

CHINESE PROVERBS IN TAE'TSIW SOCIETY IN THAILAND

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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 ^h ui	ti:	nán	ʔùai	ts ^h 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^hùŋ 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 jòn kèi hì 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^hìak⁷ sui sîau,
 sparrow although small
 n. conj. adj.]

ŋa:u tsǎn kù: ts^húan]
 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 púk⁷ t^huàn kôw ,
 old human not tell annals
 adj. n. neg. v. n.]

hàw sɛ: sík⁷ liàw p^hôw]
 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 tìn suà tia tài hí:]
 release long string hook big fish
 v. adj. n. v. adj. n.]

‘Release a long string to hook big fish.’

2.1.2.6. Temporal sequential juxtaposed Sentence

Example

7. 管物先管人，管人先管心。

[kuǎŋ	muái	sei	kuǎŋ	nán]
manage	thing	before	manage	human,
v.	n.	conj.	v.	n.
kuǎŋ	nán	sei	kuǎŋ	sim]
manage	human	before	manage	mind
v.	n	conj.	v.	n.

‘You have to manage a person before manage things.

You have to manage one’s mind before manage one.’

3. Rhyme

3.1 Internal Rhyming

3.1.1 Consonant Rhymes

It is an initial consonant which is rhymed.

Example

8. 君子避酒客。

[kuŋ	ts ^h î:	pì:	ts ^h iu	k ^h èʔ]
aristocrat	avoid	alcohol	guest	

‘The aristocrats avoid the alcoholic man.’

The initial consonant of the second word /ts^h/ rhymes with the initial consonant of the fifth word.

9. 無聲狗咬死人。

[bo:	sia:	kâu	ka:	sǐ:	nán]
not	bark	dog	bite	human	

‘The dog that does not bark always bites.’

The initial consonant of the third word /k/ rhymes with the initial consonant of the fourth word.

3.1.2 Vowel Rhymes

Example

10. 心平過大海。

┌──────────┐
 [sim p^hén kuei tài hâi]
 mind peaceful cross ocean
 ‘The peaceful mind can across the ocean.’

The vowel of the fourth word /ai/ rhymes with the vowel of the fifth word.

11. 友誼隨著利害變。

┌──────────┐
 [ʔiu ŋi: sùì tia? lì: hâi piàn]
 friendship according gain harm change
 ‘Friendship changes on the basis of gains and losses.’

The vowel of the second word /i:/ rhymes with the vowel of the fourth word.

3.1.3 Vowel and final consonant rhymes

Example

12. 窮人少親友。

┌──────────┐
 [kèŋ jín tshia: tshin ʔíu]
 poor human few relative friend
 ‘The poor have a few relatives.’

The vowel and the final consonant of the second word /iŋ/ rhymes with the vowel and the final consonant of the fourth word.

13. 一家安樂值千金。

┌──────────┐
 [tsèk' kɛ: ʔaŋ lák' ták' tshoi kim]
 one family peace better thousand old
 ‘The peaceful family is mare value than gold.’

The vowel and the final consonant of the fourth word /ak/ rhymes with the ones of the fifth word.

3.1.4 Combination of consonant and vowel rhymes

Example

14. 恐懼處處生鬼。

┌──────────────────┐				
┌────────┐				
[k ^h oŋ	kú:	ts ^h ù:	sɛ:	kûi]
fear	everywhere	produce	spirit	

‘Fear can produce spirit everywhere.’

The initial consonant of the second word /k/ rhymes with the initial consonant of the fifth word.

The vowel of the second word /u:/ rhymes with the vowel of the third word.

15. 花好蝴蝶才來。

┌────────┐		┌────────┐		
[huei	hó:	hù:	tiáp’	ts ^h ài lái]
flower	beautiful	butterfly	so	come

‘The flowers are so beautiful that the butterfly beset.’

The initial consonant of the first word /h/ rhymes with the initial consonant of the second and the third word.

The vowel of the fifth word /ai/ rhymes with the vowel of the sixth word.

3.2 External Rhyming

External Rhyming occurs in different clauses. There are three types of internal rhyming

3.2.1 Consonant Rhymes

Example

16. 君子二十個不算多，
小人一個不算少。

[kunj tsî jì: tsǎp' kái púk' sɿŋ to: ,
 good person twenty person not much

siǎu jiú tsék' kái púk' sɿŋ tsía]
 small human one person not few

'Twenty good persons are not much.

Only one bad person is too much.'

The initial consonant of the second word /ts/ rhymes internally with the initial consonant of the fourth, and externally with the eleventh and fifteenth words. The initial consonant of the third word /j/ rhymes externally with the initial consonant of the tenth word. The initial consonant of the seventh word /s/ rhymes externally with the initial consonant of the ninth and fourteenth words.

