CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

This thesis presents a grammatical analysis of the Ngo Chang [$\eta\sigma^{31}$ $t\int a\eta^5$] language. Ngo Chang is the language spoken by the Ngo Chang people who live in the border region of south-west China and north Myanmar. In China, Ngo Chang is called Achang. The phonology of Ngo Chang has been described previously by linguists (Inglis and Inglis 2003). This thesis investigates and describes the grammatical elements of Ngo Chang.

This chapter includes 1.1 Research problem and thesis background; 1.2 Overview of Ngo Chang phonology; 1.3 Research Objectives; 1.4 Methodology; 1.5 Limitations of the research and 1.6 Overview of the thesis.

1.1 Research problem and thesis background

Ngo Chang is spoken by 35,000 people who live in Yunnan province, China and northern Myanmar. Ngo Chang people moved from Mongolia 700 years ago. Traditionally, their belief system is animism. 70% of Ngo Chang are Christian and some of them are Buddhist. (Inglis and Inglis 2003:2).

Ngo Chang people live in a self-sufficient economic system. Farming is the most important living resource for Ngo Chang people. Farming is mostly the men's occupation. Staples are rice and potatoes. Women mostly work in the house, for example, making clothes for their families. Weaving is also an important work for women. Ngo Chang people have the high skill for making materials, dyeing threads and weaving textiles. (Tung n.d: 1-3)

The Ngo Chang people do not have a widely recognize writing system. Chinese characters or the Roman alphabet are often used for it.

The Ngo Chang people speak a language belonging to the Tibeto-Burman language family. Ngo Chang is a Lolo-Burmese Tibeto-Burman language (Grimes 2005). The classification is as follows:
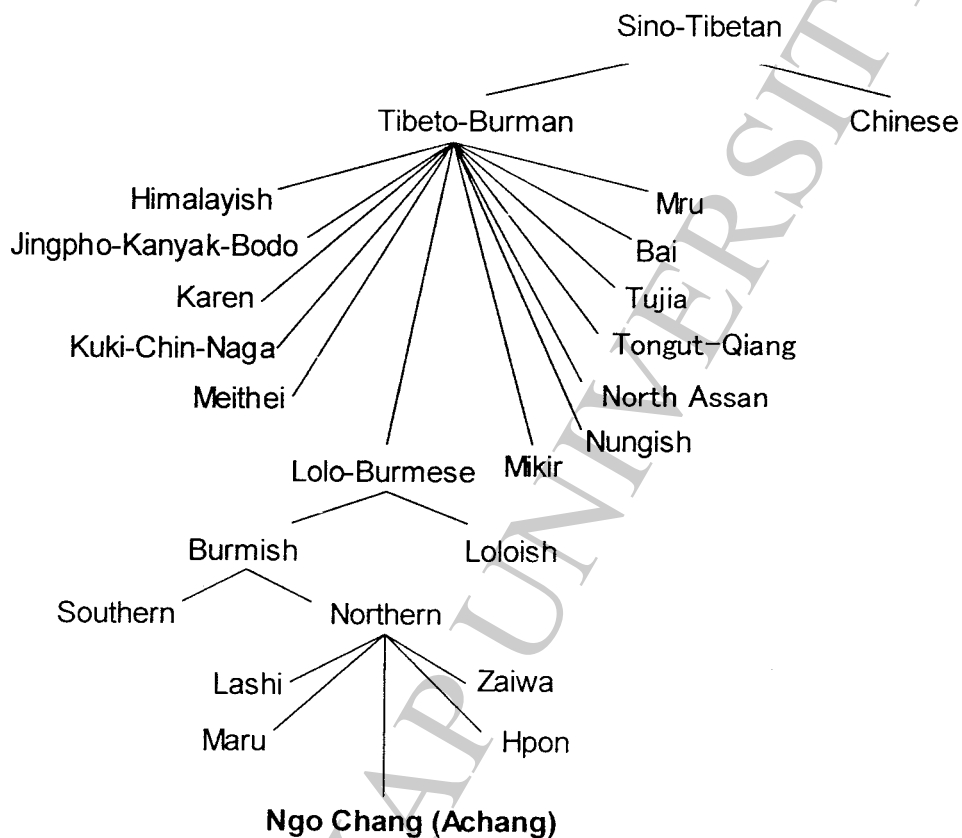

