spoken) from TK. **They do not seem to be able to fluently speak Kuay.** [A female in her early 50s]

## Interviews in TK (3)&(4)

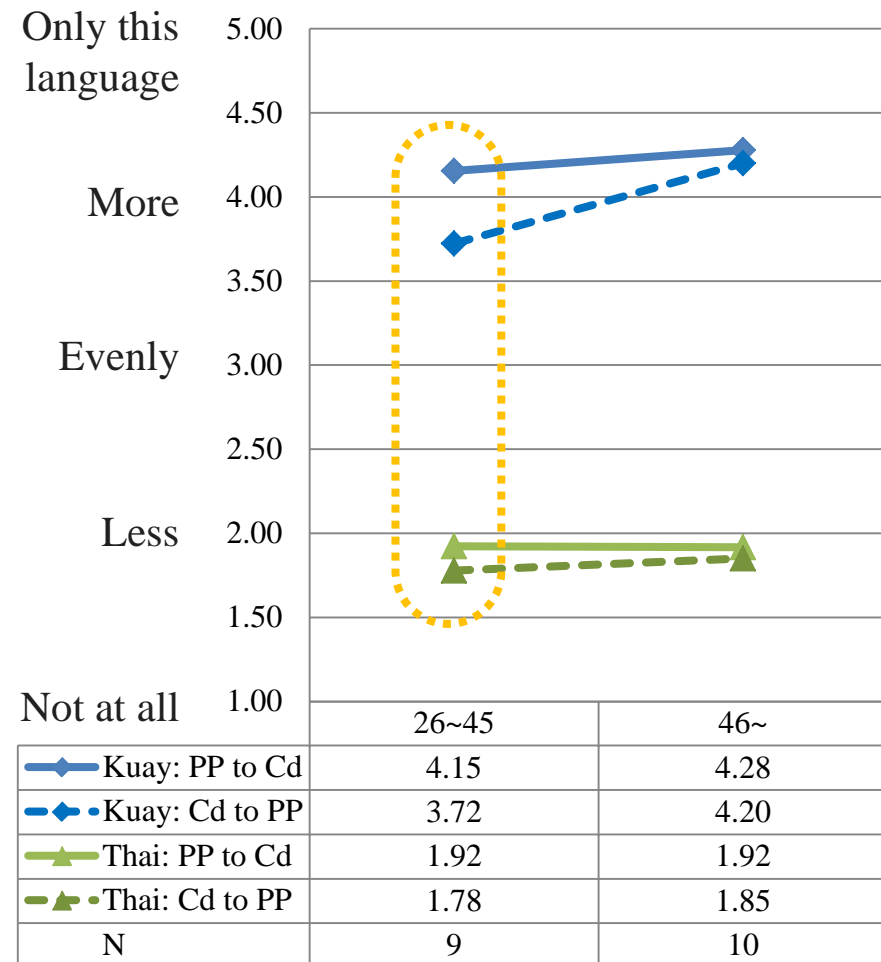
- “*My children understand Kuay*” (with showing her confidence), but “***I speak to Thai to them.***” [The mother of the abovementioned kids]
- The similar situation was found with a Kuay-Khmer mixed boy.
  - “*My son understands Kuay,*” but “*I speak Thai to him,*” [a Kuay father in his 30s] and I observed they use Thai to each other.

# Consideration Regarding Assessment (4): Language Choice **to** Children (PP to Cd) and Language Choice **by** Children (Cd to PP)(LC6)

## Bru (WB)



## Kuay (TK)





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