3.2.2 Vowel Rhymes

Example

17. 父母生其身，兒女自立志。

[pè: bó: sɛ: k^hì: sɿŋ, jì: nèn tsì líp' tsí:]

father mother birth body children own make mind
 'The parents give birth the body, but the children make their own mind.'

The vowel of the fourth word /i:/ rhymes with the vowel of the sixth and tenth words.

3.2.3 Vowel and final consonant rhyme

Example

18. 要享福，常知足。

[ʔiǎu hian hók', sià: ts^hai ts^hòk']
 must enjoy happiness often know enough

'If one wants to be happy, one must often be content with one's lot.'

The vowel and the final consonant of the third word /ok/ rhymes with the vowel and the final consonant of the sixth word.

3.2.4 Combination of consonant and vowel rhyme

Example

19. 妻賢夫禍少，子孝父心寬。

[ts^hi: hián hu: hǔa tsiá,
wife collateral husband disaster few]

|
tsi: hàn pǎ: sim k^huan]

son grateful mind wide

‘A wife who is good to her husband will receive few disasters.

A child with a final piety has a broad mind.’

The initial consonant of the fifth word /ts/ rhymes with the initial consonant of the sixth word.

The vowel of the first word /i:/rhymes with the vowel of the sixth word.

3.3 Reduplication

3.3.1 Internal Reduplications

3.3.1.1 Reduplication words that are closed together

Example

20. 謙虛日久人人愛，

驕傲日久成孤人。

[k^hiam hi: jik' kû: nǎŋ nǎŋ ʔài,
modest day long time everyone love

kiau nǎu jik' kû: sèn kou jín]
arrogant day long time become alone human

‘If you are always modest, people will all love you.

If you are always arrogant, you will become alone.’

The fifth word /nǎŋ/ reduplicates with the sixth word.

21. 果實累累的樹枝，
總是低得俯下身子。

[kuěi sík' lùì lùì ti: ts^hiù ki: ,
fruit one after another of twig
tsɔŋ sì: ti: tík' hu: hìa ts^hiŋ tsâ:]
always lower need bow not body
'The fertile woods always bend to the low.'

The third word /lùì/ reduplicates with the fourth word.

3.3.1.2 Reduplication words that are separated by the other words.

Example

22. 黃金有價心無價。

[ʔìŋ kim ʔu: kɛ: sim bò: kè:]
gold have valuable mind invaluable
'Gold is very valuable but the mind is invaluable.'

The fourth word /kè:/ reduplicates with the seventh word.

3.3.2 External Reduplications

3.3.2.1 Two-segment Proverbs

Example

23. 潮水有定，人無定。

[tià tsûi ʔù: tià , nán bò: tia]
watertide have determine human not determine
'The rise and fall of watertide are definite but the man emotions are not.'

The fourth word /tia/ reduplicates with the seventh word.

3.3.2.2 Four-segment Proverbs.

Example

24. 遇事肯幹，有難非難；

遇事怕麻煩，不難也難。

[ŋò: sɿ: k^hɛŋ kaŋ , ʔù: lán hui lán ,
work consent do have difficult evil difficult

| | |
ŋò: sɿ: p^ha: mua huán, púk^ˈ lán ʔià lán]
work fear manage annoy not difficult also difficult

‘The hard job will become the easy job if you try to start do it.
The easy job will become the hard job if you do not try to start do it.’

The first word /ŋò:/ reduplicates with the ninth word.

The second word /sɿ:/ reduplicates with the tenth word. The sixth word /lán/ reduplicates with the eighth, tenth, fifteenth and seventeenth words.

3.3.3 Internal Reduplication and External Reduplication

Example

25 人靠人幫，花靠葉蓬。

[nán kou nán paŋ, huei kou hia? p^hón]
human prosper human help flower prosper beautiful leaf

‘People can prosper because they have someone help.

The flower is beautiful because the leaf is beautiful.’

The first word /nán/ reduplicates with the third word.

The second word /kou/ reduplicates with the sixth word.

4. Thought, Belief, and Attitude

4.1 Social Structure

Tae'tsiws praise men than women because they think that male can descend but female cannot. They give the importance to love and harmony highly because love and

harmony bring happiness and peace to the family. Parents have to be the precedence for the children.

Example

26. 沒有朋友的人最孤獨。

[mòk' ʔù: p^hèŋ ʔíu ti: nán tsûai kou tók']
not have friend which human most alone
'People who do not have friends are the most lonely.'

27. 愛情可以使弱者變得勇敢。

[ʔâi ts^héŋ k^ho: ʔi: sai jiâk' tsià pian tîk' jǒŋ kâ:]
love can make weak become brave
'Love can change weak person to become the brave man.'

28. 父母是子女的樣子，

子女是父母的鏡子。

[pè: bó: sì: tsǐ: nîŋ ti: ʔia tsǐ: ,
father mother are son/daughter of example
tsǐ: nîŋ sì: pè: bua ti: kiâ tsǐ:]
son/daughter are father mother of mirror
'Father and mother are the precedence of children.
Children are the mirrors of the parents.'

