The Lexical Variations between Three Generations of Tai Dam in Ratchaburi Province, Thailand[1]

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Abstract

Tai Dam is a language in the southwestern group of the Tai language family. Spoken in Vietnam, Laos and Thailand, Tai Dam originated in the Sip Song Chu Tai region of Vietnam. This article aims to study the lexical variations between three generations of Tai Dam speakers in Donkhlang Subdistrict Damnernsaduak District, Ratchaburi Province. Data for the analysis comes from a list of 222 semantic units tested on three generations of informants : old generation (over 60 years old), middle generations (35-55 years old), and young generation (18-30 years old). The results reveal that the first generation used Tai Dam the most whereas the third generation used Tai Dam the least. The young generation use lexical in central Thai more than the other generation groups. The young generation tend to use only lexical in standard Thai or lexical in central Thai together with lexical in Tai Dam. When the young speakers use Tai Dam lexical, a variation in sounds was found. The sound variation can be attributed to the fact that standard Thai is an official language used in educational institutes and the mass media in Thailand.

Key Words: Lexical variation; Social variation; Thai Song Dam; Tai Dam

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Introduction

The Tai Song Dam or Tai Dam ethnic group of Thailand speak a language in Tai Family of Southwestern Tai Group. Fang Kuei Li (1959) classified languages in Tai Family into three groups; namely, Northern Tai Group, Central Tai Group and Southwestern Tai Group. The Tai Dam are named in differently such as Lao Song, Tai Dam, Phu Tai Dam, Tai Song and Tai Song Dam. The variation of naming is presumed to be because both "Song" (ซ่ง) and "Song" (โซ่ง) mean "pants". Therefore, "Lao Song" means someone who is wearing a black shirt and pants living on the bank of the Black River, Northern Vietnam.

The original residence of the Tai Dam is in the south of China next to Northern Vietnam. They settled down scattered from Guangxi, Yunnan, Tang Kea, Black and Red River Basin and Sipsong Chu Tai. Muang Thaen or Dienbienphu was the center of this dependent state. Because of war, the Tai Dam migrated to Thailand during ThonBuri Era (BE 2322) and the rein of King Rama V of Rattanakosin (BE 2430). They first settled down in Phetchaburi. Nowadays, the Tai Dam spread in different provinces of Thailand such as Phetchaburi, Suphanburi, Nakhonpathom, Samutsakhon, Kanchanaburi, Lopburi, Saraburi, Phichit, Phisanulok, Sukhothai, and Loei. (Panida Yensamut, 1981)

It is notable that nowadays the Tai Dam communities in Thailand are affected by the development of the country in every aspect. The communities; therefore have changed into bilingual communities and multilingual communities because of the influence the media, education as well as the interaction with the outsiders. The Tai Dam have to communicate in the official Thai Language i.e. teenage use central Thai (Bangkok Thai dialect) vocabulary whereas the working people and the elderly people speak Tai Dam more than other groups. According to this observation, the researcher then incorporated sociolinguistic principles in the framework of this study by using the study of language variation which mainly states that there is a variation in every language i.e. the different forms of language are interchangeable without changing the main meaning. Therefore, the

variation of language can be explained by social factors such as gender, age, education, residence and situation.

The researcher was interested in the variation of language over different age groups because it does not only reveal a variety of languages used by people of different age groups, but also reveal a change in progress and an apparent-time change. Moreover, a society where people of the new generation are likely to speak their ethnic language less will be overtaken by other languages which will result in language shift. The ethnic language will soon disappear and become a dead language. For all these reasons, the researcher then incorporated age as an important variation in the study of Tai Dam.

This analysis aims to study lexical variation and lexical usage among three generations in Tai Dam living in Donkhlang Sub-District, Damnernsaduak District, Ratchaburi Province. The independent variables is the language informants' age and the dependent variable is the 222 semantic units used in the analysis.

Research Methodology

1. Semantic units selection

Researcher used word list of Tai Dam vocabulary spoken in Vietnam (Fippinger 1974). This includes 222 semantic units of Tai Dam vocabulary which have different consonant and vowel from the central Thai (Bangkok Thai dialect) because the researcher wanted to study the variation of Tai Dam language in Thailand to see if the lexical exist in Tai Dam language in Vietnam or not and to what extent.

