

# TAI ORTHOLINGUISTICS: A CASE STUDY OF ຢ AND ຫ~ຍ IN LAO ມ~ຍ AND ຢ IN LANNA SCRIPT

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## 1. Introduction

The study of the relation between the scripts or the writing system and phonological system of some particular language is regarded as the methodological study of the language called Ortholinguistics. It is a scientific study of the relation between the orthography and linguistics. The first linguist who introduced this study was William J. Gedney in 1972. He had introduced the types of Thai letters, i.e., high, middle, and low class letters into the tone test diagram together with a check list of 64 test words developed several years during the course of his fieldwork on over many Tai dialects. His diagram consists of 20 boxes, each box contains three to five test words which illustrate each of the four Proto-Tai tones and each of the four consonant classes or letter classes, i.e., (1) voiceless friction sounds or high class letters (2) voiceless unaspirated stops *p t c k* or middle class letters (๑, ๓, ๔, ๖) (3) Glottal stop and glottalized sounds ?- ?b- ?d- ?y- or middle class letters (๒, ๗, ๘, ๙) and (4) voiced sounds or all low class letters in Thai.

Nowadays the linguists or field-workers on Tai dialects have found that his tone test diagram will save a lot of time to discover the tone system of a Tai Dialects by using Gedney 's tone test diagram as the following tone test diagram (Gedney, 1972).

	Proto-Tai Tones				
	Smooth			Checked	
	A	B	C	DL	DS
1) Voiceless friction sounds, *s *h <sub>r</sub> m *p <sub>h</sub> etc.	1	5	9	13	17
2) Voiceless unaspirated stop *p *t *c *k	2	6	10	14	18
3) Glottal and pre-glottalized sound *ʔ *ʔb *ʔd *ʔy	3	7	11	15	19
4) Voiced sounds *m *l etc.	4	8	12	16	20

Gedney's tone test diagram (1972).

The term ortholinguistics was introduced by myself in Thai Linguistics (1998) To study the ortholinguistics one must know the orthography of the particular language. In which the study some phonemes and tonemes which related to the letters of the language.

In studying Tai dialects many problems are found difficulty when the phonemes or tonemes are pronounced similarly to each other such as the palatal nasal /ɲ/ and the palatal continuant /y/ in Lao or the Northeastern Thai, the Northern Thai and the Southern Thai Dialects in which they are mostly pronounced in nasalized sound in these dialects. Therefore in the study of 'ᨾ ᨾᨾ' and 'ᨾ' in Lao script and of 'ᨾ ᨾᨾ' and 'ᨾ' in Lanna Thai scripts will contribute some solution for the study of the writing system and sound system of the Lao language as well as the Northeastern Thai and the Lanna Thai Dialect.

## 2. The phonemes and the letters

The consonant phonemes in Lao and Thai Lanna or Kham Mueng have 20 in both the dialects but the letters of them may be different in some phonemes and letters as follows:

## 2.1 Lao phonemes and letters

Phonemes	class of letters		
	High	Mid	Low
1) /p/	-	ປ	-
2) /ph/	ຜ	-	ຟ
3) /t/	-	ຕ	-
4) /th/	ຖ	-	ທ
5) /k/	-	ກ	-
6) /kh/	ຂ	-	ຄ
7) /c/	-	ຈ	-
8) /ʔ/	-	ອ	-
9) /b/	-	ບ	-
10) /d/	-	ດ	-
11) /f/	ຝ	-	ຟ
12) /s/	ສ	-	ຊ/ຜູ້
13) /h/	ຫ	-	ຮ
14) /m/	ໝ	-	ມ
15) /n/	ໜ	-	ນ
16) /ɲ/	ຫຍ-	-	ຍ
17) /ŋ/	ຫງ	-	ງ
18) /l/	ຫຼ/ ຫລ	-	ລ
19) /w/	ຫວ-	-	ວ
20) /y/		ຢ	(-ຍ)

