

A Qualitative-Quantitative Study on the Accessibility of Online Medical Information for Lao Medical Students and Physicians

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Introduction

- Medical journals and international collaborations largely operate via the English language¹
- Non-English speaking, low-income countries face language, cost, and relevance barriers utilizing online medical resources²
- Previous observation show Lao medical students struggle with resources written in technical English, but engage in Free Open Access Meducation (FOAM) content on Facebook.
- Additionally, they regularly use university material for their English classes posted on Facebook³

Specific Aims

This study explores limitations to online medical education, and the opportunity they create for FOAM, in Laos, a low-income Asian country with notably low proficiency in the English language.⁴

Methods

Qualitative

Semi-structured, open-ended interviews on access to medical internet resources

Quantitative

Facebook follower data extracted from *Soun Suai Pet*, a social media-based blog for Lao students and physicians, run by American and Lao medical staff

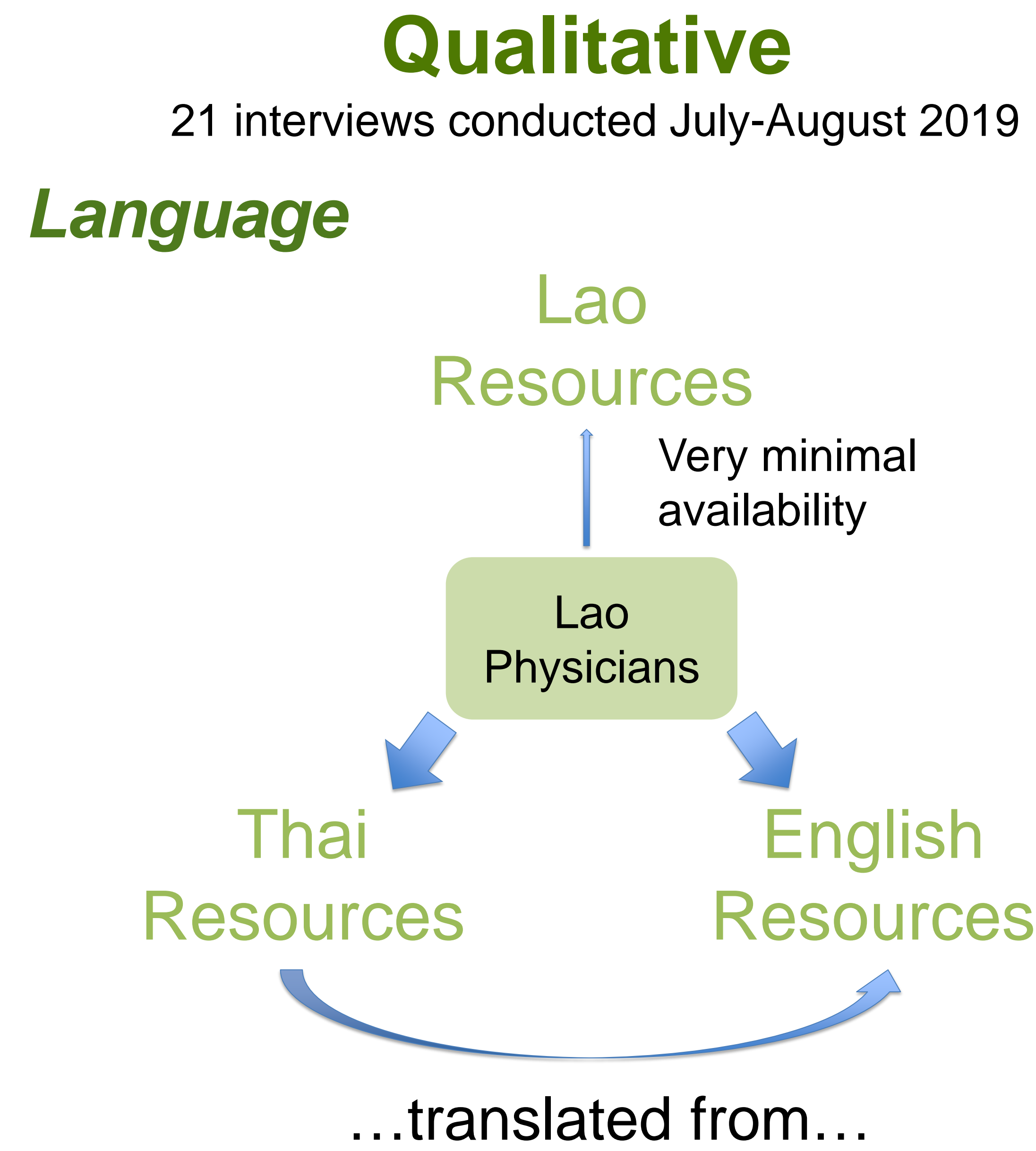
User Demographic data automatically generated on Facebook, engagement collected manually