2. Site selection

Researcher opted to conduct the research in the western part of Thailand because there are a lot of the Tai Dam living there. The site chosen is Tai Dam community Mu 1 Donkhlang Sub-District Damnernsaduak District, Ratchaburi Province.

3. Informants selection

The criteria used in the selection of informants are as follows:

3.1 Born and raised up in the local area, without migration

3.2 Use Tai Dam in daily life

3.3 Obtain clear articulation and good sight and listening skills

3.4 Obtain language expertise

4. The criteria of generation

The informants are divided into three generations.

The researcher fixed the range of five years so as to prevent a narrow gap of age among the informants with the same level of expertise. Prior research in this category also used the range of five years. (Labov, 1972)

a. The first generation (G1) represents the elderly whose age is more than 60 years old.

b. The second generation (G2) represents the middle-aged whose age is between 35-55 years old.

c. The third generation (G3) represents the younger people whose age is between 18-30 years old.

Regarding the above criteria, the informants chosen are:

a. The first generation of informant

1. Mrs. Aae   Puakja, 75 years old.

2. Mr. Narong   Donnoi, 70 years old.

3. Mrs. Yai Sewi, 65 years old.

b. The second generation of informant

1. Mrs. Jannaphat Prathepphephon, 48 years old.

2. Mr. Yot Satphet, 50 years old.

3. Mrs. Wan Aujphet, 40 years old.

c. The third generation of informant

1. Miss Watcharawadee Unrua, 19 years old.

2. Mr. Kamol Aujphet, 28 years old.

3. Miss Ratree Butphet, 25 years old.

5. Data collection

The researcher used a word list of 222 semantic units in the interview. In case the informants did not understand the meaning

because of unclear meaning, the interviewer used real objects, illustrations and body expressions and a make-up situation to facilitate the interview. When the informants understood the meaning and articulate the word, the interviewer recorded the sound twice and then transfer into phonetic alphabet.

Phonological System of Tai Dam

The researcher collected the data of phonological system of Tai Dam at Donkhlang Sub-District Damnernsaduak District, Ratchaburi Province. The results are as follows:

There are 19 consonant phonemes of Tai Dam in Donkhlang as follows /p, ph, b, t, th, k, kh, ʔ, c, f, s, h, m, n, ɲ, ŋ, l, w, j/ and there are 18 simple vowel phonemes as follows /i iː e eː ɛ ɛː ɯ ɯː ə əː a aː u uː o oː ɔ ɔː/ and 4 Dipthong as follows /ia ɯa ua aɯ/

There are 6 tones as follow

1. Tone 1 mid rising tone (34)
2. Tone 2 mid rising falling tone (354)
3. Tone 3 low rising tone (24)
4. Tone 4 high level tone (44)
5. Tone 5 mid falling tone (32)
6. Tone 6 high rising falling tone (452)

Results

The results of this study will be discussed as follows:

1. The lexical variation among three generations

The variation of language used by people of three generations means the usage of the same lexical or the usage of different lexicals in the same semantic unit.

2. Variation of lexical variants among three generations

The variation of the same lexical in people of three generations means Tai Dam people use the variation of the same lexical by changing vowel sound or consonant sound which have similar phonetic feature.

The criteria used in judging the variation of the same lexical focus on the variation of vowel sound or consonant sound. For example, /khaw⁵ po:t⁴/ ~ /khaw⁵ pho:t⁴/ 'corn' the variation of consonant sound /p/ and /ph/ has similar phonetic feature, so / khaw⁵ po:t⁴/ and /khaw⁵ pho:t⁴/ are the variation of the same lexical.

The word /pi:¹/ and /ʔuan⁵/ 'to be fat' do not use any variation which has similar phonetic feature, therefore, the word / pi:¹/ and /ʔuan⁵/ are different lexicals.

There is an exceptional case. Even though some words use similar phonetic feature, the researcher indicates the language of those words according to study and research evidence. For example, several documents indicate that the word /ka:ŋ¹ kɯː:n²/ 'night' is Tai Dam, whereas /kla:ŋ¹ khɯː:n²/ is central Thai. The researcher then indicated that they are different lexicals.