## 2.2 Thai Lanna Phonemes and Letters

Phonemes	class of letters		
	High	Mid	Low
1) /p/	ປ	ຈ	ຕ
2) /ph/	ຮ	-	ງ
3) /t/	ຕ	-	ຮ
4) /th/	ດ	-	ວ
5) /k/	ຕ	-	ວ
6) /kh/	ຊ	-	ກ
7) /c/	ອ	-	ອ
8) /ʔ/	-	ຊ	-
9) /b/	-	ບ	-
10) /d/	-	ຊ	-
11) /f/	ຜ	-	ຜ
12) /s/	ຜ	-	ຜ
13) /h/	ຮ	-	ຮ ອຸ
14) /m/	ຮ	-	ຮ
15) /n/	ຮ	-	ຮ
16) /ɲ/	ຮ	-	ຮ
17) /ŋ/	ຮ	-	-
18) /l/	ຮ	-	ຮ
19) /w/	ຮ	-	ຮ
20) /y/	-	ຮ	(-)

### 3. The high and low class letters

In the Lao language including the Northeastern Thai dialect and the Lanna Thai or the Northern Thai dialect, those words mostly used the high class letters and the low class letters with letter ‘ນ’ to form high class letters they are pronounced in nasalized sounds or palatal nasal /ɲ/. The letters for representing this phoneme in Lao is ‘ຫຍ’ and ‘ຍ’ while in Thai Lanna is ‘ຫຼ’ and ‘ຍ’ in this phoneme. These words are found only in the tone boxes A1, B 1, C1, DS1, and DL1 for high class letters and in the tone box A4, B4, C4, DS4, and DL4 for Low class letters as following diagram.

#### Lao

	A	B	C	DS	DL	
1	High class letters					ຜ ສ ຫ ຖ ຊ ຝ ຫຍ ຫ ຫ ຫ ຫ ຫ
2	Mid class letters					ປ ຕ ຈ ກ
3	Mid class letters					ບ ດ ອ ຢ
4	Low class letter					ພ ຊ ຮ ຫ ຄ ມ ນ ງ ວ ຢ

#### Lanna Thai

	A	B	C	DS	DL	
1	High class letters					ຮ ມ ທ ດ ກ ສ ຫຼ ຫຼ ຫຼ ຫຼ ຫຼ ຫຼ
2	High class letters					ປ ຕ ວ ຕ
3	Mid class letters					ບ ກ ຊ ຝ
4	Low class letter					ພ ລ ດ ສ ຫຼ ຂ ດ ດ ດ ດ ດ ດ ດ ດ ດ ດ ດ

### 3.1 High class-letters in Lao and Thai Lanna

ຫຍ້ງ	/ɲǎŋ/	‘what’	(A1)	ຫຼັດ	/ɲǎŋ/
ໃຫຍ່	/ɲàj/	‘big’	(B1)	ໄໂ່ງ	/ɲàj/
ຫຍ້ງ	/ɲūŋ/	‘confusing’	(C1)	ຫຼັດ	/ɲūŋ/
ຫຍຸກຫຍິກ	/ɲŭkɲŭk/	‘fidgety’	(DS1)	ຫຼັດຫຼິງຕ	/ɲŭkɲŭk/

### 3.2 Middle letter in Lao and Thai Lanna

ຢາ	/yǎ:/	‘medicine’	(A3)	ຢ່ວ	/ya:/
ຢ່າ	/yà:/	‘do not’	(B3)	ຢ່ວ	/yà:/
ຢ້າງ	/yâ:ŋ/	‘to toast’	(C3)	ຢ້່ວ	/yâ:ŋ/
ຢັກ	/yâk/	‘to press’	(DS3)	ຢັ່ວ	/yâk/
ຢາກ	/yà:k/	‘to like’	(DL3)	ຢັ່ວ	/yà:k/
ຢອດ	/ɲò:t/	‘to put in’	(DL3)	ຢັ່ວ	/ɲò:t/

## 4. The benefit of the study

In studying Tai ortholinguistics one must know the writing system and also Tai linguistics, of that particular language. The benefit of the study will help the linguists to analyze the sound system between the palatal nasal consonant /ɲ/ and palatal continuant consonant /y/ whenever these sounds are confused. Another benefit of the study is to help the native speakers who know the scripts can use the letters correctly in the writing system. The following are examples of the words using the middle class ‘ຢ, ຢ່’ and low class letters ‘ຍ, ບ’ of Lao and Thai Lanna.

