

## **The Lexical Variations between Three Generations of Tai Song Dam in Suphanburi Province, Thailand**

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### **Preface**

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 south of China next to Northern Vietnam. They settled 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 Thon Buri 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. (พนิดา เย็นสมุทร 2524)

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.

Since this paper is a part of the research “Ethnicity: New Paradigm in Language and Cultural Transmission” and its sub-project “The Ongoing Ethnic Language Process”. The researcher used age as the main variable in analyzing the variation in Tai Dam language.

This analysis aims to study lexical variation and lexical usage among three generations in Tai Dam living in Donmaklua Sub-District, U-thong District, Suphanburi 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)

### 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 11 Donmaklua Sub-District U-thong District, Suphanburi 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.

- 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 30-55 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 – Mr Da Theankhonrak, 70 years old.
- b. The second generation of informant –Mr Chakhrit Theankhonrak, 49 years old.
- c. The third generation of informant –Miss Jenjira Chuanatree, 19 years old.

### 5. Data collection

Researcher interviewed the informants on the record using 222 semantic units.

## Phonological system of Tai Dam

There are 19 consonant phonemes of Tai Dam in Donmaklua Sub-District U-thong District, Suphanburi Province 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, i:, e, e:, ε, ε:, u, u:, ə, ə:, a, a:, u, u:, o, o:, ɔ, ɔ:/ and 4 Diphthong as follows /ia, ua, ua, au/

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
2. Variation of lexical variants among three generations

### 1. The lexical variation among three generations

The analysis of lexical variation of three generations in Tai Dam living in Donmaklua Sub-District U-thong District, Suphanburi Province from 222 semantic units is as follows:

- 1.1 Semantic units similarly used by three generations
- 1.2 Semantic units similarly used by two generations
- 1.3 Semantic units differently used by three generations

#### 1.1 Semantic units similarly used by three generations

The language informants interviews revealed that the Tai Dam of three generations used the same vocabulary. There are 174 semantic units (80.64%) 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 104 semantic units (46.85%) 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
'moon'	/buan <sup>1</sup> /
'mud'	/khi: <sup>5</sup> poŋ <sup>1</sup> ~ poŋ <sup>1</sup> /
'papaya'	/ma <sup>5</sup> hoŋ <sup>3</sup> /
'egg'	/saj <sup>5</sup> /
'coconut'	/ma <sup>5</sup> pa:w <sup>6</sup> /
'mouth'	/sop <sup>3</sup> /
'tooth'	/khew <sup>5</sup> /
'fear'	/ja:n <sup>4</sup> /
'where'	/ka <sup>5</sup> la <sup>5</sup> le: <sup>6</sup> /
'mother'	/ʔem <sup>1</sup> /

1.1.2 The usage of other vocabularies means the Tai Dam informants of three generations used central Thai (Bangkok Thai dialect), or new vocabulary. There are 72 semantic units (32.44%) . They will be indicated as (B) in the following table.

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

Example

<u>Semantic unit</u>	<u>Tai Dam</u>	<u>G1,2,3</u>
‘rabbit’	/thoŋ <sup>3</sup> /	/ka <sup>5</sup> taij <sup>3</sup> /
‘spider’	/siŋ <sup>2</sup> saw <sup>1</sup> /	/me:ŋ <sup>1</sup> mum <sup>1</sup> /
‘thigh’	/pa:n <sup>3</sup> xa: <sup>3</sup> /	/kok <sup>3</sup> kha: <sup>1</sup> /
‘grit teeth’	/jan <sup>6</sup> /	/khop <sup>3</sup> khew <sup>5</sup> /
‘tell a lie’	/jam <sup>1</sup> /	/khi: <sup>5</sup> bew <sup>5</sup> /
‘conical hat’	/kup <sup>2</sup> /	/muaŋ <sup>3</sup> /
‘sock’	/mat <sup>5</sup> /	/thuŋ <sup>1</sup> thaw <sup>6</sup> /
‘shoot’	/ben <sup>2</sup> /	/pij <sup>2</sup> /
‘clever’	/lak <sup>4</sup> /	/sa <sup>5</sup> lat <sup>3</sup> /~/cha <sup>5</sup> lat <sup>3</sup> /
‘dirty’	/ʔuaj <sup>2</sup> /	/puan <sup>5</sup> /

