

# Construction of Lao Women's Beauty in Thai Musical Discourse

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**Abstract**—This study aims to conduct a Critical Discourse Analysis to determine the relationship between linguistic devices and the construction of Lao Women's beauty in Thai musical discourse. The authors analyzed Thai songs with content related to Lao Women, including 60 songs selected from YouTube, which are sung by Thai male singers and composed by Thai songwriters. The study found 4 linguistic devices used to construct Lao women's beauty, namely, 1) terms of address, 2) metaphor, 3) presupposition, and 4) modification. The use of these linguistic devices helps to construct Lao women's beauty in two dimensions. First, in the dimension of outer beauty, there is an image of a beautiful, well-dressed, and fair-skinned Lao lady with an appealing face and a proportional figure. The second dimension, inner beauty, describes Lao women as being good people who are well-behaved and polite and who use fascinating, beautiful, and sweet words.

**Index Terms**—Beauty, critical discourse analysis, LAO women, Thai song.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, Thai mass media, especially entertainment media, pays greater attention to Lao women, thus constructing and presenting Lao women's identity to Thai audiences. Thai television series, movies, and especially songs, are evidence of the popularity of Lao women among Thai people. One of the most conveyed characteristics of Lao women is their "beauty." By presenting content about Lao women via various media channels, a perception toward Lao women's beauty has been developed among Thai people.

Beauty is considered subjective, defined by the affections and preferences of an individual or of a certain group of people. Given that beauty is socially constructed, different nations certainly have different perceptions of beauty according to their social context, culture, or social values. Hence, the construction of Lao women's beauty in the Thai social context can be considered a reflection of Thai people's tastes in beauty as well.

Our survey of online music showed a variety of songs in which the lyrics relate to Lao women, including a diversity of genres and singers (male, female, and duo). Genres touched by the theme of Lao women include country folk music, old Bangkokian music, modern folk music, modern Thai song,

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reggae, and rap. This diversity of genres perfectly reflects the popularity of Lao women in Thailand. While taste in music varies from person to person, the songs about Lao women are appreciated by various groups of audiences, implying that perceptions about Lao women are widespread. Thai songs related to Lao women, from the past until the time of this research, have tended to have lyrics concerned with love, and a key factor discussed by many poets or authors is "Lao women's beauty."

In view of the trends outlined above, this study uses Fairclough's concept of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) [1], [2] to establish the relationship between linguistic devices and the construction of Lao women's beauty in Thai musical discourse. A review of the literature found that while previous research has discussed Lao women's beauty in the Lao social context, there has been a lack of cross-cultural research. This article, therefore, aims to analyze the construction of Lao women's beauty by Thais through Thai musical discourse. This analysis will thus shed light on the mindset and perceptions toward Lao women in the Thai social context.

## II. METHOD AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The objective of this study is to understand the relationship between linguistic devices and the construction of Lao women's beauty in Thai musical discourse.

We gathered data from Thai songs that were related to Lao women. The songs had to be sung by Thai male singers, composed by Thai authors or composers, and uploaded to the Internet website YouTube. A total of 60 Thai songs were selected using the searches "เพลง ผู้หญิงลาว" and "เพลง สาวลาว" ("Song Lao Women" and "Song Lao Girl").

For the purposes of this study, "Lao women" refers to females of Lao nationality who were born in the Lao People's Democratic Republic and who are mentioned in Thai musical discourse. "Thai musical discourse" refers to content related to Lao women's beauty and presented via the public medium of Thai music. The term refers only to content constructed by Thai persons. The term "linguistic devices" applies to the use of language in Thai musical discourse which leads to the construction of a mindset toward Lao women's beauty.

This study will apply CDA, a concept outlined by Fairclough [1], [2], as a tool to analyze data. Fairclough presents the framework of discourse analysis in three dimensions, as illustrated in Fig. 1.

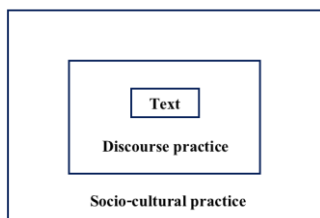


Fig. 1. The three dimensions of CDA, according to Fairclough.

