

## Chapter 6

### Orthographic Extendibility and Summary

Having given the description of each variety consideration will now be given as whether these three varieties could use the same orthography. In this thesis the only distinction used to determine whether one orthography could be used in all three varieties is phonological. Lexical and semantic differences have not been taken into account. Any orthography would need to be able to aid the reader in learning Mandarin Chinese Pinyin if it is to be accepted by the Chinese government. This section will begin with the smaller units of the sound system and then proceed to the larger units.

#### 6.1 Consonants

Both Man Noi and Bang Deng have the same set of phonemic consonants. La Gang has the same phonemic consonants as Man Noi and Bang Deng, however it also has two phonemic voiceless nasals. The phonemic consonants are listed below in Table 29 along with a proposed orthography.

This orthography has been designed to resemble the Mandarin Chinese Romanized script, Pinyin. This should allow those who learn to read and write in Plang to adjust to Chinese studies more efficiently. As with Pinyin when /j/ and /w/ occur in the coda they would be written as 'i' or 'u'. For example a word such as /máw/ 'to be drunk' would be written as 'mau' and /máj/ 'to write' would be written as 'mai'.

Man Noi	Bang Deng	La Gang	Proposed Grapheme
p	p	p	b
p <sup>h</sup>	p <sup>h</sup>	p <sup>h</sup>	p
t	t	t	d
t <sup>h</sup>	t <sup>h</sup>	t <sup>h</sup>	t
c	c	c	zh
c <sup>h</sup>	c <sup>h</sup>	c <sup>h</sup>	c
k	k	k	g
k <sup>h</sup>	k <sup>h</sup>	k <sup>h</sup>	k
m	m	m	m
n	n	n	n
-	-	ŋ	nh
ɲ	ɲ	ɲ	ny
ŋ	ŋ	ŋ	ng
-	-	ŋ	ngh
f	f	f	f
v	v	v	v
s	s	s	s
h	h	h	h
ʔ	ʔ	ʔ	Unwritten
w	w	w	w word initial u word final
r	r	r	r
l	l	l	l
j	j	j	j word initial i word final

Table 29 Phonemic Chart with Proposed Graphemes

### 6.1.1 Overdifferentiation

If this orthography is used the result would be that writers from Man Noi and Bang Deng would then need to memorize the words that begin with voiceless nasals.

Therefore the Plang literacy would contain sight words that would need to be taught

to anyone wanting to learn to read from Man Noi and Bang Deng. This would make learning to write more difficult.

### 6.1.2 Underdifferentiation

If on the other hand the voiceless nasals were not written and there were only one symbol for both the voiced and voiceless nasals, this would result in the reader having to guess from the context whether it is the voiced or voiceless nasal. Plang literacy would need to teach that these particular symbols have two sounds for La Gang readers. This makes learning to read more difficult.

## 6.2 Vowels

The three varieties have the same ten phonemic vowels. Because of the orthography is also trying to aid in the learning of Pinyin it would not be useful to the reader to use not Pinyin vowel letters. Pinyin uses a, i, e, o, u, and ü as letter for vowels. The vowels that would need new vowel letters would be /ɪ, ʊ, ɣ, ɔ, ε/. Not wanting to introduce a new symbol it would be possible to double letter for these vowels.

Man Noi	Bang Deng	La Gang	Proposed Grapheme
i	i	i	i
ɪ	ɪ	ɪ	ii
e	e	e	e
ɛ	ɛ	ɛ	ee
a	a	a	a
ʊ	ʊ	ʊ	uu
u	u	u	u
ɣ	ɣ	ɣ	oo
o	o	o	o
ɔ	ɔ	ɔ	aa

Table 30 Vowel Phonemes with Proposed Graphemes

## 6.3 Words

Among these three varieties the greatest difficulty comes in the word structure. Man Noi and Bang Deng main syllables are identically written with the rule #CVC#. La

Gang has preserved the ability to cluster and therefore the main syllable is written as #C(C)VC#. All three have the same maximum minor syllable structure, written as #CV.

### 6.3.1 Overdifferentiation

If the orthography writes the cluster Man Noi and Bang Deng readers would need to be taught to write the cluster but to remove the optional cluster consonant when reading. This is something that speakers already do mentally when they speak to villagers from La Gang.

### 6.3.2 Underdifferentiation

If the cluster is not written La Gang speakers would then have to determine from context if the word contains a cluster. This would make learning to read for La Gang speakers more difficult.

## 6.4 Suprasegmentals

In all three varieties tone is the same, high and low. The Pinyin method of writing tone is a tone mark above the vowel, such as *á*. In each variety there are only two phonemic tones. Therefore, there would be two tone marks for these three varieties, *á* for high tone and *à* for low tone. For example /pún/ 'four' would be written as 'bún' and /kòŋ/ 'bottle' would be written as 'gàng'.

