

# Kathoey “imitation” of women’s speech and the construction of gender identity

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# Outline

- Background of the study
  - *Kathoey* or so-called *ladyboy*
  - *Kathoey's* linguistic practices
- Online dataset
  - Self-reference terms
  - *Kathoey* vs women
- Naturally occurring data
  - Ongoing fieldwork
  - Lengthening

# Kathoey

- Male-to-female transgenders in Thailand
- *Toot (Tootsie)*
- *Phu-ying praphet song* 'second type of woman'
- *Ladyboy*
- *Phet-thi-sam* 'the third sex/gender' -- Buddhism



# Kathoey (Cont.)



- Sex work, prostitution, entertainment, beauty
- Comic, uncouth, exhibitionist, aggressive
- No legal recognition
- Activist movements
- A marginal but recognized position in Thai society (Jackson 1997)
- Tolerance and Buddhism (Morris 1994, Taywaditep et al. 1997-2001, Jackson 1998, Totman 2003)

# Kathoey's linguistic practices

- Winter (2003)
  - Invariably the female pronouns and particles
  - Arguably language may not be a good indicator of identity. A more direct indicator might be to ask people what they think they are.
- Kongtrakool (1996)
- “Kathoey’s language,” “gay’s language”
  - e.g. Nuntiwatwipa (2004)
- Vocabulary
- Imitation of women’s speech

# Research questions

- How do kathoey identify or categorize themselves? What are the kinds of subjectivities they perform?
- How does language participate in kathoey's construction and performance of subjectivities? How do they use the linguistic resources that are shared among other Thai speakers for their own purposes?

# Online dataset

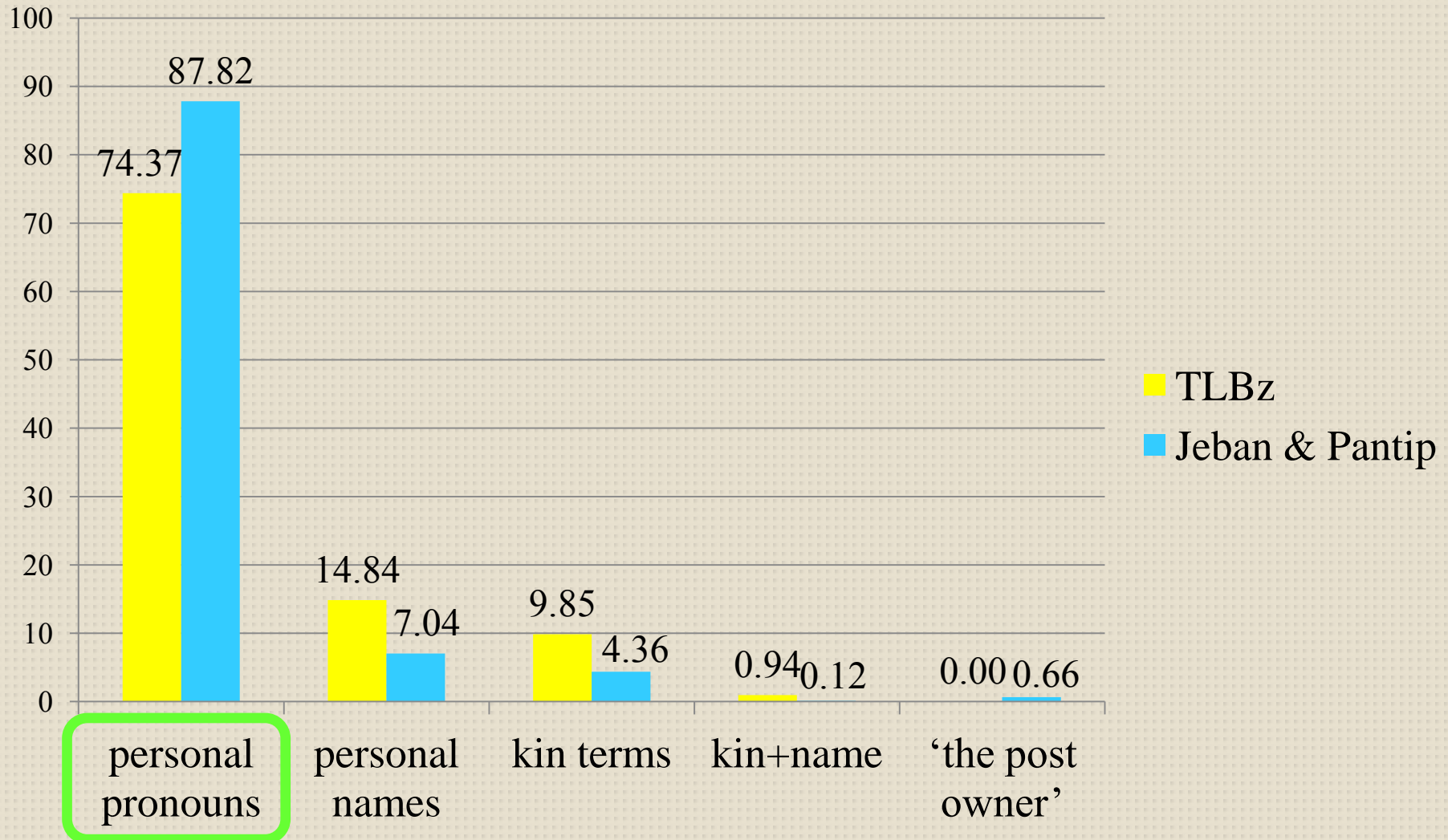
- Online web-boards
  - Comparing the use of self-reference terms of kathoey and women
  - 250 postings from 3 web-boards
  - 3,380 tokens self-reference terms
- First-person personal reference terms
  - Terms used to refer to a speaker
  - Personal pronouns, personal names, occupational titles and kin terms (Iwasaki & Ingkaphirom 2005)