The three dimensions of Fairclough's CDA are described below:

- 1) The inner box, "Text," involves the analysis of language in order to understand the text.
- 2) "Discourse Practice" refers to the analysis of the following components: text production, text distribution, text consumption, and text interpretation.
- 3) The outer box, entitled "Socio-Cultural Practice," applies to a study of the relationship between the "Text" and the socio-cultural context.

This study applies the concept of CDA, as described above, to an analysis of the relationship between linguistic devices and the construction of Lao women's beauty in Thai musical discourse, leading to a better understanding of the mindset toward Lao women in the Thai social context.

### III. RESEARCH RESULTS

#### A. Thai Musical Discourse and Text Production

To begin, songs are a form of entertainment media that are accessible to a great number of people because they can be broadcasted through various channels, and accordingly, receivers can listen to songs in a variety of ways. In the past, messages were communicated via only mainstream channels, such as radio, television, or live concerts. However, since today's technologies are much more advanced, the channels for listening to music have expanded and increased in number.

Audiences can listen to music on mobile phones, which are widely used communication devices. Moreover, there are a countless number of Internet websites that provide services for downloading and listening to songs. Thus, musical discourse inarguably contributes to the construction of a mindset within society, not only toward certain issues, but also toward certain groups of people.

A survey of Thai songs with lyrics relating to Lao women found a large number to exist. We therefore selected only songs sung by male singers as the focus of this study. The resulting selection of songs includes a total number of 60 songs from a variety of genres – country folk, northeastern-style folk, old Bangkokian, modern Thai, reggae, and rap. The sources for the songs included in this dataset not only provide evidence that a diversity of audiences with different tastes in music appreciate songs about Lao women; the artists distributing Thai musical discourse related to Lao women are also not limited to people in the music industry seeking profit from selling music. Artists include a significant number of freelance musicians who want to present their work and who want to

convey their feelings toward Lao women through music lyrics. One can suppose that the artists in this latter group define the presentations constructed by their music themselves, independent from commercial profits. In other words, the diversity in message senders implies that the commercial music industry alone does not construct the existing mindset toward Lao women, but various groups of people contribute toward its construction. The numerous music channels currently in use also reflect this diversity.

The Internet website YouTube is a very popular music channel because it provides services without any charge, not only for senders to be able to freely upload their works, but also for receivers to get access to those works. Information gathered regarding social media usage in Thailand has shown that the number of social media users in Thailand as of the second quarter of the year 2014 was 26.25 million users. What is more, the number of videos uploaded to YouTube was 3.4 million, and the total for unique visitors per month was 7,822 million. The frequency of views per month reached a peak of 1,506 trillion times. Undoubtedly, YouTube is a huge music provider, used by music investors and freelance artists alike to reach a great number of viewers and a wide audience. Receivers are not limited to Thais, because the uploaded songs can be accessed worldwide. However, since the songs in this study use Thai language and Thai dialects, the two main receiving groups are Thai and Lao. Lao people may also enjoy this music owing to the fact that Thai language and Lao language are so similar, so people from either country can communicate with people from the other using their respective language [3].

To conclude, songs are a form of mass media that can distribute a Thai language text widely, from various senders through a free and open channel to Thai and Lao people. Consequently, musical discourse is a key factor in the construction of a Thai mindset and Thai perceptions toward Lao women's beauty.

#### B. Language Devices in the Construction of Lao Women's Beauty in Thai Musical Discourse

An analysis of Thai songs relating to Lao women found that there are four language devices used in constructing Lao women's beauty: terms of address, metaphor, presupposition, and modification. An explanation follows of each language device and its use in constructing Lao women's beauty.

##### 1) Terms of address

The use of address terms is a language device applied in manifesting relationships and may vary depending on socio-cultural practices and situations. Address terms can differ according to the purpose of the speaker and how he or she wants listeners to perceive a relationship [4]. Therefore, the use of address terms can reveal the attitude of the addresser toward the addressee. Terms of address implying a sense of beauty regarding Lao women are a very prominent language device used in constructing Lao women's beauty in Thai musical discourse. We categorized the address terms into two groups: address terms related to outer beauty and address terms related to inner beauty.

