

## A PHONEMIC ANALYSIS OF THE UNWRITTEN LANGUAGE OF THE PÚLANG TRIBE

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### ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to create letters for of nonliterary Púlang tribe in Thailand those who immigrant from China. Illiterate Púlang tribe hand down their tradition by primary oral culture therefore their tradition can't initiate and keep, moreover, it may disappear throughout history. So it is expected to crusade against unlettered people. The scheme of research adopted in this study was a minority race who habitate at the northern Machan, Chiangrai in Thailand. It is not only analysis of language but also the eradication of literacy and the research based on linguistic, ethnolinguistic, and primary oral culture. Five Púlang people who live in that area were chosen for creating letters. By using the I. P. A., after each word was listen to their pronunciation one by one it was described and repeated this process several times ; the material words and humanbody were pointed in front of them while other words were described by gesture. For final description, number of people were in the lineup for listening the sound of words and phrases to sentences.

In the first stage, it was an analysis segmental of Púlang: vocoid, contoid and diphthong were described with each sample syllables and words. The suprasegmental were studied with intonation and juncture of the words in the second stage. Two words were compared and different meanings within their intonation and juncture were shown. At the end of this part, each case of phonemic or morphophonemics representation described the juncture in the words. In the third stage, minimal pairs were analyzed with vowels and consonants and described in free variation based on words. In the last stage, syllable structure in open syllable and closed syllable was studied and then each syllable of its structure was analyzed with samples.

There were thirty-two phonemes in among Púlang as follows: seven vocoids; a, i,

e, o, u, æ, and ʌ, one diphthong; wu, 24 contoids; b, c, č, f, g, h, j, k, l, m, n, ŋ, p<sup>h</sup>, p̄, p, r, ś, s, sh, š, t, w, and y. Their pronunciations of p̄, ś, č, p<sup>h</sup>, j, and š are frequently used in speech and are unique in triphthong. Moreover, most of the words used initial and final consonant cluster.

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

In the absence of letters, people are bound to teach and transmit orally but word-of-mouth is also modified in the course of communication. In addition, it is almost impossible to transmit long and complicated stories exactly over a long period by word-of-mouth. That is why we preserve and deliver messages through the medium of letters. Even letters continue to appear and disappear, word-of-mouth disappears more quickly, or comes to have a different meaning from its original one by being corrected and handed down incorrectly. However, there are still 2,000 non-letter languages, according to the statistic of April, 1994. Therefore, this study is intended to accomplish a linguistics analysis and contribute to the eradication of literacy. For this, a study was made of the origin of spoken and written languages, based upon linguistics, along with cultural anthropology, and the *ide*.

Richard Leakey<sup>1)</sup> proposed two points on the evolutionary origin of the human language. First, language is a unique trait, a by-product acquired in the course of the extension of the human brain. According to this point, language has developed at a rapid rate in recent years when the limit of cognition has been overcome. The second point is that a non-letter language was acquired as a result of natural selection composed of diverse cognitive abilities in the anthropoid age. These diverse abilities cover a wide range of abilities, and aren't confined only to communicative ability. Leakey called it 'continuity model', which elucidates that language has continued along with human evolution from time immemorial.

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1) Richard Leakey, The Origin of Humankind, 황현숙역 두산동아, 1997, p. 164

## CHAPTER II

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The purpose of this study was to create letters for the unwritten language of Pulang tribe in Thailand those immigrated from China. The Pulang tribe with a population of 351,974 is originally ethnically Chinese, and is mainly distributed around such districts as Maenghae, Kyunghong, Sangkang, youngduk, Unhyun, and Kyungma in Unnamsung. Its name differs with each region, such as Pulang, Wu, Ongkong, Awa or Wa. After the establishment of the Peoples Public of China, several names were united into Pulang. The Pulang language belong to Maengko tribe Waderangeoji of South Asian branch, and has no letters according to the survey of Adapt a People<sup>2)</sup>. The target of this study is the Pulang tribe which now resides in Maechan, in northern part of Chiangrai, and partly Bangkok, and speaks partly Thai.

The present study can be appreciated in the light of its projected contribution to the field of ethnolinguistics in a relatively new aspect. It is a pioneering attempt to probe some of the complexities of inventing a Pulang alphabet or literature for the Pulangs to keep and develop their own culture. The pattern of research established by the present study gives a fairly comprehensive picture of how the language forms the characteristic and produces it. Hopefully, this study will be a useful tool in the teaching of Pulang in Thailand. Identification of the features and patterns of the formation of the letter has implications for the encoding and the decoding of information as a tool. Moreover, the creative methods used in this study may prove useful and valid for future studies in other languages. The results can also be used to improve the skill for the analysis of a spoken language towards the ultimate goal of improving, in particular, a non-literate language.