Image 1: Soun Suai Pet Logo

- Core Domains**
- Internet Use for Medical Knowledge
 - How English Ability Influences Resources Accessed
 - Interest and use of FOAM on Facebook
 - Reliability of resources used
 - Use of Traditional Medical Publication

Results



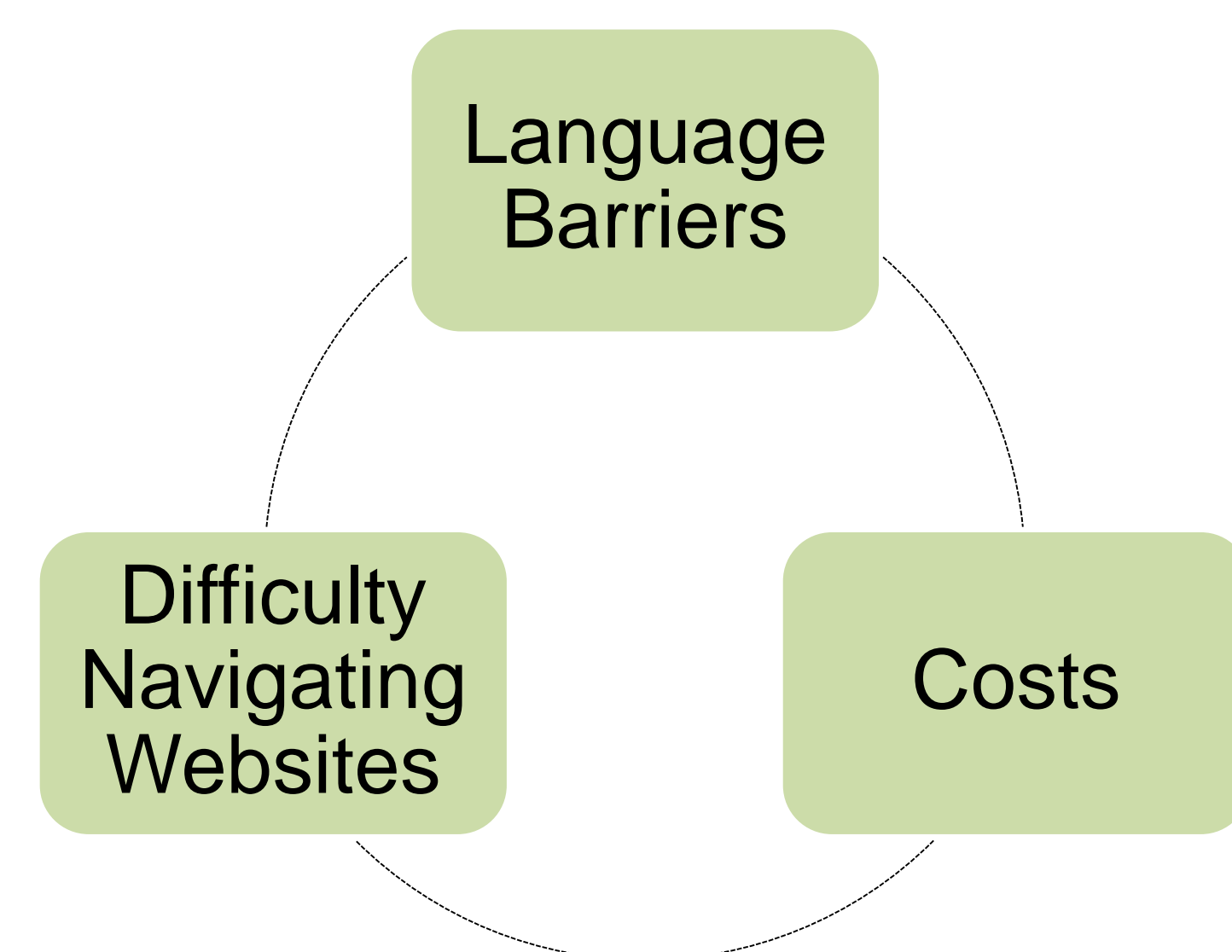
Internet Use for Medical Education

- Smartphones used more than computers (except for case presentations)
- FOAM pages on Facebook commonly followed and seen as clinically/academically useful
- FOAM content usually verified before use



Journals and UptoDate

Limited use due to...