1. The lexical variation among three generations

The analysis of lexical variation of three generations in Tai Dam living in Donkhlang Sub-District Damnernsaduak District, Ratchaburi Province from 222 semantic units is as follows:

1.1 Semantic units which people of three generations used the same lexical.

1.2 Semantic units which people of two generations used the same lexical.

1.3. Semantic units which people of three generations used different lexicals.

1.1 Semantic units which people of three generations used the same lexical.

The language informants interviews revealed that the Tai Dam of three generations used the same lexical. There are 153 semantic units (68.91%) which can be classified as follows:

1.1.1 From the analysis of Tai Dam vocabulary, the Tai Dam of three generations used Tai Dam vocabulary. There are 81 semantic units (36.49%) as indicated (A) in the following table.

G1 Age over 60 years	G2 Age 35-55 years	G3 Age 18-30 years
A	A	A

Example

Semantic unit	G1,2,3
'tree'	/kɔ:³ maj⁶/
'papaya'	/ma⁵ hoŋ³/
'mouth'	/sop³ ~ hu:² sop³/
'to hear'	/daj⁵ ŋin²/
'to speak'	/paʔ³/
'to cry'	/haj⁵/
'meet'	/pɔ:¹/
'human'	/kon²/
'father'	/ʔa:j⁵/
'mother'	/ʔem¹/

1.1.2 The usage of other lexicals means the Tai Dam informants of three generations used central Thai (Bangkok Thai dialect), or new word. There are 72 semantic units (32.43%). They will be indicated as (B) in the following table.

G1 Age over 60 years	G2 Age 35-55 years	G3 Age 18-30 years
B	B	B

Example

Semantic unit	Tai Dam	G1,2,3
'rabbit'	/thɔʔ³/	/ka⁵ ta:j³/
'spider'	/siŋ² sa:w¹/	/to:¹ mɛ:ŋ² mum² ~ mɛ:ŋ² mum²/
'chopstick'	/thu:²/	/ta⁵ kiap³/
'conical hat'	/kup³/	/muaʔ³/
'cloud'	/piəŋ² fa:³/	/khi:⁵ me:k⁴ ~ me:k⁴/
'sock'	/ma:t⁵/	/thuŋ¹ ti:n¹/
'towel'	/xan¹/	/pha:⁵ pok³ hua¹ ~ pha:⁵ ka:t⁴ hua¹/
'to shoot'	/bɛn²/	/ɲiŋ²/
'grit teeth'	/ɲan⁶/	/khop¹/
'clever'	/lak²/	/sa⁵ la:t⁴/

1.2 Semantic units which people of two generations used the same lexical.

The usage of the same lexical used by two generation means the Tai Dam informants of two generations used Tai Dam only, or other dialect or both Tai Dam and other dialects. There are 62 semantic units (27.93%). They can be classified into 5 categories as follows:

1.2.1 The second and the third generations used other dialects or new word whereas the first generation used Tai Dam. There are 22 semantic units (9.91%) as indicated in the following table.

G1 Age over 60 years	G2 Age 35-55 years	G3 Age 18-30 years
A	B	B

Example

Semantic unit	G1	G2, 3
'star'	/la:w^1/	/da:w^1/
'a fly'	/mɛ:ŋ^2 ŋwan^2/	/mɛ:ŋ^2 wan^2/
'mosquito'	/to:^{1} ɲuŋ^2/	/juŋ^2/
'to swim'	/lɔ:j^2/	/wa:j^4/
'rotate'	/pin^5/	/mun^1/
'hammock'	/ʔu:^{3}/	/pe:^{2} ~ ple:^{2}/
'yet'	/he:^{1}/	/ɲaŋ^2/
'will'	/ciʔ^3/	/caʔ^3/
'deep'	/lək^4/	/lɯk^4/

       1.2.2 The first and the second generations used Tai Dam whereas the third generation used other dialects or new word. There are 16 semantic units (7.21%) as indicated in the following table.