Being a specific study, it is limited in phonemics; segmentals in vocoids and contoids, suprasegmentals in juncture and intonation, minimal pairs, free variation, and syllable structure. Factors other than these are outside of the scope, even though they were noted in the analysis in terms of deviants. This study focused on the figuration

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2) AAP, 한국 미전도 종족 입양본부 출판, 1996, 서울

of the aspects of letters and insured accuracy of goal in-depth phonetical formation organization. The value of this work was derived mainly from the fact that it was a first attempt in the direction of studying how the Púlang tribe communicates in order to achieve goals.

It is assumed throughout this analysis that one's spoken language influences the thinking process as well as the way of organizing and communicating thought, and identifying the role of a specific type. This research analyzed and described the spoken language called Púlang. In particular, the study sought to answer these questions:

1. How can the alphabet be formed?
2. How can the syllable structure be formed?
3. How do the consonants and vowels be formed?
4. What is frequency in phonemes?

### CHAPTER III

#### PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF LANGUAGE

An analysis of it Púlang language was made on the basis of simple proportional representation of and the fields of interests touched by the language and corresponding points of concentration: segmentals with vocoids, contoids and diphthongs; intonation and juncture in suprasegmentals; minimal pairs with vowels and consonants; free variation, syllable structure.

#### 1. Segmentals in Púlang

##### A. Vocoid

In the analysis of the vocoid in Púlang, the four front vowels show; high front [i] in *iyom* (die), middle front [e] in *í e* (that), low front [a] in *ai* (color) and [æ] in *unpæn* (teeth); one middle vowel appears [ʌ] in *riAt* (six), and two back vowels; [o] in *owey*(sister-in-law) and [u] in *muk*(will).

- 1) Front vowel

Key words      Púlang              English

[a]	ai	color
[i]	iyom	die
[e]	í e	that
[ ]	unpæn	teeth

## 2) Middle vowel

[ʌ]	riʌt	six
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## 3) Back vowel

[o]	owei	sister-in-law
[u]	muk	will

**B. Diphthong**

The study of diphthongs in Pulang is shown in one phoneme where the verb be was used [wu] in *wuʌt* ( be).

Key words	Pulang	English
[wu]	wuʌt	be

**C. Contoid**

In the study of vocoid in Pulang, they appeared such as: three nasal sounds, two liquid, ten stop, five fricatives within three sibilants, one affricative, and two semivowels. The nasal sounds with the phonemes [m, n, ŋ] are shown; to produce [m] sound in *ma* (mother), [n] in *nyo*(smoke), and [ŋ] in *ngam* ( beautiful). The liquid sound appears [l] in *lwei*(buy) and [r] in *ir*(we) such as;

## 1) Nasal

Key words	Pulang	English
[m]	ma	mother
[n]	nyo	smoke
[ŋ]	ngam	beautiful

## 2) Liquid

[l]	lwei	buy
[r]	ir	we

## 3) Stops

The stop sounds appear in four bilabial, three alveolar, and three velar sounds. With the phonemes in bilabial [p<sup>h</sup>, p̣, p, b] are shown as three voiceless and one voiced. The three phonemes of bilabial voiceless [p<sup>h</sup>] in *siphuΔm* (hungry), [p̣] in *p̣uk* (pick), and [p] in *poer*(speak), the one voiced phoneme is [b] in *bil* (sleep). For instance;

## a) bilabial

[p <sup>h</sup> ]	siphuΔm	hungry
[p̣]	p̣uk	pick
[p]	poer	speak
[b]	bil	sleep

The alveolar sound in stop shows three phonemes [ṭ, t, ṭ̰]; the voiced [ḍ] in *đoer*(smog) and [ṭ] in *ṭ io*(walk) and [t] in *lat*(afraid) are voiceless. Whereas the voiced velar [g] in *gier* appears, the voiceless [ḳ] in *ḳut*(love) and [k] in *kler*(darling) are shown voiced velar. For examples;

## b) alveolar

[ṭ]	ṭ io	walk
[t]	lat	afraid
[ḍ]	đoer	smog

## c) velar

[ḳ]	ḳut	love
[k]	kler	darling
[g]	gier	they

## 4) Fricative

The two fricatives with the phoneme [f] and [ʃ] are appeared; to produce the sound [f] in *fa-an*(goose) with bilabial voiceless \while [ʃ] in *yawu* (early in the morning or dawn) with alveolar voiced as bellowing;