(1) Address terms related to outer beauty are comprised of

those describing physical beauty and overall look. Terms implying a beautiful lady are used, such as คนงาม, คนสวย, โฉมฉาย, โฉมขง, งาม, นงคราญ, บังอร, นวลนาง, and คนโก้ (beauty, beautiful woman, pretty girl, enchantress, young lady, belle, darling, lady, and elegant girl). Examples in context are presented below.

*Example:* อ้ายขงอโง้งเฝ้ารำพึงถึงนงคราญ นานแล้วนะที่บ่ได้มาหาเจ้า

(I have been thinking of you, belle. It is a long time that I have not gone to meet you.)

Song: ละนิงสาวลาวเวียง (Missing a Lao Vientiane Girl)

Lyrics: ประพันธ์ เวียงสมุทร (Prapan Wiensamut)

*Example:* โขงยามนี้ไม่มีอนงค์น้ำโขงเอื่อยต่อไหลลงที่ซึ่งครองคอยห่างหา

(The Mekong is without you, young lady. The river slowly flows. I am still waiting for you.)

Song: งามโขงคอยนาง (Standing Along the Mekong Waiting for Her)

Lyrics: คำพันธ์ ชะปะตัง (Khamphan Yapatang)

Besides the terms addressing beauty in general as shown in the examples, there are also terms that specifically address the beauty of certain body parts, for example, แม่ตาหวาน, แก้มแดง, แม่ขนตาอน, เนื้อทอง, แม่เอวบาง, and แม่เนื้ออกลอย (sweet eyes girl, rosy cheeks girl, curly lashes girl, golden girl, slender girl, and fair skinned girl). Examples in context are presented below.

*Example:* พี่หน้าตาหวานเมื่องานสงกรานต์วัดโพธิ์ชัยเสาสงกักรบายไว้สัญญาใจด้วยน้ำมนต์ (I met you, sweet eyes girl, at the Songkran Festival at Pho Chai temple. We prayed and made a promise with the holy water.)

Song: ลิดฮอดสาวเวียงจันทน์ (Missing a Vientiane Girl)

Lyrics: ไชย พรนาคา (Chai Phornnaka)

*Example:* พี่ไม่ลืมเลือนเหมือนกรรมต้องจำจากน้อง ยังรักเนื้อทอง ลาก่อนน้องเนื้อทองนางขาว (I never forget but it is karma that separated us. I still love you, golden girl. Goodbye, young golden girl.)

Song: รักข้ามโขง (Love Across the Mekong)

Lyrics: จันทน์ เป็นสุข (Chamngong Pensuk)

The address terms for Lao women are usually synonyms that imply beauty. In other words, they share the same meaning but appear in different forms, for example, โฉมฉาย, โฉมขง, งาม, นงคราญ, บังอร, นวลนาง, นางขาว, นวลละอ, งาม, สวย, โสภี, โสกา, and ลาวินซ์ (pretty girl, enchantress, young lady, belle, darling, lady, young girl, pretty girl, beauty, beautiful, elegant, and enchanted). All of these synonyms signify beauty and beautiful women. An analysis of the data gathered for this study shows that these synonyms solely address outer beauty.

(2) Terms of address regarding inner beauty include those referring to beauty in manners and behavior. These kinds of terms are seldom found, however. They include คนดี, คนสู้, ผู้ดี, and คนผู้ดี (good girl, smart girl, well-behaved girl, and smart, well-behaved girl), as shown in context below.

*Example:* งามอหิละเฒ่าหนี คนผู้ดีเจ้าแฟนไผ่ (So beautiful! Smart, kind girl, who is your boyfriend?)

Song: นางฟ้าลาว (A Lao Angel)

Lyrics: ก้องศิลป์ ฟ้าลวงบน (Kongsin Fahluangboone)

*Example:* อักกันมาโดนหลายเดบ หลายเดบ แม่นบ่คนดี (We have been in love for so long, very long, right, good girl?)

Song: สาวเวียงหนุมไทย (Vientiane Girl, Thai boy)

Lyrics: ชลธิ์ ธารทอง (Chonthi Thanthong)

The use of the term “smart, kind girl” indicates a well-behaved person who has good manners. When such a term is used to address Lao women, they are constructed to be persons who are kind and behave well according to social traditions.

