

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

7.0 Introduction

This chapter consists of two sections: The first section provides a summary of this analysis and the next section provides suggestions for further study.

7.1 Summary

The Chin people originally migrated from China centuries ago and settled around the plain areas, and then moving around the Chin Hills. Falam, the language of the Chin people, is one of the TB language families, Kuki-Chin Sub-group. Falam includes twenty-nine consonant phonemes and five vowel phonemes. Vowel length is contrastive only in closed syllables.

The maximal syllable template of Falam is $(C_1)V_1(V_1)(C_2)(C_3)$ followed by any tone. All consonants can occur word initially, but only ten can occur word finally. There are two diphthongs, /ua/ and /ia/. Monophthongs and diphthongs can occur word initially, word medially, and word finally. There are no consonant clusters except a non-nasal sonorant followed by glottal stop word-finally. Falam word structure consists of one to four syllables, usually one. There are vowel length contrasts. Glottalized syllables are shorter. Long vowels always shorten in glottal rhymes, but diphthongs stay the same. There are no rising or falling tones with glottalized syllables but there are rising and falling tones with stop-final syllables.

The suprasegmental phonology of Falam contains tone, stress, and intonation. The tonal analysis in this thesis is an auditory analysis based on recorded wordlists and text. There are four underlying tones in Falam: low, high, rising, and falling. All consonants can occur with all tones. Tone sandhi also occurs

in Falam with low, rising and falling tones. Of the four phonemic tones, the high tone never undergoes tone sandhi.

There is a relationship between stress and intonation. Stress patterns fall generally upon the second syllable of a compound word consisting of two syllables, and if the word contains more than two syllables, the stress will fall on the last syllable of the word. Being a tonal language, tone is the most fundamental contrastive element in the suprasegmental phonology of Falam. However, intonation is also meaningful in context, often expressing different moods or feelings, such as impatience or excitement.

Falam has morphophonemic alternations. Morphophonemic alternations mostly occur with nouns in compounding, verbs, and some nominal phrases. There are segmental alternations, namely, nasal alternation, stop alternation, final glottalization, and vowel alternation. Two vowel alternation rules are shortening and coalescence. Diphthongs in nouns with open syllables coalesced when they attach to another syllable to create a compound word. Syllables with a diphthong final in verb stems are also coalesced when followed by another syllable. Open syllables which have long vowels become short when they attach to another syllable to create a compound word. Segmental deletion also occurs with functional morphemes, namely, adverbial, locative, and possessive morphemes.

There is lexical alternation of verb stems, primary and secondary. The secondary stems tend to shorten or stay the same, and never lengthen. Segmental shortenings that affect secondary stems generally involve a single change, mostly forced by the impossibility of long vowels in glottalized rhymes. Regarding glottalization, syllables with glottal closure are normally shorter and occur with low tone. It can be concluded that glottalization produces effective vowel shortening. Some nasal syllables also undergo vowel shortening in secondary stem. When a stop is added to an open syllable in secondary stem, many vowels tend to be shorter than their equivalents in open syllables (/raa²³ – rat²¹/ ‘to come’). Some vowels in open and closed syllables are the same length, so that

VV and VVC and both are longer than V and VC as in /paa⁴⁴/(VV) and /paat⁵²/(VVC), which occurs only with high tone syllables.

There are also three tone alternations: one converts rising tone into low tone in secondary stem when the primary stem syllable is closed and converts into high, low, and falling tone when the primary stem syllable is open. The second tonal alternation involves the replacement of a falling tone by low tone in secondary stem and a low tone by falling tone in secondary stem. The third alternation is one that converts a primary stem with a high tone into a secondary stem with low tone when the syllable is closed and converts into secondary stem with a falling tone when the syllable is open. Rising tones are never found in secondary stems. The glottal stop is almost always associated with low tone. Sonorants that are not nasals are also glottalized while final stops and nasals are not glottalized.

The segmental shape of a syllable in some cases has no effect on its tonal behavior while in other cases there is an interdependence of tonal and segmental alternations. In terms of the tonal independency, rising tone always alternates, regardless of its syllable type. To some extent, final /-t/ occurrence in secondary stem is unpredictable for its relation on tone. The most obvious interdependency is that when tone is invariant, the situation requires segmental alternations such as vowel length, final alternations, glottalization, and diphthong coalescence. Low tone syllables which are glottalized in secondary stem are only found if stems do not end in nasals because nasals are never glottalized in Falam. Moreover, rising tone that alternates low and falling, high tone that alternates low, falling tone that alternates low exist only for consonant final stems, and rising tone that alternates high exists only for vowel final stems. Also there is an interaction between tone alternation and vowel shortening because vowel length stays the same when the whole stem is invariant. Finally, some conclusions can be drawn for syllable types in secondary stems: all syllables are closed, vowels are mostly short, many syllables are glottalized, there is no vowel lengthening, low diphthongs /ua, ia/ are often coalesced, rising tone alternates level tone, there is no addition of rising

tones or high tones, level tones (both low and high) and rising tone alternate falling.

7.2 Suggestion for further study

This analysis is an initial phonological description of Falam. A further acoustic study would be very a helpful tool to be able to further understanding the Falam sound system. Phonological studies in other dialects in Falam, such as Laizo, Sim, Zahao, Khualsim, Ngawn, Tapong, and so on would also be good for further study. A phonological comparison would also be helpful so that the similarities and the differences among those dialects can widely be understood by researchers. The status of glottal stop is still not entirely clear. The historical relationship between primary and secondary verb stems deserves clarification, and would result on a clearer picture of a single underlying form of each lexeme. As an extension from this study, it would be valuable to do a revision of the existing orthography by applying this phonological analysis.