Figure 1. The Ngo Chang language family tree (adapted from Grimes 2005)

1.2 Overview of Ngo Chang phonology

This section presents an overview of Ngo Chang phonology including syllables, consonants, vowels and tones. It is based on the phonological analysis of Inglis and Inglis (2003). However, the phones of Ngo Chang examples in this thesis are not done according to the analysis of Inglis and Inglis (2003). Instead they are based on the analysis of the present researcher.

1.2.1 Syllables

The research of Inglis and Inglis (2003) shows that Ngo Chang has four types of stressed syllables: CV, CVC, CVVC, CVCC, and one unstressed presyllable: V.

1.2.2 Consonants

There are 22 consonants in the Ngo Chang consonant inventory and 2 semi-vowels w and j. Ngo Chang voiced plosives also have a voiceless allophone.

p^h	t^h	ts^h	$t\int^h$	c^h	k^h	
b	ḏ	dz	dʒ	ɟ	g	ʔ
		s	ʃ	ç	x	h
m	n				ŋ	
	l					
w			j			

Figure 2. The consonant inventory of Ngo Chang (based on Inglis and Inglis 2003)

Figure 3 is the consonant inventory used for Ngo Chang examples in this thesis based on the data available to this research. Note that voiceless stops can be aspirated or not, and that there is no velar fricatives.

p	t	t͡s	t͡ʃ		k	
pʰ	tʰ	t͡sʰ	t͡ʃʰ		kʰ	
b	d	d͡z	d͡ʒ		g	ʔ
		s	ʃ	ç		h
m	n ṇ				ŋ ɲ	
	l					
w			j			

Figure 3. The consonant inventory of Ngo Chang examples in this thesis

1.2.3 Vowels

The vowel system of Ngo Chang involves six phonemic vowels and four phonemic diphthongs. Phonemes are unbracketed, and allophones are bracketed. The bold sounds, [ɪ], [æ] and **ɯ** rarely occur. Syllable [ŋ] also occurs.

Vowel

	i [ɪ]	ɯ	u	
	ɛ [æ]		ɔ	
	aˑ	a[ʔaˑ]	[ŋ]	

Diphthong

ei [e, ai]   ɯu

                              uʌ

              ɑu

Figure 4. Vowels and diphthongs of Ngo Chang (Inglis and Inglis 2003)

Figure 5 is vowels and diphthongs used for Ngo Chang examples in this thesis based on the available data. Note that further research is needed to determine whether Inglis and Inglis or the description used in this thesis are more correct.