## 2) Metaphor

Metaphor is the use of language in making a comparison between two things that are from different semantic domains [5]. In terms of message analysis, one may search for two types of metaphor. The first type, figurative metaphor, is the use of language to compare two different things which share some similarity [6]. The other type is a conceptual metaphor, which is the reference of one idea in terms of another, where the compared ideas must be from different domains. The idea from the source domain is thus tied to the idea of the target domain. This type of metaphor or comparison can indicate the thinking system of the language user or of a society [7].

Therefore, the use of metaphor is a linguistic device that allows audiences to be able to draw an image and understand the meaning that the sender wants to convey. According to our data analysis of Thai musical discourse, there is a presentation of the beauty of Lao women using figurative metaphor, which attempts to compare Lao women’s beauty to other ideas. Thai songs present the beauty of Lao women in two ways.

(1) *Firstly*, physical beauty – mainly focusing on the skin – is compared with other ideas, for example, “the skin is as shiny as gold,” and “the skin is as fair as a boiled egg.”

*Example:* แม่ช่างงามเจดจัน ผิวพรรณดั่งทองทาบทา (You are so beautiful. Your skin is as shiny as gold.)

Song: ดอกฟ้าเวียงจันทน์ (The Exalted Vientiane Women)

Lyrics: สัญญา จุฬาทรร (Sanya Chulabhorn)

*Example:* ผิวสาวขาวปานไข่ปอก อ้ายอยากบอกเจ้าคือคู่สร้างคู่สม (Your skin is as fair as a boiled egg. I want to tell you, you are my soul mate.)

Song: สาวบาสโลม (The Dancing Basalop Girl)

Lyrics: ตึง มิตรภาพ (Tung Mittraphap)

(2) *Secondly*, the song lyrics address Lao women in terms of other ideas. For instance, Lao women are referred to as being as beautiful as a goddess, an angel, the moon, and flowers.

*Example:* มกหลายเค้ผู้สาวนุ่งจิ้น เกบติดดินแต่มตั้งนางฟ้า (I like you so much, sin-wearing girl. You are so down to earth, yet as beautiful as an angel.)

Song: สาวบาสโลม (The Dancing Basalop Girl)

Lyrics: ตึง มิตรภาพ (Tung Mittraphap)

*Example:* อิงหมื่นแสนดาวพรูพราวดูเก็ล่อน้องเหมือนเป็นเดือนเด่นอยู่ กลางฟ้า (Where there are countless stars in the sky, you are the moon shining among them.)

Song: เวียงจันทน์สัญญารัก (Vientiane: Promise of Love)

Lyrics: พยงค์ มุกดา (Payong Mookda)

### 3) Presupposition

The use of presupposition creates a necessity to guess the real, hidden meanings underlying a sample of speech. It involves some hidden knowledge or beliefs that are not stated obviously [8]. An analysis or interpretation of presupposition requires information regarding the speaker and the listener and regarding beliefs of people in the surrounding society and traditional practices. All of this information allows an understanding of the intended meaning, concealed behind language usage [9]. Since the text does not mention such information directly, the interpreter needs to logically guess or infer the information in an effort to understand the mindset conveyed in the language sample, including its concealed purpose. In the data we collected from Thai song lyrics, there is a use of presupposition to express the beauty of Lao women and to convey that they have been accepted for their beauty. The following are examples of presupposition.

*Example:* คนงามเอ๋ยนางเอ๋ยมาสมคำดอกคนเว้า  
เขาสำดอกอีหลิวสาวลาวโสภิบุญมีจึงมาพ้อ (Beautiful girl, people say  
Lao woman are so beautiful. I'm blessed to meet you.)

Song: เวียงจันทน์เวียงใจ (Vientiane: The City of My Heart)

Lyrics: คมเคี้ยว ไชศรี (Khomkhiaw Kaisri)

*Example:* สมคำคนล้ำอำมาเมืองลาวงามธรรมชาติป่าเขางามสาวลาวชื่น  
ไหมแพรวา (Just like they say: Lao is beautiful for its nature, for  
its women, for its clothes.)