1.1.3 The usage of both Tai Dam and vocabulary in other dialects means the Tai Dam informants of three generations used both Tai Dam and Bangkok Thai dialect or Central Thai dialect or new vocabulary. There are 3 semantic units (1.35%). They will be indicated as (  $\frac{A}{B}$  ) in the following

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

Example

<u>Semantic unit</u>	<u>Tai Dam</u>	<u>G1,2,3</u>
‘seed’	/ken <sup>2</sup> /	/ken <sup>3</sup> / /met <sup>3</sup> /
‘suck’	/hu:t <sup>2</sup> /	/hu:t <sup>3</sup> / /du:t <sup>3</sup> /
‘hundred’	/ho:j <sup>6</sup> /	/ho:j <sup>6</sup> / /lo:j <sup>6</sup> /

## 1.2 Semantic units similarly used by two generations

The usage of the same vocabulary 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 40 semantic units (18%). They can be classified into 4 categories as follows:

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

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

Example

<u>Semantic unit</u>	<u>G1,2</u>	<u>G3</u>
‘rainbow’	/to: <sup>1</sup> huŋ <sup>6</sup> /	/luŋ <sup>6</sup> /
‘think’	/ŋa:m <sup>2</sup> /	/kit <sup>4</sup> /
‘spill’	/ba: <sup>3</sup> /	/tok <sup>3</sup> /
‘twenty’	/sa:w <sup>2</sup> /	/ji: <sup>4</sup> sip <sup>3</sup> /
‘hammock’	/ʔu: <sup>3</sup> /	/pe: <sup>1</sup> /

1.2.2 The second and the third generations used other dialects or new vocabulary whereas the first generation used Tai Dam. There are 21 semantic units (9.45%) as indicated in the following table.

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

Example

<u>Semantic unit</u>	<u>G1</u>	<u>G2,3</u>
‘classifier for round objects’	/nuaj <sup>1</sup> /	/lu? <sup>4</sup> /~ /luk <sup>4</sup> /
‘to be well’	/khwe:n <sup>1</sup> /	/sam <sup>1</sup> baj <sup>1</sup> di: <sup>1</sup> / ~ /ju: <sup>3</sup> di: <sup>1</sup> /
‘push’	/suj <sup>2</sup> /	/phak <sup>3</sup> /
‘chopstick’	/thu? <sup>1</sup> /	/ta <sup>5</sup> kiap <sup>3</sup> /
‘sing’	/khap <sup>3</sup> /	/lo:ŋ <sup>6</sup> phe:ŋ <sup>2</sup> /

1.2.3 The second and the third generations used both Tai Dam and other dialects whereas the first generation used Tai Dam only. There are 4 semantic unit (1.8%) as indicated in the following table.

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

Example

<u>Semantic unit</u>	<u>G1</u>	<u>G2,3</u>
‘fat’	/pi: <sup>2</sup> /	/pi: <sup>2</sup> / /?uan <sup>5</sup> /
‘swim’	/lɔj <sup>2</sup> nam <sup>5</sup> /	/lɔj <sup>2</sup> nam <sup>5</sup> / /waj <sup>4</sup> nam <sup>2</sup> /
‘remember’	/cu: <sup>3</sup> /	/cu: <sup>3</sup> / /cam <sup>1</sup> /
‘father’s younger brother’	?a:w <sup>1</sup> /	?a:w <sup>1</sup> / /?a: <sup>1</sup> /

1.2.4 The first generation used both Tai Dam and other dialects whereas the second and third generation used other dialects only. There are 5 semantic units (2.25%) as indicated in the following table.