G1	G2	G3
A	A	B

Example

Semantic unit	G1,2	G3
'grass'	/kɔ:¹ ɲa:⁵/	/kɔ:¹ ja:⁵/
'calf'	/ma⁵ kɛŋ⁵ ~ na:⁵ kɛŋ⁵/	/na:⁵ khɛŋ⁵ ~ khɛŋ⁵/
'remember'	/cɯ:³/	/cam¹/
'man'	/kon² ca:j² ~ pɔ:⁴ ca:j²/	/pɔ:³ cha:j²/
'human'	/kon²/	/khon²/
'spear'	/hɔʔ³/	/hɔ:k³/
'not'	/bɔ:³/	/maʔ⁴/

   1.2.3 The second and the third generations used both Tai Dam and other dialects or new word ($\frac{A}{B}$) whereas the first generation used Tai Dam only. There are 12 semantic unit (5.41%) as indicated in the following table.

G1	G2	G3
A	A B	A B

Example

Semantic unit	G1	G2, 3
'moon'	/bɯan¹/	/bɯan¹/ /dɯan¹/
'rainbow'	/to:¹ huŋ⁶/	/to:¹ huŋ⁶/ /to:¹ luŋ⁶ ~ luŋ⁶/
'day'	/mɯ:⁶/	/mɯ:⁶/ /wan²/
'fat'	/pi:¹/	/pi:¹/ /ʔuan⁵/
'to push'	/suj¹/	/suj¹/ /phak³/
'corn'	/khaw⁵ li:²/	/khaw⁵ li:²/ /khaw⁵ po:t⁴ ~ khaw⁵ pho:t⁴/

1.2.4 The first generation and the second generation used Tai Dam whereas the third generation used Tai Dam and other dialects or new word. There are 10 semantic units (4.5%) as indicated in the following table.

G1	G2	G3
A	A	A B

Example

Semantic unit	G1,2	G3
'neck'	/kɔ:²/	/kɔ:²/ /khɔ:²/
'heart'	/hua¹ caɯ¹/	/hua¹ caw¹/ /hua¹ caj¹/
'to give'	/haɯ⁵/	/haw⁵/ /haj⁵/
'crawl'	/ca:n²/	/ca:n²/ /kha:n²/
'fever'	/saj⁵/	/saj⁵/ /khaj⁵/
'ash'	/taw⁵/	/taw⁵/ /thaw⁵/

1.2.5 The first generation used both Tai Dam and other dialects or new word whereas the second and the third generation used other dialect or new word. There are 2 semantic units (0.9%) as indicated in the following table.

G1	G2	G3
A B	B	B

Example

Semantic unit	G1	G2,3
'worm'	/to:¹ lɯan²/ /to:¹ saj⁵ dɯan²/	/to:¹ saj² dɯan² ~ saj² dɯan²/
'half'	/thoŋ²/ /kɯŋ⁴/	/kɯŋ⁴/

1.3 Semantic units which people of three generations used different lexicals.

The first generation used Tai Dam whereas the second generation used both Tai Dam and other dialects and the third generation used other dialects only. There are 7 semantic units (3.15%) as indicated in the following table.

G1	G2	G3
A	A	
	B	B

Example

| Semantic unit	G1	G2	G3
'night'	/kɯːn^2/	/kaːŋ^1 kɯːn^2/ /kaːŋ^1 khɯːn^2/	/kaːŋ^1 khɯːn^2/
'visit'	/jaːm^4/	/jaːm^4/ /jiam^4/	/jiam^4/
'spill'	/baː^1/	/baː^1/ /hok^3/	/hok^3/
'rotten'	/min^1/	/min^1/ /men^1/	/men^1/
'swell'	/kaɯ^5/	/kaɯ^5/ /buam^1/	/buam^1/
'shortened'	/kɔm^5/	/kɔm^5/ /san^5/	/san^5/
'short'	/ten^5/	/ten^5/ /san^5/	/san^5/

