

A Comparative Study of Tai-Phuan, Tai-Phake and Lao-Wiang

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Tai-Phuan is a dialect language spoken in fifteen provinces of Thailand, whereas Tai-Phake is a minority language spoken in ten villages in Assam, India, and Lao-Wiang is a dialect language spoken in twenty-three villages in Thailand.

Phonology: Compared with Tai-Phuan, Tai-Phake and Lao-Wiang show a reduction in the consonant and phonemes. On the other hand, they have preserved all the six tones in the three varieties. On the scale of similarities one finds that the three languages reject the syllabic structure : VC. The three languages do not allow certain aspirated consonants or voiced consonants to occur in the word-final positions.

Lexicon: In the analysis that follows, the researchers presented the fieldwise vocabulary. Identical forms and cognate forms are later taken up as similar vocabulary items. Next we count the different forms and finally we list words from Tai-Phuan and Lao-Wiang in which there were no corresponding Tai-Phake words.

Key words: Tai-Phuan, Tai-Phake, Lao-Wiang

INTRODUCTION

Most of the linguists believe that the Standard Thai used nowadays in communication is one of the Tai-Dialects. The languages of Tai-Phuan, Tai-Phake and Lao-Wiang are also classified as Standard Thai. So a study of the dialect-history and its development not only helps the learners to understand its contents but also benefits the one who is interested in it.

The language of Tai-Phuan, Tai-Phake and Lao-Wiang are still used in communication and being a segment of a group known as minority language. Although the people of minority groups stay away from one another, some in other foreign countries, such as the people in Assam, India, speak Tai-Phake. However, it is believed that Thai or Tai is a great language family generally spoken in South East Asia.

People have created languages as a part of

their culture by their own requirement for communication and understanding in several ethnic groups. In the same way, the ancestral languages of ethnic groups used in the past might have been changed in accordance with time and laws of nature that language should be always changed. If language did not change, they would become just dead language or language of non-communication.

So we need to study the depth, understanding and comparison of three languages i.e. Tai-Phaun, Tai-Phake and Lao-Wiang classifying their similarities and dissimilarities, finding a clearer conclusion leading to a development of the languages mentioned above.

Tai-Phuan is spoken in fifteen provinces of Thailand Lop Buri, Ratchaburi, Phichit, Phetchabun, Phetchaburi, Phrae, Saraburi, Sing Buri, Suphan Buri, Prachin Buri, Nakhon Sawan, Nakhon Nayok, Sukhothai, Udon Thani and Nan.

The Tai Phakes also known as Phakials, a small population found in the riverine areas of Dibrugarh district of upper Assam, were originally a hill tribe within the famous Tai family. They call themselves as Tai Phake.

Lao-Wiang is a minority language spoken in eighteen villages in Uthong district, Suphan Buri, two villages in Phanomsarakham district, two villages in Sanamchaikhet district, Chachengsaw and one village in Kabin-Buri district, Prachinburi in Thailand.

The comparison of Tai-Phuan and Lao-Wiang with Tai-Phake is based on extensive field-work in the Ban Hinpak, Hinpak subdistrict, Ban mee district, Lop Buri province for Tai-Phuan, in the Ban Donkha, Uthong district, Suphanburi province for Lao-Wiang

and in the two villages i.e. Nam-Phake and Tipam-Phake for Tai-Phake in which forty informants were contacted. The corpus consists of 2,618 vocabulary items, 1,500 sentences and recording of 25 interviews (total duration = 25 hours)

RESEARCH METHODS

- 1> Choose the research title on “A Comparative Study of Tai-Phuan, Tai-Phake and Lao-Wiang” .
- 2> Study the concerned documents.
- 3> Produce the equipment by managing the questionnaires consisting of 2,618 word groups and 1,500 sentences.
- 4> Aim at a group of 40 people to interview.
- 5> Collect the materials by interview and the documents concerned.
- 6> Record the interview and transcribe phonetically onto literal materials.
- 7> Analyze all materials by a method of minimal pairs.
- 8> Analyze the sound materials by using a computer system.
- 9> When there are some problems in the analysis, more materials must be added.
- 10> Conclude the results and give found suggestions.