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

Example

<u>Semantic unit</u>	<u>G1</u>	<u>G2,3</u>
‘rotate’	/pin <sup>1</sup> / /mun <sup>1</sup> /	/mun <sup>1</sup> /
‘I’	/khɔj <sup>1</sup> / /kha: <sup>5</sup> /	/kha: <sup>5</sup> /
‘black’	/lam <sup>1</sup> / /dam <sup>1</sup> /	/dam <sup>1</sup> /
‘dry’	/kha:w <sup>1</sup> / /hɛ:ŋ <sup>5</sup> /	/hɛ:ŋ <sup>5</sup> /
‘short’	/ten <sup>1</sup> / /san <sup>5</sup> /	/san <sup>5</sup> /

### 1.3 Semantic units differently used by three generations

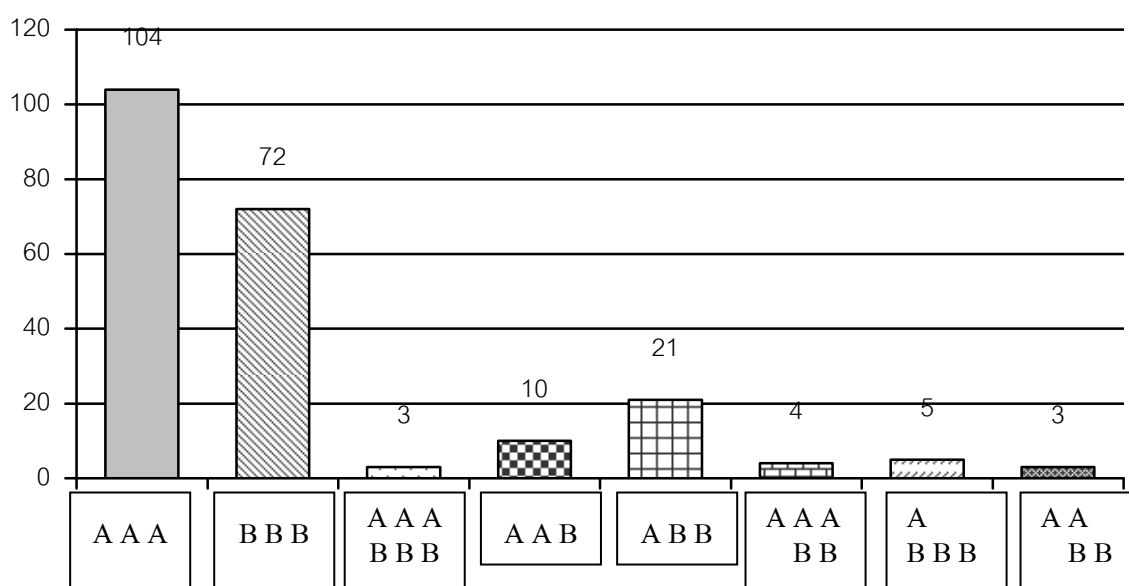
The first generation used Tai Dam whereas the second generation used both Tai Dam and other dialects and the third generation used other dialects only. There are 3 semantic units (1.36%) as indicated in the following table.

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

Example

Semantic unit	G1	G2	G3
'yes'	/mɛn <sup>3</sup> /	/mɛn <sup>3</sup> / /caj <sup>4</sup> /	/caj <sup>4</sup> /
'swell'	/kau <sup>5</sup> /	/kau <sup>5</sup> / /buam <sup>1</sup> /	/buam <sup>1</sup> /
'like'	/mak <sup>4</sup> /	/mak <sup>4</sup> / /cɔ:p <sup>4</sup> /	/cɔ:p <sup>4</sup> /

Pattern of the lexical item usage can show in chart as the following :