Pattern of the lexical item usage can show in chart as the following :
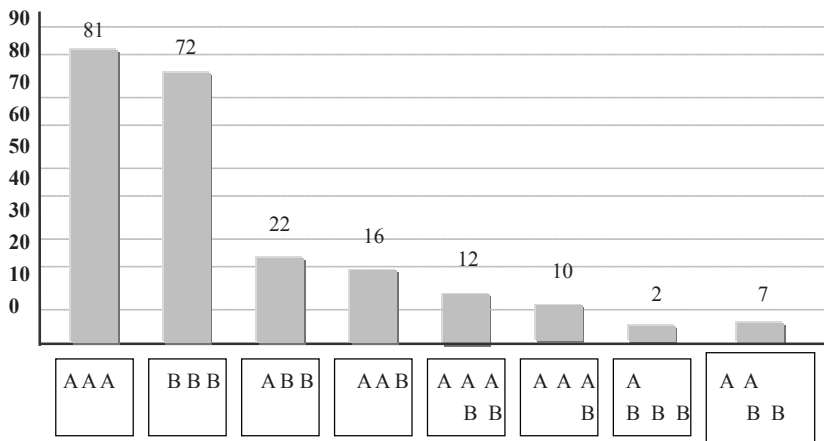
It is clearly stated that the informants of three generations in Tai Dam language community, Damnernsaduak District, Ratchaburi Province used 81 semantic units of Tai Dam vocabulary and 72 semantic units of other dialects.Regarding to the ratio of the usage of Tai Dam vocabulary (A), and other dialects (B), and both Tai Dam vocabulary together with other dialects ($\frac{A}{B}$) among three generations. The first generation used Tai Dam the most and used other dialects the least. The third generation used Tai Dam the least, used other dialects the most and used Tai Dam together with other dialects the most as indicated in the following table.

Generation	(A)	%	($\frac{A}{B}$)	%	(B) %	
G1	148	66.67	2	0.9	72	32.43
G2	107	48.20	19	8.56	96	43.24
G3	81	36.5	22	9.9	119	53.60

The above table compares the usage of Tai Dam (A), Tai Dam together with other dialects ($\frac{A}{B}$) and other dialects (B) among three generations.
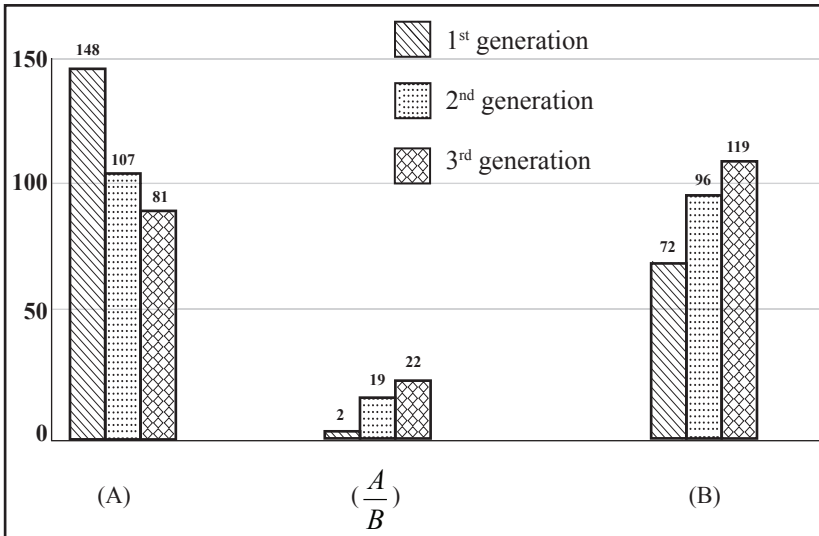
2. Variation of lexical variants among three generations

There are two categories of lexical variants.

2.1 The lexical variants of Tai Dam

2.2 The lexical variants of other dialects

2.1 The lexical variants of Tai Dam

Different generation of Tai Dam's informants used more than one form of the vocabulary. The variations found are the deduction of syllable, the addition of syllable and syllable changes. The syllable which contains the main meaning remain unchanged.