**ຢ and ຍ in Lao**

ຢາຍ	/yǎ:y/	‘to scatter’
ຍາຍ	/ɲa:y/	‘grand mother’
ຢາມ	/yǎ:m/	‘to visit’
ຍາມ	/ɲa:m/	‘time’

**ຢ and ຜ in Lanna**

ຢົ່	/yam/	‘to respect’
ຜົ່	/ɲam/	‘a kind of food’

etc.

**5. The problem of the study**

In writing system of Lao and Thai Lanna the sound systems of some words can be used both high class letters or middle class letter in case when the sound are the same or similar to each other as the words present in the tone boxes: DS1 vs DS3, DL1 VS DL3, and C1 VS C3 in Lanna. These words are pronounced in the same tones but different in nasalized sound and continuant sound. So in writing system they should be written in different ways and different letters between high and middle class letters. The following are some examples of the use ‘ຫຍ-ທງ’ and ‘ຢ-ຢ’ in both the Lao language and the Lanna Thai language

**DS1 VS DS3 in Lao**

ຫຍັບ	/ŋǎp/	‘to move a little’	(DS 1)
ຍັບ	/yǎp/	‘to be damaged’	(DS 3)
ຫຍິບ	/ŋǐp/	‘to sew’	(DS 1)
ຍິບ	/yǐp/	‘to move one’s eyes’	(DS 3)

**DS1 VS DS 3 in Lanna**

ທງັບ	/ŋǎp/	‘to move’	(DS 1)
ຢູ່	/yǎp/	‘to be crushed’	(DS 3)
ທງຸ່	/ŋǎt/	‘to press’	(DS 1)
ຢຸ່	/yǎt/	‘to be drained of water’	(DS 3)

**DL1 VS DL4 in Lao**

ຫຍາບ	/ɲà:p/	‘blink’	(DL1)
ຢາບ	/yà:p/	‘rough’	(DS 3)

**DL1 VS DL4 in Lanna**

ທຸ່ວ	/ɲà:t/	‘to fall down’	(DL1)
ຟຸ່ວ	/yà:t/	‘to pour water’	(DS 3)

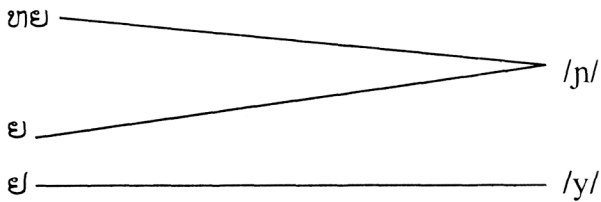
	A	B	C	DS	DL
1	5	2	6	5	2
2	5	2	6	5	2
3	1	2	6	5	2
4	1	3	4	6	3

Lanna Tones

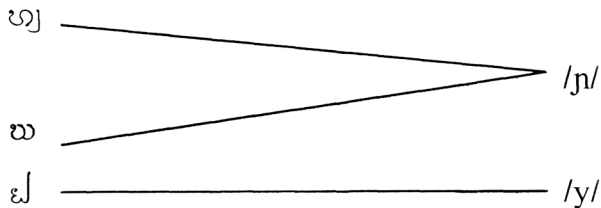
	A	B	C	DS	DL
1	5	2	3	5	3
2	5	2	4	5	3
3	5	2	4	5	3
4	1	2	4	4	4

Lao Tones

1) Letter and Phoneme of Lao



2) Letter and Phoneme of Lanna





## 6. Conclusion

The consonant phonemes /ŋ/ and /y/ are found in many Tai dialects. They are contrast to each other in many words. The linguists are mostly confused with the two phonemes in which that dialect is nasalized one. Lao and Lanna Thai or Kham Mueng both are written languages. In writing system of both the language they have the ways of writing for the two phonemes, i.e., the phoneme /ŋ/ used for the Low and high class letters ‘ᨾ ᨾᨾ’ in Lao and ‘ᨾ ᨾᨾ’ in Lanna Thai, while the phoneme /y/ used for the middle class letter ‘ᨾ’ in Lao and ‘ᨾ’ in Lanna Thai

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