Song: ลืมใจไว้เมืองลาว (I Forgot My Heart in Laos)

Lyrics: ซอ เกษตรวิสัย (Sor Kasetwisai)

The above two examples imply that the beauty of Lao women has been spread by word of mouth, so it is possible to presume that there has been talk about Lao women's beauty before. Such speech indicates that Thai people have already widely accepted and agreed upon Lao women's beauty.

### 4) Modification

Modification is the use of complimentary language, such as words, phrases or clauses, in order to amplify some content to be more obvious or to illustrate some thoughts to be clearer [10]. In Thai songs about Lao women, modification involves mentioning characteristics of Lao women, thus making the Thai mindset toward Lao women's beauty more outstanding. For example, "beautiful Lao lady" and "beautiful Vientiane lady" are used to indicate beauty when referring to Lao women.

*Example:* อ้ายอาสาไปส่งคนงามปั้งเก็ยอ้ายขอเดินตามน้องคนงามชีว่าจ้งได้ (I want to  
walk you home. If you, beautiful young lady, do not mind,  
what do you say?)

Song: ตามน้องไปเวียงจันทน์ (Following Her to Vientiane)

Lyrics: ตี๋ มิตรภาพ (Tung Mittraphap)

As illustrated in the example above, the song lyrics include modification in order to explain clearly how beautiful Lao women are. In addition, other lyrics specify beauty as follows.

*Example:* ใ้สาวลาวผู้แก้มขาวสดใสอยากผู้ใจเข้ามีไผหรือยัง  
(Oh, Lao lady with bright cheeks, I want to know who sits in  
your heart.)

Song: มั้กสาวลาว (I Love a Lao Girl)

Lyrics: เส้งี่ยม บุญอาจ (Sangiam Boonard)

The use of modification in the example above highlights the Thai mindset toward Lao women's beauty. It thus allows the beauty of Lao women in Thai musical discourse to become more perceptible. Modification as a whole is a device used in Thai music to describe how Lao women's beauty is admired and accepted.

The four linguistic devices described above demonstrate that in Thai musical discourse about Lao women, there is a construction of Lao women's beauty according to the Thai social context. Lao women's beauty is presented with the use of address terms, synonyms, metaphor, and modification in an effort to illustrate and explain that Lao women are beautiful.

### C. The relationship between Language and the Construction of Lao Women's Beauty in Thai Musical Discourse

According to our analysis of language devices as related to constructing Lao women's beauty in Thai musical discourse, there are four devices, namely, address terms, metaphor, presupposition, and modification, used to construct Lao women's beauty. Their beauty is conveyed in two ways: 1) Outer beauty includes descriptions of Lao women as being beautiful and well-dressed with fair skin and an appealing face, whereas 2) Inner beauty references support the mindset that Lao women are good persons who talk sweetly and have polite manners. The relationship between linguistic devices and the construction of Lao women's beauty is described below.

*i. Outer beauty* in Thai songs about Lao women is comprised of being beautiful and well-dressed with fair skin, an appealing face, and a proportionate figure. The construction of Lao women as beautiful persons is presented through the use of address terms, modification, metaphor, and presupposition. Thai songs construct the mindset toward Lao women's beauty in a broad way, without describing the details of physical characteristics. However, the songs emphasize the concept of Lao women as beautiful. When the lyrics mention physical beauty, the skin is the main focus most of the time. In Thai musical discourse, the ideal skin of Lao women, as normally praised, is fair and shiny with a glow. The beauty of Lao women's skin specifically is described through the use of address terms, metaphor, and modification. Lao women's faces are admired in Thai lyrics as beautiful for their shape, eyebrows, eyes, cheeks, and smiling mouth. The devices used for this purpose are modification, address terms, and metaphor. These devices help to describe Lao women as having a round, oval face, arched eyebrows, sharp eyes, sweet eyes, a charming smile, and fair or rosy cheeks. In terms of body figure, Lao women are presented as having a lean figure and nice waist, and the devices used to describe body figure are address terms and modification. Lastly, in terms of dress and overall look, not only are clothes a concern, but also style. In fact, we found that the most common term used to address Lao women's overall look is "ไ้" (cool). The use of this word illustrates a nice, good-looking, or "cool" style of dress. Generally, the use of "ไ้"(cool) praises one's overall look as nice, beautiful, and perfect. Furthermore, the dress code of Lao women, presented as beautiful in Thai musical discourse, is a *sin*, the traditional

wraparound skirt of Laos. The devices used in relation to dress are address terms and modification.