4.2 Way of life

Tae'tsiws eat rice , vegetable ,and drink tea. They take herb medicine when they are sick. Gold and Jade are highly valued in Tae'tsiw society. Tae'tsiw people believe that Jade will bring them good luck, so they always wear jade ornaments.

Example

29. 米粒雖小，能夠飽人。

[bǐ: liáp' sui siàu, làn kòu pà: nán]
 rice seed although small able to full person
 'A little seed of rice can feed human to be full.'

30. 器具質而潔，瓦缶勝金玉。

[khî: kǔ: tsià jì: kiàk', hià huî sên kim nêk']
 utensil and clean tile crock gold jade
 Should use the good quality things. It is not necessary to use
 high value things. The tile crock may better than gold or jade.

31. 浪子回頭金不換

[làn tsî: huaì t'haû kim púk' ?uà]
 delinquent child return name of chinese herb
 'The delinquent person becomes the valuable person.'

4.3 Characteristics

The diligence, saving, modesty, loyalty, honesty, bravery, gratefulness, covetousness, goodness, and morality are the qualification that people should have. The Tae'tsiws encourage people to set up goals, thereby enabling them to gain success.

Example

32. 人心無剛一世窮。

[nàn sim bò: kan tsèk' sî: kǎn]
 person heart not vigorous one existence
 'You will be poor forever if you do not have the vigorous mind.'

33. 有情飲水飽，無情食飯飢。

[kǎn sîm k'hîng hûn, tuâ lai ho: ?n]
 prudent diligence bring come good luck
 'The diligence and prudent bring us the good luck.'

34. 自然必須儉約，宴客切勿留連。

[tsî: hǒŋ pík' su: k^{hiâm} ?iâk',
 naturally plow must thrifty
 yan k^{hè} ts^{hiâk}' maî liù lián]
 banquet correspond customer do not detain join
 'You must save when pander and must not prolong when you
 give a party.'

35. 驕傲是榮譽的凶惡敵人。

謙虛是榮譽的忠實朋友。

[k^{hiam} hi: sì: jòŋ ?i: ti: toŋ sík' p^{hèn} ?íu.
 modesty be renown of faithfulness friend
 kiau nâu sì: jòŋ ?i: ti: hwian ?àk' ték' jín]
 arrogance be renown of vile enemy
 'The modesty is the honest friend of the honor.
 The arrogance is the enemy of the honor.'

4.4 Religion and Beliefs

Tae'tsiws believe sins and merits in Buddhism. If they do good deeds, the merits will protect them and return to them. In a similar way, if they do anything bad, it will have an impact on them. Moreover, Tae'tsiw people believe in spirits. They think that there are spirits in their houses. There are good spirits helping people and bad spirits probably hurting others. They also think that luckiness and unluckiness arrive alternatively. Nevertheless, people should have a hope.

After someone passed away, his relatives will have his body buried in a grave which is called "huangsui". The grave that the Tae'tsiws chose for their ancestors must be good for their future. The good graves must have the mountain at the back and the water in front of it. The offering and paying respect to the ancestors are very important for Tae'tsiw because they believe that the ancestors will come to disturb and molest them if they do not make the ancestors satisfy.

Example

36. 大難不死，必有後福。

[tài làn púk' sî:, pík' ?ù: ?aù hòk']
 big risk not damage not have behind luck
 'Luck will come after a risk go.'

37. 祖宗雖遠，祭祀不可不誠；

子孫雖愚，經書不可不讀。

[tsou tson sui ?iân,
 ancestors though far
 tsî: sî: pùk' k^ho: púk' séŋ]
 offerings not but not sincere

[tsi: suŋ sui ŋó:,
 descendants though foolish
 kia tsi: pùk' k^ho: púk' t^hák']
 scripture not but not study

'Although the ancestors' grave is very far away, the people have to offer them. Although descendants is stupid, but he has to study.'

4.5 Thought

Tae'tsiws think that although a reality may be very hard to accept, it is necessary to concede those realities. Tae'tsiws regard prestige and reputation of themselves and their lineage. Moreover, they think that reason is another thing which people should be rely on. They think that everything in this world relies on the reason. Tae'tsiws always refer animal to compare with something or some habit that people do, for example; the eagle as the great person, the sworn as a high, the donkey as the obstinate person.

Example

38. 道理講得通，口服心也通。

[taù lî: kaŋ tík' t'hon,
 doctrine reason tell use convenient
 k'haû hok' sim ?ià t'hon]
 mouth obey heart convenient
 'Listeners extremely accede reasonable speech.'

39. 牛的毛多，蠢人事多。

[nú: ti: mó: to, ts'hùn jín sî: to:]
 ox of feature many stupid person matter many
 'The cattle have a lot of features.
 The stupid man has a lot of problems.'

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