RESULTS

The present study is divided into the following:

- 1) give the background of Tai-Phuan, Tai-Phake and Lao-Wiang explains the scope of comparison and field work methodology.

2) deals with the comparison of Tai-Phuan, Tai-Phake and Lao-Wiang phonology covering segmental phonemes, suprasegmental phonemes, syllabic structures and consonant clusters.

3) give the list of lexical items in the three varieties.

4) summarizes the findings of the previous chapters and discusses the areas for further research.

PHONOLOGY

The lexical items collected gave us the following inventory of segmental phonemes:

Consonants of Tai-Phuan and Lao-Wiang:

p, ph, t, th, b, d, k, kh, ?
c, f, s, h, m, n, ɲ, ɳ, l, w, y

Consonants of Tai-Phake:

p, ph, t, th, k, kh, ?
c, s, h, m, n, ɲ, ɳ, l, w, y,

A comparison of the consonant phonemes shows that Tai-Phuan and Lao-Wiang has eighteen consonants and two semi-vowels whereas Tai-Phake has fifteen consonants and two semi-vowels. Tai-Phuan and Lao-Wiang has the bilabial plosive voiced /b/, labio-dental fricative voiceless /f/ and alveolar plosive voiced /d/ which Tai-Phake lacks.

The common lexical items show that Tai-Phuan and Lao-Wiang /b/ is replaced by /m/ in Tai-Phake as in

<u>TPH</u>	<u>LW</u>	<u>TP</u>	
/ bāw/	/ bāw /	/ maw /	“to be light”
/ bět /	/ bět /	/ mět /	“hook”
/ bā: /	/ bā: /	/ ma: /	“shoulder”

Tai-Phuan and Lao-Wiang /d/ is replaced by /n/ as in

<u>TPH</u>	<u>LW</u>	<u>TP</u>	
/ dám /	/ dam /	/ nám /	“black”
/ dɛ:ɳ /	/ dɛɳ /	/ nɛɳ /	“red”
/ da:w /	/ da:w /	/ ná:w /	“star”

Tai-Phuan and Lao-Wiang /f/ is replaced by /ph/ as Tai-Phake, that is a fricative is replaced by an aspirated plosive. For examples:

<u>TPH</u>	<u>LW</u>	<u>TP</u>	
/ fón /	/ fõn /	/ phón /	“rain”
/ fí: /	/ fí: /	/ phí: /	“pock”
/ fá: /	/ fâ: /	/ phâ: /	“sky”

Vowel phonemes of Tai-Phuan and Lao-Wiang:

i	i:	u	u:,	u	u:,
e	e:,	ə	ə:,	o	o:,
ɛ	ɛ:,			ɔ	ɔ:,
		a	a:		

Diphthongs: ia, ua, ua

Vowel phonemes of Tai-Phake

i,	u	u
e	ə	o
ɛ		ɔ
		a, a:

A comparison of the three inventories shows that Tai-Phuan and Lao-Wiang has a rich variety of vowels whereas Tai-Phake has a simplified system. Length is phonemic in Tai-Phuan, but it is obliterated in Tai-Phake with the single exception of /a:/.

Tai-Phuan and Lao-Wiang have three diphthongs /ia/, /ua/, /and/, /ua/ where as Tai-Phake does not have any diphthongs.

A comparison of the common vocabulary show that

TPH and LW → TP

/ia/ is replaced by /e/ as in

/khiaw/	→ /khew/	“green”
/sian/	→ /señ/	“sound”
/khiat/	→ /khèt/	“frog”

Tai-Phuan and Lao-Wiang /ua/ is replaced by /ə/ in Tai-Phake as in.

TPH TP

/kua/	→ /kə/	“salt”
/stua/	→ /sə/	“tiger”
/hua/	→ /hə/	“boat”

Tai-Phuan and Lao-Wiang /ua/ is replaced by /o/ in Tai-Phake

TPH TP

/hua/	→ /ho/	“head”
/kūay/	→ /koy/	“banana”
/lūat/	→ /lot/	“wire”

Syllabic Structure

There are three syllabic structures such as monosyllabic, disyllabic and polysyllabic structures in the three varieties.