Vowel

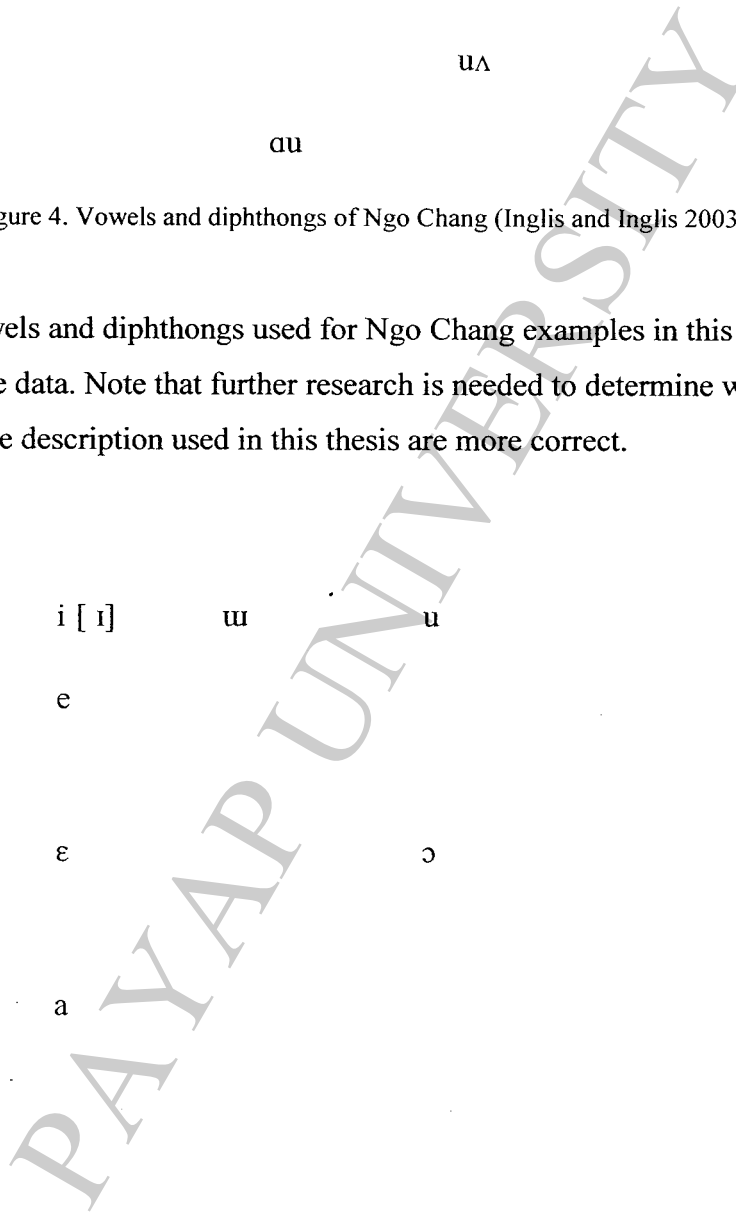   i [ɪ]   ɯ   u

        e

        ɛ   ɔ

        a

Diphthong   ie iɛ   iu

                ei   ui ua

                                                      ʊɔ

                                                   uʌ   ɔa

                ai   au   ɑu

Figure 5. Vowels and diphthongs of Ngochang examples in this thesis

1.2.4 Tones

There are 5 tones in Ngo Chang. Three occur in open syllables, and two occur in checked syllable. There is some allophonic variation within the tones with the mid and mid falling having overlapping allotones. See Inglis and Inglis (2003) for more detailed analysis.

High falling		High	
54	5, 45, 4	5	43
Mid			
3	32	Falling	
Mid falling		32	3, 31
31	32		

Figure 6. Tones of Ngo Chang (based on Inglis and Inglis 2003)

Figure 7 is tones used for Ngo Chang examples in this thesis.

High	5
High rising	45
High falling	43
Mid	3
Mid falling	32
Low falling	31

Figure 7. Tones of Ngo Chang examples in this thesis

1.3 Research objectives

The research objective of this study is to describe the important elements of the syntax of the Ngo Chang language based on a general theoretical frame of Functional Grammar. Specifically, Word classes, Phrases, Clause types, Clause modifications and Sentences are described in the following chapters.

1.4 Methodology

This section discusses the methodology of this research, including data collection, a brief review of the theories used in the analysis and analysis procedure.

1.4.1 Data collection

The data used in this paper are based on interviews with two Ngo Chang informants:

Name: Ms. Zang Thang Latung

    Age: 50 years old

    Occupation: Teacher

    Education: High School, Bible Study (Chiang Mai Bible Institute)

Name: Ms. Taink Wang Latung

    Age: 76 years old

    Occupation: Teacher/Translator

    Education: B.A. degree, in Myanmar

The data is also gathered from some books which are based on religious beliefs, moral education and tradition. Various stories published in short books were also utilized. (Abbreviated titles are given in brackets after each book). Only one text, Tiger, is given as a sample in the appendix. These books were published using the proposed Roman based orthography. However, the IPA is used in all examples of Ngo Chang text in this thesis.