All three villages have a register complex. Assuming that tone is the more dominant feature in all three villages it would need to be written, however phonation would not be written.

## 6.5 Conclusion and Example Words

From a phonological perspective the three varieties do not differ greatly enough to justify separate orthographies. The main decision that must be made concerns if it would be better to overdifferentiate thus making it harder for Man Noi and Bang Deng speakers to learn to write or whether it would be better to underdifferentiate making it harder for La Gang speakers to learn to read. For the purpose of teaching literacy in these villages it would be better to underdifferentiate thus helping readers and to avoid making the script hard to comprehend.

Gloss	Man Noi	Bang Deng	La Gang	Proposed Orthography
'dog'	sóʔ	sóʔ	sóʔ	só
'to yawn'	ŋápʔ	ŋápʔ	ŋápʔ	ngháp
'to be afraid'	látʔ	látʔ	hlátʔ	hlát
'Plang'	pàŋ	pàŋ	plàŋ	blàng
'tongue'	ká.tákʔ	ká.tákʔ	ká.tákʔ	gá dág

Table 31 Example words in Proposed Orthography

## 6.6 Summary

The purpose of this thesis was to present a phonological comparison of Man Noi, Bang Deng, and La Gang for the purpose of deciding if these three varieties could use one orthography.

In chapter 1 the cultural background, geographic location, population, and language structure of the Plang in the Bulang Shan District of Menghai County in Xishuangbanna Tai Autonomous Prefecture of Yunnan Province was presented.

Chapter 2 presented the background and methodology for this thesis. There have only been two phonological works done on the Plang in the Bulang Shan District. The first was done by a group of Chinese linguist who used wordlist data from Xin Man E, which is in the Bulang Shan District, it also combines this data with words collected from Guang Shuang which is a village not in the district. The second phonological work was done by Paulsen who uses word list from dialects in Xiding, Bulang Shan, and Samtao areas to produce a proto-reconstruction of Plang. From these two works predictions were made as to what would be found in the varieties study for this thesis. This was followed by a description of the methodology that was used in data collection and analysis.

The next three chapters presented the phonologies of Man Noi, Bang Deng, and La Gang. These phonologies began with a description of the word and syllable structures followed by a discussion on the phonemic consonants and vowels and finally the analysis of suprasegmentals, tone and register, were presented.

In Man Noi there were found to be both monosyllabic and sesquisyllabic words. Monosyllabic words can be written by the structure #CVC#. Sesquisyllabic syllables are written as #CV in presyllables and particles, but as #CV in prefixes. There are twenty-one phonemic consonants, ten phonemic vowels, two phonemic phonations, and two tonemes.

In Bang Deng, like Man Noi, there were found to be both monosyllabic and sesquisyllabic words. Monosyllabic words can be written by the structure #CVC#. Sesquisyllabic syllables are written as #CV in presyllables and particles, but as #CV in prefixes. There are twenty-one phonemic consonants, ten phonemic vowels, two phonemic phonations, and two tonemes.

In La Gang, like Man Noi and Bang Deng, there were found to be both monosyllabic and sesquisyllabic words. Monosyllabic words can be written by the structure #C(C)VC#. Sesquisyllabic syllables are written as #CV in presyllables and particles, but as #CV in prefixes. However, unlike the other two varieties, in La Gang there are twenty-three phonemic consonants (having not lost the voiceless nasals), ten phonemic vowels, two phonemic phonations, and two tonemes.

Finally, it is determined that the three varieties could use one common orthography. Even though they can use one orthography, to do so requires that the orthography be overdifferentiated for the Man Noi and Bang Deng varieties because voiceless nasals are still phonemic in La Gang.

## 6.7 Further Study

These phonological descriptions were based on five hundred ninety-eight words from one person from each village. More study needs to be done on each village's speech patterns using a larger corpus of words. It would also be profitable to analyze the phonology using sentences and stories to analyze the intonation patterns. There also needs to be an analysis of language shift between the generations, therefore there needs to be data collection done from a wide range of age groups.

It would be beneficial to retest the register analysis that has been presented in this thesis using a laryngograph. This would allow for a more accurate understanding of the register complex. As more words are collected a clearer understanding of the relationship of phonation and tone will be seen. From this it would be of great help to analyze the process of tonogenesis in Plang.

Lexicostatistics and a sociolinguistic survey will be needed discern with greater detail the difference between the various varieties. This needs to include many other villages in the area. This would lead to better decision making when choosing an orthography.

A wider study of the entire area which includes not only the other villages in the Bulang Shan District but also the Bada, Daluo, and Xiding areas. In such a study it would be beneficial to use a recorded text test to determine the dialectal boundaries.

This would lead to an understanding of the various varieties of the area and how they relate to one another and to the dialects in Myanmar. The phonological analysis that result from the wider study should then be applied to Paulsen's Proto-Plang reconstruction.

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