[f]	fa-an	goose
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[j]                    jyawu                    early in the morning or dawn

#### a) Sibilants

The sibilant sound in the fricative shows three phonemes [ʃ, s, ʃ]; the voiceless [ʃ] in *ʃpei* (socks) and [s] in *soer* (sing) are alveolar sounds but [ʃ] in *sha*(basket) a is palatoalveolar voiceless sound as follows;

[ʃ]	ʃpei	socks
[s]	soer	sing
[ʃ]	sha	basket

#### 5) Affricative

The sound of the affricative in the Pulang language is shown in one phoneme of [tʃ] in *chop* (to wear) with the palatoalveolar voiceless sound as below;

[tʃ]	chop	to wear
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#### 6) Semi-vowel

A study of the semi-vowel in Pulang is shown in two phonemes as [w] in *wey* and [y] in *yawu*(easy) as following examples;

[w]	wey	fast
[y]	yawu	easy

## 2. Suprasegmentals

### A. Stress

The study of stress of the Pulang language was not shown much but some are; *u*  $\Delta$ t has a different sound such as intonation at a first syllable means the verb be and the second symbols where(place) in 3), the phoneme *rian* on the first accent means learn while second syllable symbols diligent in sample 1); *pa*y also means that first syllable says goat but the second told wet in 2); and in 4) *jo*ang also has two symbols as the first one says school but the second one says umbrella.

1) rian (learn) / rián (diligent)

2) péi (goat) / péi (wet)

3) ú $\Delta$ t (be) / u $\Delta$ t (where)

4) jóang (school) / joáng (umbrella)

### B. Juncture

An analysis of juncture shows a few examples as below; in sample 5) *rian* means diligent but the juncture *ri+an* means learn; *nyΔm* means delicious and *ny+um* means to kill with the juncture in 6); when the juncture comes between *unčā* and *al*, it means window, however *unčal* without the juncture seems to be wall in 7). To compare the them, the lower vowel a makes a long sound with the juncture.

5) ri+an ( learn ) / rian (diligent)

6) nyΔm (delicious) / ny+um (to kill (human))

7) un ča+al(window) / unčal (wall)

Let's examine one more example in 8), *joang* means school when the stress is on the first syllable without the juncture while *jo-ang* accented on the second syllable with the juncture means umbrella and the sample *ki+it* means cold, but without it, *kit* means angry in 9).

8) joang (school) / jo+ang (umbrella)

9) ki+it (cold) / kit (angry)

## 3. Minimal pairs

An analysis of minimal pairs reveals many while juncture and stress rarely occurs. It may be divided into two parts as minimal pairs with vowels and consonants. I conducted a similar search for a word difference between these two pairs and for numerous other pairs:

### A. Minimal pairs with Vowel

The set of seven words cited proves that the initial or final vowel in each case is phonetically distinct from each of the other phonemes. Numerous pairs can be found that differ in only one phoneme in addition to the sounds under discussion in 9): *swag*, *swang*, and *swam*.

1) riat(six years)

rit(six)



- |                     |                      |
|---------------------|----------------------|
| 2) nyo(smoke)       | nyu(drink)           |
| 3) onepat(Thursday) | oneput(Wednesday)    |
| 4) í iΛu(sweet)     | í io(walk)           |
| 5) í e(that)        | í ei(question)       |
| 6) í am í o(on)     | í am í ou(back)      |
| 7) sungno           | sungne               |
| 8) anyoamjoang      | anyoamjoang          |
| 9) swag(arm)        | swang(lap) swam(eat) |

### B. Minimal pairs with Consonants

Nine pairs of words match in the two sets. Each set includes some word which is a consonant. Four nasal sounds distinct in 4), 5), 7), and 8). Numerous other pairs of consonants in 9): *puak*, *puak*, *pyak*, and *puyak*.

- |                             |                |
|-----------------------------|----------------|
| 1) ngak(neck)               | ngal(light)    |
| 2) pajyak(scarf)            | pajyat(towel)  |
| 3) kler(darling)            | pler(clothes)  |
| 4) klΛm(drum)               | klΛng(laundry) |
| 5) puer(talk/speak)         | puΛm(home)     |
| 6) í yak(draw away)         | í yat(kick)    |
| 7) pan(because)             | pang(chair)    |
| 8) yan(this)                | yam(cry)       |
| 9) puak, puak, pyak, puyak. |                |

### 4. Free variation

A study of free variation shows a few of examples such as: the floor uses both *nawan* or *nawang* in 1); *sangke* and *sangkwe* we means motorcycle in 2); bicycle sound. Both *sapiyan* and *sapiang* in 3); the adjective slim means *yoam* or *yo+an* in 4); the verb *have* used *kuwey* and *kuai* but generally the former is used in 5).