    Zolu yange Lynyhau 'Tiger and cat' (Tiger)

    Gyoq phoq yah zons 'Male chicken and eagle' (Chicken)

    Puh, Gyuq yah zons 'Red frog and eagle' (Frog)

    Noeulwi yah puh hung 'Buffalo and big frog' (Buffalo)

    Zvbiq zains yah shvbeq 'Grape tree and goat' (Goat)

    Mangso ka Gis 'God is good' (God)

Dvzvn gyo lyis Ngoqchangh dah muhzoh 'Ngo Chang works within a year'
(Year)

These books were glossed and translated to English with the informants, and analyzed for the grammatical structure. Examples from these texts are referred to by the title in parentheses. No title in the example indicates that the example was elicited.

1.4.2 Brief review of the theories used in the analysis

This Ngo Chang grammatical analysis is done within the theoretical framework of Functional Grammar developed by Simon C. Dik, Talmy Givón, Bernard Comrie and others. Functional Grammar (FG) assumes a functional approach to the organization of natural language. According to Dik (1997a:12-15), the following three standards of adequacy are important for the theory.

Typological adequacy: The theory should be typologically applied to any type of natural language.

Pragmatic adequacy: Linguistic expressions are related to how they are used in communicative interaction.

Psychological adequacy: In Functional Grammar, a language should correspond with psychological models.

In Functional Grammar, the functional notion plays an important role in describing linguistic expression. Dik (1997a:26) introduces functional notions at three levels of grammatical organization as follows.

Semantic functions (Agent, Goal, Recipient, etc.) describing participants' different role toward the state of affairs.

Syntactic functions (Subject and Object) indicating the perspective from which a State of Affairs is described in a linguistic expression.

Pragmatic functions (Theme, Topic, Focus, etc.) specifying pragmatic information of speaker and addressee.

In the theory of FG, its rules and principles should be practically applicable to any natural language. The theory should have a certain degree of abstractness in order to be applicable to any natural language. On the other hand, the theory also should involve a certain degree of concreteness in order to have practical applicability.

Ngo Chang grammar is analyzed based on these theoretical guidelines. A further discussion of FG is found in Chapter 2.

1.4.3 Analysis procedure

As mentioned in 1.4.1, the data are collected using two methods: 1. analyzing texts and 2. interviewing informants.

The procedure for method 1, analyzing texts, was conducted according to the following steps.

Step 1: Gloss each Ngo Chang word to English with informants' help; then translate the meaning of each sentence.

Step 2: analyze texts for particular grammatical features.

The procedure for method 2, interviewing informants, was conducted according to the following steps.

(Pre-meeting)

Step 1: Starting with grammatical features that are typologically common to languages, the author prepared series of English example sentences that highlight the grammatical feature(s) being examined.

(With informant)

Step 2: ask informants to translate example sentences which are written in English into the Ngo Chang language. Then analyze the grammatical structures which are found in their translations according to each section.

The effectiveness of both methods 1 and 2 is enhanced because they are conducted in complementary ways. Method 1 starts from a narrow emic analysis found in the specific language. While method 2 starts from a broad etic analysis which is generally found in languages. As a result, the Ngo Chang language can be examined from a comprehensive perspective.

1.5 Limitations of the research

This thesis focuses on the syntax of the Ngo Chang language, so a detailed phonological analysis is not included.

An interview limitation is that the two Ngo Chang speakers have left their village and have lived in a predominantly Thai-speaking city for a long time. Also both of the informants are women. Moreover, there is a time limitation, so only certain features are examined. These two women are the source of all data for this thesis.

1.6 Overview of the thesis

This first chapter represents the introduction of this thesis, including the research motivation and objectives, methodology of the research, data collection for the

analysis, brief explanation of the theories used in the analysis, analysis procedure, limitation of the research and overview of the thesis.

The second chapter is the literature review that discusses the framework of Functional Grammar in which the grammatical analysis is conducted. It also discusses all the literature that specifically describes Ngo Chang. The third chapter presents word classes. The fourth chapter discusses the analysis of phrases. The fifth chapter describes clause types. The sixth chapter examines clause modifications. The seventh chapter discusses sentences, including complex sentences, compound sentences and comparison. The eighth chapter is the conclusion of the research.