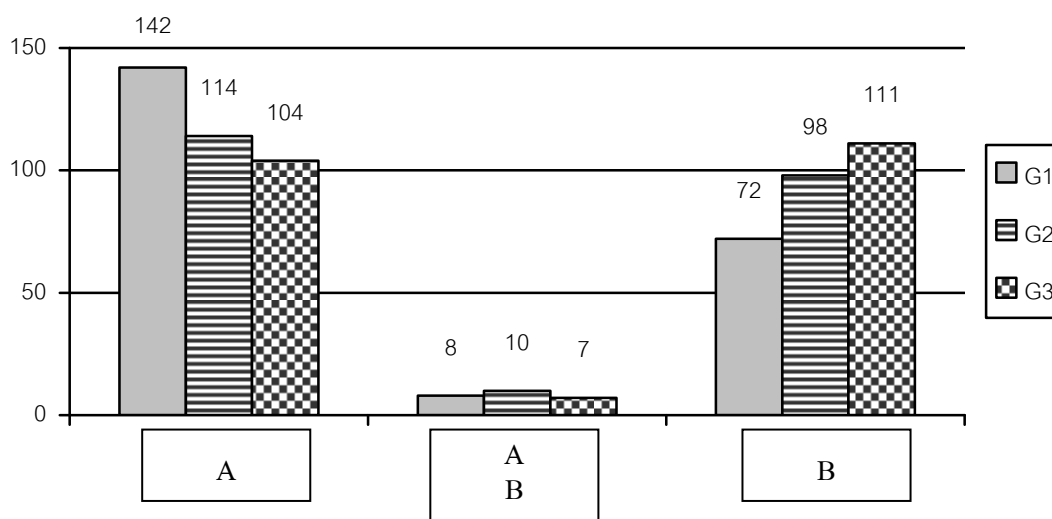
It is clearly stated that the informants of three generations in Tai Dam language community, U-thong District, Suphanburi used 104 semantic units of Tai Dam vocabulary and 72 semantic units of other dialects.

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 and used other dialects the most. Whereas the second generation used Tai Dam together with other dialects the most as indicated in the following table.

Generation	222 semantic units		A B		B	
	A		A	B	B	
G1	142	63.97	8	3.60	72	32.43
G2	114	51.36	10	4.5	98	44.14
G3	104	46.84	7	3.16	111	50

The above table compares the usage of Tai Dam (A), Tai Dam together with other dialects ( $A_B$ ) 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 generations of 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 remains unchanged.

Semantic unit	G1	G2,3
'mud'	/khi: <sup>5</sup> poŋ <sup>1</sup> /	/poŋ <sup>1</sup> /
	G1,2	G3
'trousers'	/suaŋ <sup>2</sup> hi: <sup>2</sup> /	/suaŋ <sup>2</sup> kha: <sup>1</sup> hi: <sup>2</sup> /



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

	<u>Semantic unit</u>	<u>G1, 2</u>	<u>G3</u>
/ɲ ~ j/	‘sew’	/ɲip <sup>4</sup> /	/jip <sup>4</sup> /
/au ~ aw/	‘heart’	/hua <sup>1</sup> cau <sup>1</sup> /	/hua <sup>1</sup> caw <sup>1</sup> /
/l ~ d/	‘worm’	/to: <sup>1</sup> lu <sup>1</sup> an <sup>1</sup> /	/to: <sup>1</sup> du <sup>1</sup> an <sup>1</sup> /
/o: ~ a/	‘elephant’	/to: <sup>1</sup> ca: <sup>1</sup> ŋ <sup>6</sup> /	/ta <sup>1</sup> ca: <sup>1</sup> ŋ <sup>6</sup> /

## 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.

<u>Semantic unit</u>	<u>G1, 2</u>	<u>G3</u>
‘conical hat’	/muaŋ <sup>3</sup> /	/muaŋ <sup>3</sup> cek <sup>3</sup> /
	<u>G1</u>	<u>G2, 3</u>
‘spider’	/to: <sup>1</sup> me: <sup>1</sup> ŋ <sup>1</sup> mum <sup>1</sup> /	/me: <sup>1</sup> ŋ <sup>1</sup> mum <sup>1</sup> /

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

	<u>Semantic unit</u>	<u>G3</u>
/k ~ kh/	‘think’	/kit <sup>4</sup> / ~ /khit <sup>4</sup> /
/ɲ ~ j/	‘shoot’	/ɲiŋ <sup>2</sup> / ~ /jiŋ <sup>2</sup> /

## Conclusion

The interviews with three generations of informants living in Donmaku Sub-District, U-thong District, Suphanburi 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 second 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 Donmaku Sub-District, U-thong District, Suphanburi Province.

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