Example

Semantic unit	Generation	
'mud'	<u>G1</u> /po:ŋ¹/	<u>G2, 3</u> /khi:⁵ poŋ¹/
'nose'	<u>G1,2</u> /hu:² laŋ¹/	<u>G3</u> /laŋ¹/
'elephant'	<u>G1,2</u> /to:¹ ca:ŋ⁶/	<u>G3</u> /ca:ŋ⁶/
'abdomen'	<u>G1</u> /kham² pum¹/	<u>G2</u> /pum¹/
'trousers'	<u>G1</u> /pha:⁵ suaŋ³ kha:¹ hi:²/	<u>G2, 3</u> /suaŋ³ kha:¹ hi:²/ /suaŋ³ hi:²/

In addition, there have found consonant and vowel variation in Tai Dam Language such as

Phonological variation	Semantic unit	Generation	
/aɯ ~ aw/	'heart'	<u>G1,2</u> /hua¹ caɯ¹/	<u>G3</u> / hua¹ caɯ¹ ~ hua¹ caw¹/
/ɛ ~ ia/	'tooth'	<u>G1,2</u> /khɛw⁵/	<u>G3</u> /khɛw⁵ ~ khiaw⁵/
	'breathe'	/ha:j¹ caɯ¹/	/ha:j¹ caw¹/
/s ~ c/	'like this'	<u>G1,2</u> /caŋ³ si:⁶/	<u>G3</u> /jaŋ³ ci:⁶/
/d ~ l/	'worm'	<u>G1</u> /to:¹ dɯan¹ ~ to:¹ lɯan¹/	
/ɲ ~ ŋ/	'sew'	<u>G1,2</u> /ɲip⁴/	<u>G3</u> /ɲip⁴/

2.2 The lexical variants of other dialects

   Different generations used the central Thai dialect or Bangkok Thai dialect or new vocabulary. The variations found are the deduction of syllable, the addition of syllable and syllable changes. The syllable which contains the main meaning remains unchanged.

Semantic unit	Generation	
'spider'	<u>G1</u> /to:^{1} mɛ:ŋ^1 mum^1/	<u>G2, 3</u> /mɛ:ŋ^1 mum^1/
'cloud'	<u>G1, 2</u> /khi:^{5} me:k^4/	<u>G 3</u> /me:k^4/
'to tell a lie'	<u>G1</u> /khi:^{5} bɛ:w^5/	<u>G2, 3</u> /bɛ:w^5/

   In addition, there have found consonants and vowels variation of new vocabulary such as

Phonological variation	Semantic unit	Generation	
/c ~ ch/	'hour'	<u>G1</u> /cua^4 mo:ŋ^1/	<u>G2, 3</u> /cua^4 mo:ŋ^1 ~ chua^4 mo:ŋ^1/
/p ~ ph/	'corn'	<u>G 2</u> /khaw^5 po:t^4/	<u>G3</u> /khaw^5 pho:t^4/
/khw ~ f/	'axe'	<u>G1</u> /khwa:n^1/	<u>G2, 3</u> /fa:n^1/
/p ~ pl/	'hammock'		<u>G3</u> /pe^2: ~ ple:^{2}/

Conclusion

The interviews with three generations of informants living in Donkhlang Sub-District, Damnernsaduak District, Ratchaburi Province using 222 semantic units revealed that the first generation used Tai Dam the most whereas the third generation used Tai Dam the least. Regarding the usage of other dialect, the third generation used other dialects the most whereas the first generation used other dialects the least. Regarding the usage of Tai Dam together with other dialects, the thrid generation used them the most.

Besides, there are variation of lexical variants in Tai Dam and other dialects such as the addition of syllable, the deduction of syllable, consonant and vowel changes. Therefore, age can be an important factor which affects the changes in Tai Dam used by people living in Donkhlang Sub-District, Damnernsaduak District, Ratchaburi Province.

Discussion

The results of this study reflect that people of new generation use central Thai (Bangkok Thai dialect) instead of Tai Dam. Moreover, they also try to mingle well with central Thai people on the aspect of language so as not to be distinguished. If the situation continues like this, the influence of central Thai (Bangkok Thai dialect) will hinder Tai Dam lifestyle. If the people in this community do not preserve and develop their Tai Dam, the researcher anticipates that Tai Dam language will encounter a crisis within a few generations.

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