ii. *Inner beauty* in Thai songs about Lao women concerns the beauty of mind, manners, and speech. In Thai musical discourse, Lao women are constructed using address terms and modification to be nice persons with beautiful manners and beautiful speech. Examples of terms addressing inner beauty are คนดี, คนสู้, ผู้ดี, and คนผู้ดี (good girl, smart girl, nice lady, and smart nice lady). These illustrative words indicate a kind and well-behaved person. Address terms thus used to compliment Lao women results in their construction as kind persons. Apart from Lao women’s beautiful mind, the speech of Lao women is also part of their identity admired in Thai song lyrics. The lyrics describe their speech as polite, with a sweet and appealing tone.

Table I presents a summary of the relationship between language devices and the construction of Lao women’s beauty in Thai song lyrics.

TABLE I: RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LINGUISTIC DEVICES AND CONSTRUCTION OF LAO WOMEN’S BEAUTY IN THAI SONG LYRICS

Construction of Lao Women’s Beauty		linguistic devices			
		modification	terms of address	metaphor	presupposition
Outer beauty	beauty	/	/	/	/
	skin	/	/	/	
	face	/	/	/	
	figure	/	/		
	dress	/	/		
Inner beauty	goodness	/	/		
	manners	/	/		
	speech	/			

The above analysis shows that Lao women’s outer beauty is comprised of being beautiful and having fair skin, a pretty face, a good body figure, and being well-dressed. These ideas of beauty are presented through various linguistic devices, and they are mentioned more frequently than inner beauty. Therefore, it is possible to conclude that the Thai social context values Lao women’s outer beauty more than their inner beauty (mind, manners, and speech).

#### D. Social Practices and Culture in the Construction of Lao Women’s Beauty

As neighboring countries in Southeast Asia, Thailand and the Lao People’s Democratic Republic have a long, historical relationship, as well as race, linking the two countries. Moreover, the people of Thailand and Laos can communicate using their own, respective mother tongues, without a need to depend on other medium languages. The good relationship of many years between the countries and their shared experiences has resulted in a closeness between Thai and Lao people, and they are regarded as “close friends” [11]. The diplomatic relationship between Thailand and Laos officially began on December 19, 1950 and has been maintained until

today. Jummalee Chaiyasorn [12], Former President of the Lao People’s Democratic Republic, made a statement about the two countries’ relationship, quoted in part below:

*“The two peoples of the Lao PDR and the Kingdom of Thailand have enjoyed their sharing of long-lasting historical relations and good neighborliness. Likewise, we also share similar relations, culture, and language. Throughout different periods in our history, the two peoples have been bound by the common desire for our national progress and prosperity, lending each other a hand in times of need, all of which has ensured the strengthening of our friendly relations and cooperation.”*

The close relationship of these two countries’ peoples at the citizen level (as family members) and at the diplomatic level, has promoted their mutual experiences. In addition, Lao people have always appeared in Thai public media, and Lao people can access Thai public media as well, for example, Thai television programs and Thai radio broadcasting. What is more, the construction of three bridges across the Mekong River in order to physically connect the two countries together indicates that the people of the two countries have had longstanding interaction, leading to the sharing and exchanging of stories between the nations.

Thai musical discourse is one tool used to construct and define the mindset of people in a society. Since the entertainment media can easily reach audiences, broadcasting about Lao women in Thai musical discourse is an important factor in constructing Lao women’s beauty. Additionally, the findings from this research indicate that within Thai musical discourse the construction of Lao women’s beauty, both outer and inner, is tied to their relationship with men. This finding is consistent with findings by Malaykham [13], whose research investigated Thai and Lao morals. Malaykham found that Thai and Lao morals promoted for women include key ideas that highlight characteristics of women with outer and inner beauty. Women who possess such characteristics are said to make men fall in love with them.