However, UptoDate still recommended by Lao professors

Medscape often used as an alternative to UptoDate

Conclusion

- Participants:
- did not report using traditional medical journals and UptoDate due to language barriers, difficult website navigation, and costs;
 - reported few medical resources in Lao, and therefore often source Thai websites, or more simplified English resources available freely on the web, such as Medscape and FOAM materials on Facebook

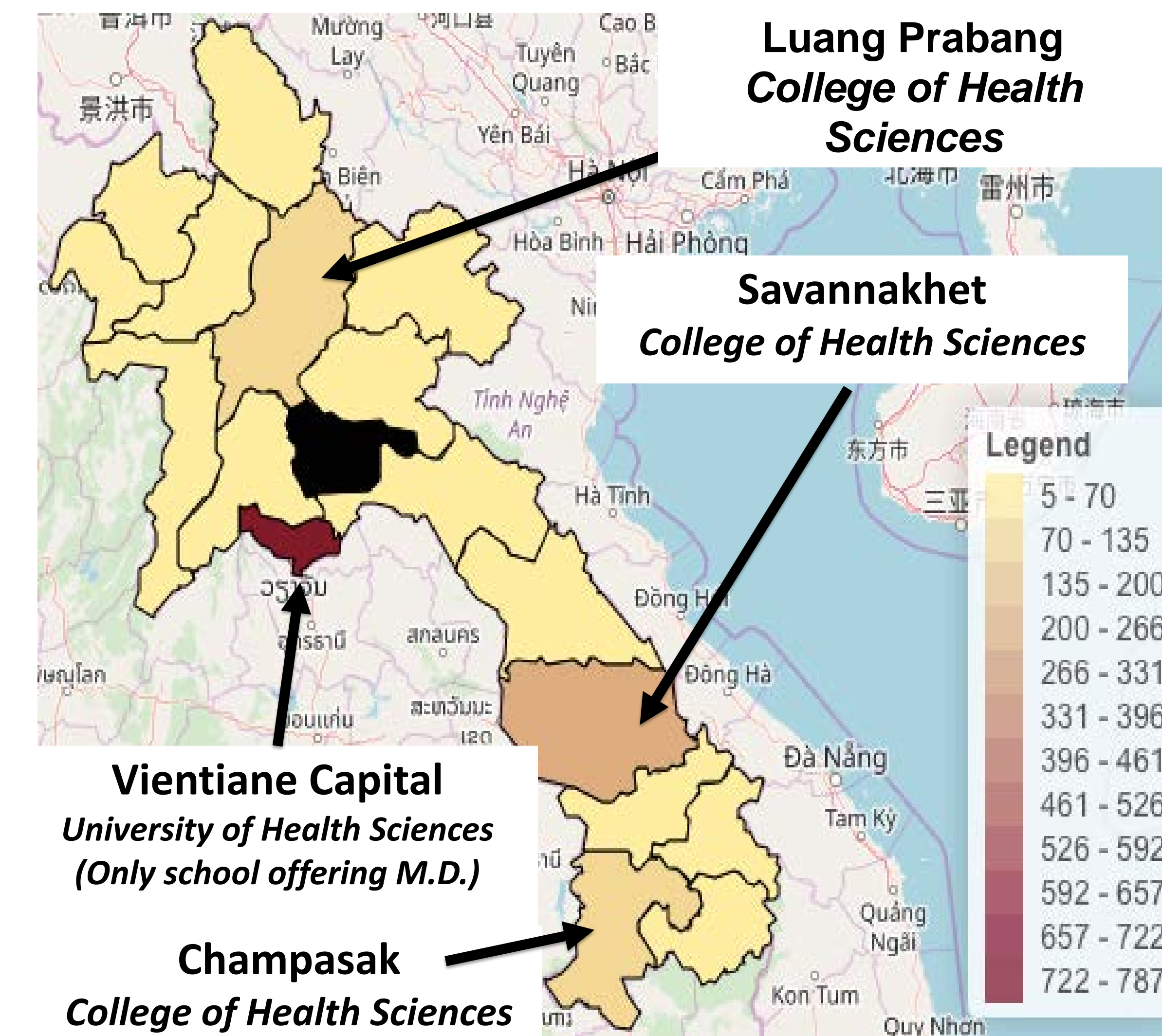
Soun Suai Pet is one FOAM resource that has succeeded in engaging a Lao audience in its content; the most popular being medical terminology. The follower geographic distribution matches that of education hospitals throughout the country.