- |                  |       |
|------------------|-------|
| 1) nawan /nawang | floor |
|------------------|-------|

- |                        |            |
|------------------------|------------|
| 2) sang'ké / sang'kwe  | motorcycle |
| 3) sa'piyan / sa'piang | bicycle    |
| 4) yoam /yoan          | slim       |
| 5) k'uwey /k'uay       | have       |

### 5. Syllable structure

A distribution of the syllable structure of Pulang is divided into each number of syllables(one to four) and defined as an open syllable or closed syllable.

#### A. One syllable

One syllable words have eight types, among them, three syllables shown open in 1), 2), and 5), but other five syllables appear to be closed syllables.

- |          |   |
|----------|---|
| 1) V     | u (I, me), mi(he, she), mar(what), mer(doctor), a(mother) |
| 2) CV    | mi(you), so (dog), k'a(give)                              |
| 3) VC    | un(she, he), yo (do, work), en (eat),                     |
| 4) CVC   | long( tall), muk(will), wet (stomach), p'uk(pick),        |
| 5) CCV   | nya (house)   |
| 6) CCVC  | k'wan (baby)  |
| 7) CVVC  | k'i-it(cold)  |
| 8) CCVCC | nyang (know)  |

#### B. Two syllable

Two syllable words appear in various ways in that among twelve types only two examples are open syllables in 6) and 10), while other syllables appear to be closed syllables.

- |         |  |
|---------|--|
| 1) CVC  | ngam (beautiful), k'uer (possessive)                   |
| 2) VVC  | oin (father), uam (slim), uΔt (be)                     |
| 3) VCVC | apong (speak),   |
| 4) CVVC | piang (song), gier( they), rian (study), muΔm (water), |
| 5) CCVC | syum (want)  |
| 6) VCCV | unsha (tomorrow),                                      |

- 7) VCCVC unþæn (teeth), unþʌn (woman),  
 8) CCVVC nyuer (see),  
 9) CVCVC lowan (warm), kúwey (have), í alat (market)  
 10) CVCCV þulle (playing), makdi (must),  
 11) CVCCVC lakyan (here), tongþyak(wallet)  
 12) CCVCCVC kúamkýam(well)

### C. Three syllable

Three syllables in the following examples are shown as five open closed syllables in 1), 2), 3), 11), and 12) while others are closed syllables. But, uniquely, is the appearance of a tridiphthong VVV (aio) in 1).

- 1) VVV aio (age, old)  
 2) VCVV aśou (why)  
 3) CVVCV śaufa (25),  
 4) VVCVVC aipá-an(white)  
 5) VCCVVC anyoam (child),  
 6) VVCCVC wuʌnngam(ugly)  
 7) CVCCVC í u í yap (fat),  
 8) CVCVVC supuʌm (hungry), kúpuʌm (drink)  
 9) CVVCVC kuʌsʌp (sad),  
 10) CVCCVVC ranglian (school), lakdium(under)  
 11) CVCCVVCV jumpaina (everyone),  
 12) CVCCVCCV í amnanya (yard)

### D. Four syllables

The type of four syllables used is given in the four examples as shown of which are all closed syllables, as follows;

- 1) VVCCVVC wuʌnmuʌn (unhappy)  
 2) CVVCVVC káukuer(tree)  
 3) CVVCCCVVC kuʌnmuʌn (joy, happy)

4) CVCVCCVC      maku syu $\Delta$ m(tomato)**CHAPTER IV CONCLUSION**

In the creation of the P'ulang language, it was found that there were thirty-two phonemes as follows: seven vocoids; i, e, æ,  $\Lambda$ , o, and u; one diphthong; wu; 24 contoids; m, n, ng, l, r, p<sup>h</sup>, p̄, p, b, í, t, ċ, k̄, k, g, f, j, ś, s, ʃ, tʃ, w, and y. Stress, juncture, and free variation do occur often while minimal pairs are many. Their pronunciations of k̄, p̄, ś, ʃ, ċ, p<sup>h</sup>, j, and í are frequently used in speech and are unique among triphthongs. Moreover, most of the words use initial and final consonant clusters. The researcher recommends that in the future, more study be conducted that will include the distinctive future, assimilation, dissimilation, addition and elision. etc., because it is not just only the beginning but also basic.

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