Our research also found that Lao women’s beauty in Thai musical discourse is consistent with the policy of the government of the Lao People’s Democratic Republic. A study by Sibounheuang [14], who aimed to explore the making of identity of Lao women by the government of the Lao People’s Democratic Republic from 1975 until 2011, states that the government of the Lao People’s Democratic Republic announced a “New Economic Mechanism,” which defined “Lao women” as “skillful and beautiful.” In other words, the government professed that Lao women should possess expertise in developing themselves and their nation, and they should be beautiful by “dressing in a *sin* and silk scarf with their hair in a bun.” Additionally, the government said Lao women should behave politely and beautifully by adhering to customs and traditions.

We can see that although identities can change from time to time or according to social context, beauty is still the outstanding feature of Lao women in both the Thai and Lao contexts. Additionally, the beauty of Lao women constructed under the Thai and Lao contexts continues to be defined by concepts of traditional beauty. In other words, beauty is found in Lao women who have a beautiful appearance, behave

politely, have sweet manners, and whose features display gentleness. These characteristics of “beautiful” women are indicative of a so-called patriarchal society, which is in line with Thai and Lao traditional societies, where males hold primary power. It follows that the construction of discourse in relation to Lao women’s beauty serves the needs of men and reflects a form of hegemony of thoughts. In other words, males construct a mindset toward beauty for women to follow, so that women will build their identity in relation to beauty as so defined in order to achieve admiration and attention from men. Since men define the discourse of beauty, it can be said that females are under male domination. As for women who do not qualify according to the rules of beauty defined by men, they will not achieve admiration and will not be approached by men. This shows that the construction of Lao women’s beauty relies on sexual relationships, rather than truth.

#### IV. CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

According to this study of the relationship of language and the construction of Lao women’s beauty in Thai musical discourse, four linguistic devices are applied toward constructing Lao women’s beauty, namely, (1) address terms, (2) metaphor, (3) presupposition, and (4) modification. These linguistic devices construct a mindset toward Lao women’s beauty in two dimensions, including outer beauty and inner beauty. (1) Outer beauty refers to descriptions of how Lao women are physically beautiful; for example, they are described as having fair, glowing skin, having a nice face (with an oval shape, arched eyebrows, curled lashes, sweet eyes, bright or rosy cheeks, and a beautiful smile), and having a nice body (well-dressed, with a lean figure and curvy waist). (2) Inner beauty refers to descriptions of Lao women as good persons, having polite manners, speaking gently, and in general behaving in an appealing way.

The construction of Lao women’s beauty in Thai musical discourse affects not only entertainment, but also the mindset toward Lao women in the Thai social context. That is, it builds a perception among Thai people that Lao women are beautiful. Evidence of this mindset can be observed in Thai pop culture. For example, Lao female actresses sometimes join Thai entertainment media via movies, television series, and music videos, and most Lao female actresses are popular and well-known among Thais. Moreover, besides the mainstream media, content about Lao women appears in online circles, such as through Facebook and YouTube. One clear example is the Facebook fan page named “We Love Lao Ladies Association of Thailand,” which has more than a hundred thousand followers. Furthermore, songs related to Lao women are regularly uploaded to YouTube by both musical companies and freelance musicians. This indicates that Lao women are popular in Thai society. At the same time, their beauty is promoted. Hence, we can say that the beauty of Lao women is the part of their identity that has made them popular in Thailand.

The construction of Lao women’s beauty also reflects a gender phenomenon. That is, a woman’s beauty depends on the desires of men. By studying about women’s beauty through men’s voices, one can see that such beauty is

constructed from admiration and based on sexual desires. Such admiration aims to develop a sexual relationship, so Lao women’s beauty in Thai musical discourse is tied to their relationship with men. Therefore, the features constructed as beautiful are those that can draw men’s attention. This, again, reflects the fundamental structure in society, which is the patriarchy where men are dominant. The construction of Lao women’s beauty is one of gentleness, politeness, and dependence on authentic traditions; for example, Lao women are addressed as “คนผู้ดี” (smart, kind girl), which is consistent with the characteristics of a woman emulating authentic traditions. Thus, one can say that Lao women’s beauty in Thai musical discourse, presented through men’s voices and as a reflection of men’s desires, defines the preferred type of woman – one who has authentic and pure beauty, falling under the definition of a good girl. Finally, this analysis has shown that Thai songs define the beauty of Lao women according to ideas pertaining to male domination.

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