

# CHINESE PROVERBS IN TAE'TSIW SOCIETY IN THAILAND

**Pananda Lelertyuttitham**

Institute of Language and Culture for Rural Development  
Mahidol University

## 1. Introduction

Proverbs are sweet sounding speech and are also full of principles. Proverbs are one of the tools used by humans to teach each other. People who have faced some experience try to put their experience in the form of the short, clever, melodious and meaningful speech that we call proverbs. Moreover, we can learn about daily-life, nature, topography, climate, natural phenomenon, culture, custom and belief from proverbs.

Chinese proverbs are very famous in Thailand since Thailand and China have a very close relationship. Proverbs are useful for life because it teaches people the right things which people should do in their life. Nowadays, there are a lot of Tae'tsiw, a kind of Chinese, in Thailand. They still use Chinese proverbs in daily life.

Since Chinese proverbs are beautiful and very efficient in teaching, I would like to study word reduplication, rhyme and syntax of Chinese proverbs. Second, there are a lot of Tae'tsiw people in Thailand. Third, my father's family are Tae'tsiw too. Moreover, I found that there are many works about Chinese proverbs but they have only been collected and translated into different languages. They have not been analyzed in terms of structures, rhymes, thinking, beliefs, and attitude as in this study. This paper aims to study rhymes, reduplication, and structure in the Chinese proverbs used in Tae'tsiw society in Thailand as well as the Chinese's attitude, thinking and beliefs as reflected in the Chinese proverbs in my sample.

This paper will study the Chinese proverbs spoken by Tae'tsiw people in Thailand who still live in or are in contact with Tae'tsiw society.

“Tae’tsiw society” refers to a society where Tae’tsiw people live and still speak Tae’tsiw in their daily life. This study focuses on Tae’tsiw in Bangkhunthian Nonthaburi.

The analysis is based on 300 Chinese proverbs collected from various sources. These proverbs are checked with three Tae’tsiw informants who are between fifty and sixty years of age and always live in or contact to Tae’tsiw society. The reason for choosing informants at these ages is that they still actively speak Tae’tsiw in their daily-life. The proverbs that the informants do not know are not used. The informants are asked to pronounce all proverbs and their meanings that they know. Those proverbs are transcribed into phonetic symbols as well as Chinese characters and grouped by their semantic fields. Then the structures of the proverbs are analyzed by using Tagmemics Theory. The proverbs are also analyzed according to their rhyme.

## 2. Structure of Proverbs

### 2.1 Sentence

#### 2.1.1 Simple Sentence

The most basic type of sentence is the simple sentence which relays only one piece of information. Simple sentence contains only one independent clause. A simple sentence can be as short as one word. The simple sentence in Chinese proverbs is always the topic-comment sentence. The subjects are modified by the embedded clause.

Sim S =        + Main Cl : Cl

Example

1. 理虧的人話長。

[ lí:	k <sup>h</sup> ui	ti:	nán	ʔùai	ts <sup>h</sup> iá:ŋ]
reasonless	which	human	speak	lengthily	
adj	pro	n.	v.	adv.	

‘The reasonless person speaks lengthily.’

### 2.1.2 Juxtapose Sentence

The Juxtapose Sentence may consist of two clauses or four clauses as formulated below.

Jux S = + Sim S 1 : Cl + Sim S 2 : Cl

Jux S = + Sim S 1 : Cl + Sim S 2 : Cl  
+ Sim S 3 : Cl + Sim S 4 : Cl

The two or four clauses are semantically related in the following ways

#### 2.1.2.1 Coordinative juxtaposed Sentence

Example

2. 牛的毛多，蠢人事多。

[ŋú: ti: mó: to, ts<sup>h</sup>ùŋ jín sì: to:]  
cattle have features many stupid human problem many  
n. v. n. adj adj n. n. adj

'The cattle have a lot of features.

The stupid man has a lot of problems.'

#### 2.1.2.2 Antithetical juxtaposed Sentence

Example

3. 上山容易下山難。

[tsià sua jòŋ kèi hìa sua lǎŋ]  
go up mountain easy go down mountain difficult  
v. n. adv. v. n. adv.

'It is easy to go up the mountain but it is difficult to go down from the mountain.'

## 2.1.2.3 Concessive juxtaposed Sentence

Example

4. 麻雀雖小，五臟俱全。

[mùə ts <sup>h</sup> iak <sup>7</sup>	sui	sīau,	
sparrow	although	small	
n.	conj.	adj.	
ŋa:u tsǎn	kù:	ts <sup>h</sup> úəŋ]	
five entrails	all	complete	
num.	n.	num.	adj.

‘Although the genus passer is a small bird,  
it has a complete organ.’

## 2.1.2.4 Conditional juxtaposed Sentence

Example

5. 老人不傳古，後生失了譜。

[làw	nán	púk <sup>7</sup>	t <sup>h</sup> uàŋ	kôw,
old	human	not	tell	annals
adj.	n.	neg.	v.	n.
hàw	sɛ:	sík <sup>7</sup>	liàw	p <sup>h</sup> ôw]
young	human	lose	remarkable	pattern
adj.	n.	v.	n.	

‘The younger will lack the pattern if the older people do not  
tell the annals.’

## 2.1.2.5. Purposive juxtaposed Sentence

Example

6. 放長線釣大魚。

[paŋ	tìŋ	suà	tia	tài	hí:]
release	long	string	hook	big	fish
v.	adj.	n.	v.	adj.	n.

‘Release a long string to hook big fish.’