The syllabic structure of monosyllabic words is the same in Tai-Phuan, Lao-Wiang and Tai-Phake: cvT, cvcT, cvvT with the exception any consonant cluster does not occur in Tai-Phuan.

The structure of the disyllabic word in Tai-Phuan, Lao-Wiang and Tai-Phake is the following: cvcT· cvvT, cvcT· cvcT, cvvT· cvvT, cvvcT· cvcT, cvvCT· cvvcT, cvvcT· cvvT.

The structure of polysyllabic words are rare in the three varieties. In Tai-Phuan and Lao-Wiang the structure of polysyllabic words are loanwords from Standard Thai.

Consonant Clusters

In Tai-Phake the following ten consonant clusters are possible: pl, phl, kl, khl, tl, py, phy, ky, khy and my, which Tai-Phuan and Lao-Wiang lack.

With the exception of /m/ all the initial consonants in the clusters in the variety are one of the four voiceless plosives: /p/, /ph/, /k/ and /tl/. The second member of the cluster is /l/ or /y/.

Tones

Tai-Phuan has six tones.

1> Low tone

2> High tone

3> Mid tone

4> Rising tone

5> Falling tone

6> High falling tone

Tai-Phake and Lao-Wiang have six tones :

1> Low tone

2> High tone

3> Mid tone

4> Rising tone

5> Falling tone

6> Mid rising tone

There are six tones in the three varieties, Tai-Phuan has high falling tone which Tai-Phake and Lao-Wiang lack, whereas Tai-Phake and Lao-Wiang have mid rising tone which Tai-Phuan lacks.

The common lexical items show that there is no change in the rising tone for the three varieties. In the case of other tones we found the following regarding the common lexical items:

Tai-Phuan has high falling tone when Tai-Phake and Lao-Wiang have mid rising tone.

Tai-Phuan has high falling tone when Tai-Phake has high tone and Lao-Wiang has mid tone.

Tai-Phuan has high tone which is replaced by falling tone in Tai-Phake and Lao-Wiang.

Tai-Phuan has falling tone whereas Tai-Phake and Lao-Wiang have low tone.

Tai-Phuan has low tone whereas Tai-Phake and Lao-Wiang have mid rising tones

Tai-Phuan and Lao-Wiang have mid tone whereas Tai-Phake has high tone.

LEXICON

The lexicon is analysed in terms of various interrelated semantic fields. For example, under PERSONS we get semantic fields such as relations, occupations, age and sex, social status etc. The comparison between Tai-Phuan, Lao-Wiang and Tai-Phake yields three types of lexical classes. The first gives identical forms and cognate forms as similar vocabulary items. There are words having some regular phonological changes. These two classes constitute the common vocabulary for the three varieties. The second class lists lexical items that are totally different in the two varieties. The third class shows places where one of the three varieties lack words; that is, it shows semantic gaps.

The high percentage of common vocabulary items reveals the relatedness of the three varieties and in a sense justifies an attempt comparing the three. The table showing the descending order of common vocabulary is significant. It shows which semantic fields comparatively remain stable even when a

language migrates and is influenced by other dominating languages. The different lexical items indicate the areas of further research. The main question would be: where do these words in Tai-Phake come from? There are more gaps in Tai-Phuan and Lao-Wiang than in Tai-Phake. This may be because of the limited functional value of Tai-Phake. A further study in this direction would be useful.

CONCLUSION

The researchers summarize all the findings made earlier in this chapter. This will present a clear picture of the comparison.

The chapter also indicates further areas of research. For example, it would be interesting to compare the other three varieties such as Tai-Khamti, Tai-Khamyang, Tai-Rung, Tai-Aiton with Tai-Phuan with Standard-Thai. A comparison of the Tai-varieties in Assam with that of Tai-Phuan and Lao-Wiang will throw light on some important aspects of bilingualism, especially on minority language communities.

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