## Standard first-person personal pronouns in Thai (adapted from Iwasaki & Ingkaphirom 2005)

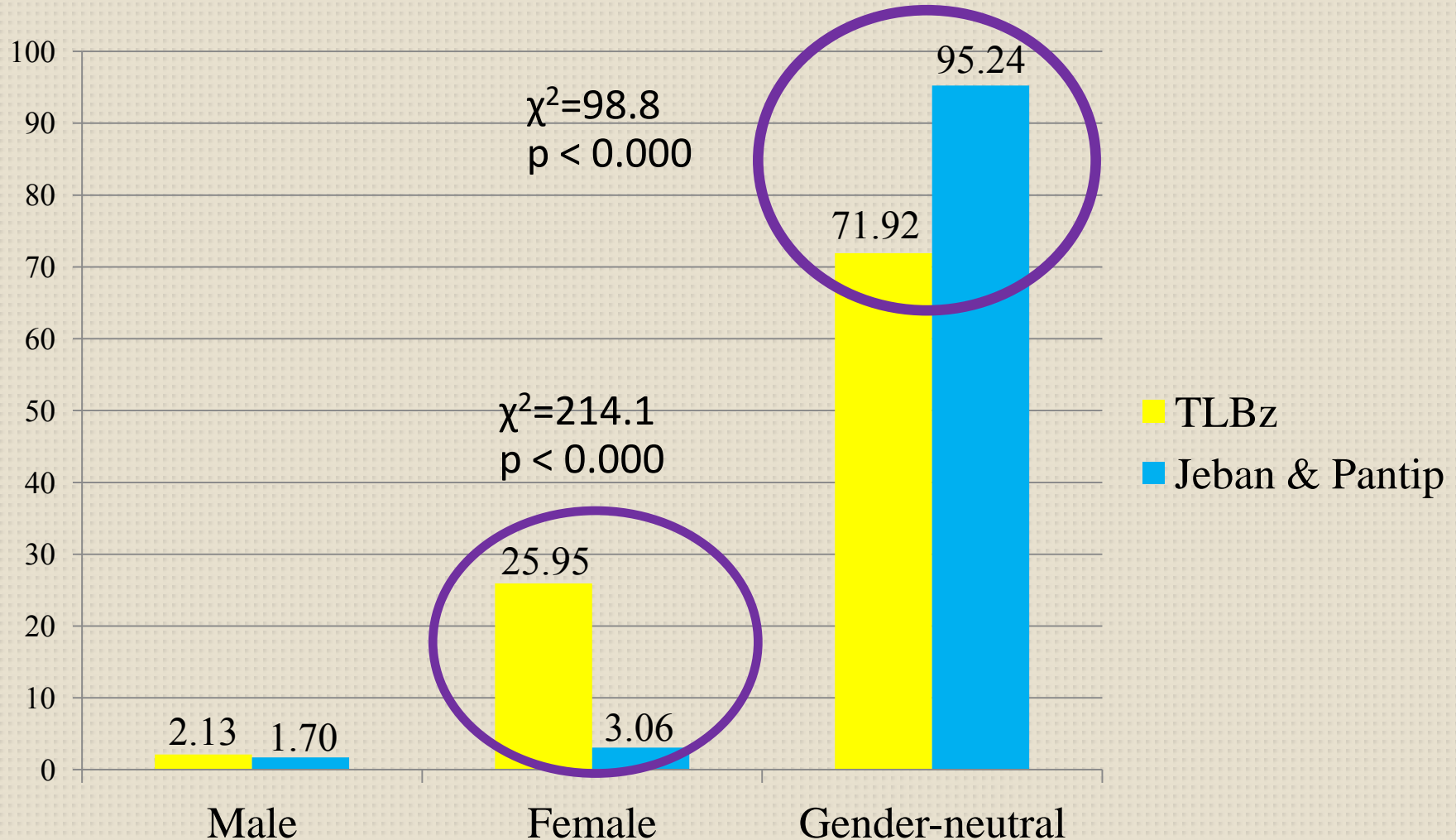
	Male	Female	Gender-neutral
High formality	กระผม kraphom ผม phom	ดิฉัน dichan	ข้าพเจ้า khaphacaw
Mid formality		หนู nu	ฉัน chan เรา raw
Low formality		เขา khaw	กู ku