Next Steps:

- Thematic coding of interview transcriptions
- Identifying profession of Soun Suai Pet followers

Quatitative

Follower Demographics



1658 total followers

60% Female, 40% Male

Age:

- 53% 18-24
- 35% 25-34
- 6% 35-44
- 5,6% <17, >45

Image 2: *Soun Suai Pet* Follower Distribution⁵

Post Engagement

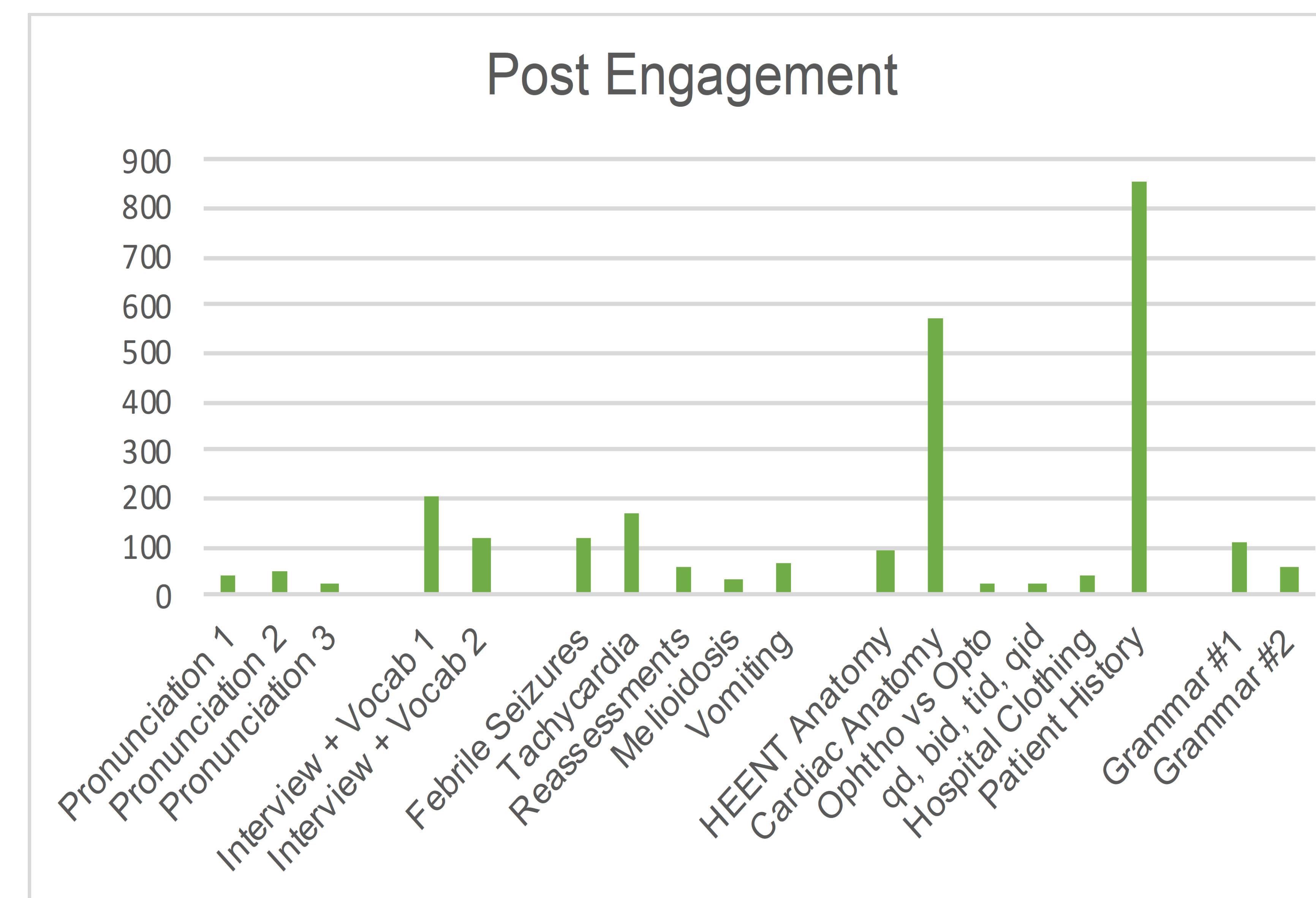


Table 1: Posts divided by category from left to right: Pronunciation, English Interviews, Clinical Pearls, Medical Terminology, Medical English Grammar. Engagements are defined as the combined total of "shares," "likes," "reactions," and "comments." Posts are written in a mix of English and Lao language.

References

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- (3) *Teaching Multi-level Students in a Large Class Setting: Strategies Used with Lao Medica Students*, Publication pending.
- (4) *EF English Proficiency Index*, 2016
- (5) Sasha Babicki, et. al. Heatmapper: web-enabled heat mapping for all. *Nucleic Acids Res.* 2016 May 17

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