# Results



# Results (Cont.): Personal pronouns



## Results (Cont.)

- Hyperadaptation (Trudgill 1986)
- Speakers of one variety attempt to speak like those of another variety but “overdo” it
- The female pronoun *dichan*

# The female pronoun *dichan*

- Kathoey

- ดิฉัน (*dichan*) อยู่กาฬสินธุ์ ถ้าจะไปตัดที่ลพบุรี ไป - กลับ แล้วคิดว่าแผลจะบวมไหมคะ ดิฉัน (*dichan*) จะไหวมีคะ
- I live in Kalasin. Do you think it's possible for me to undergo the surgery at Lopburi in one day for a round trip? Will I be able to stand the pain?

# The female pronoun *dichan* (Cont.)

- Women

- แต่ก่อนเรา (**raw**) มีปัญหาเรื่องสิวอุดตันค่ะ เป็นทั้งหน้าเลย อักเสบที่หนึ่งนี่ทิ้งรอยแดงและหลุมไว้ตลอด ก็รักษาด้วยตัวเองมาเรื่อยๆ ใครว่าตัวไหนดี **ดิฉัน** (**dichan**) ลองมาหมด
- **I** used to have pimples all over my face. They leave red marks and holes on my face. I've tried to take care of them myself. Which kind of medicine is said to be good, **I**'ve tried all.

## Results (Cont.)

- Both kathoey and women use the female pronoun *dichan*, but they use it for different purposes.
- Kathoey: default
- Women: emphatic purpose
- Gendered linguistic resources
- Reinterpretation of a linguistic form

# Naturally occurring data

- Ongoing fieldwork
- Ethnographic method
  - Participant observation
  - Snowball sampling
  - Friendship groups
  - Fieldnotes, audio-recordings of group activities
  - Approximately 8 months
  - Bangkok

# Lengthening

Max mueng [ku yak pai baep  
 Pong [cha chuan pai ottrelia  
 Max uem  
 Mik [oi pai yurop mai a  
 Pong [ tua muen  
 Max tua thaorai=  
 Pong =tua muen [nit nit  
 Max [ba  
 Mik ui ba thuk ciang  
 Max ching pa nia [muea rai  
 Pong [ching di tua khong=  
 Max =khong arai=  
 Pong =khong brunai  
 Max tae pai kap khropkhrua mueng (laugh)  
 Mik man bok wa [(inaudible)  
 Pong [mai mai mai ku pai to ottrelia eng  
 Max [o  
 Pong [tae ni tae ni yang khuenyukap wa=  
 Max =mi thiphak duai na mueng ku mi phuean yu lai khon





# Lengthening (Cont.)

Tony phi koet ma tong long thuk yang na mi arai kan thang kon kap faen bang arai bang  
 Som (laugh)

Fon ba mai ao rok prasat

Yoot ao hen tham chang

Tony hen phi yak ru ngai [phi tong patibat

Fon [ko baep songsai ngai wa ko man mi baep yang ngia muean [kan mi

Tor [ngan thoe tong long loei=

Yoot =mai mai mi limit chiwit koen roi chai mai ha



# Lengthening (Cont.)

- Social meaning
- Shared linguistic resources
- Ideologically related meanings
- Indexical field (Eckert 2008)

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