

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Rationale

It is clearly stated in the Constitution of the People's Republic of China, Chapter I article 4: "All nationalities in the People's Republic of China are equal. The people of all nationalities have the freedom to use and develop their own spoken and written languages, and to preserve or reform their own ways and customs." However, it is also written in the same chapter in article 19: "The state promotes the nationwide use of *pútōnghùà* [common speech based on Beijing pronunciation]." How to balance the relationship between these two language policies has been debated since the day they were written. Along with the rapid development achieved by the Chinese government during the past two decades, more and more people tend to emphasize the policy concerning *pútōnghùà* (hereafter PTH) and neglect the policy regarding minority languages (Wang J. 1983:1). Some people are pessimistic about the future of minority languages, assuming many minority languages will disappear in a short period of time because of the modernization progress taking place in China (He J. 1999:46). What is the fate of the minority languages in China? What are the people's attitudes towards their own languages? How strong is the vitality of these languages? Are most minority people bilingual enough to use PTH in all circumstances? All these are burning questions for those who are devoted to minority language work. Finding the answers to these questions will help us to use personnel, financial and material resources wisely in developing language programs for minority groups. This study investigates these questions by looking at the situation of the Bai nationality in Jianchuan County, China.

1.1 Research questions

The research questions of this study are as the follows:

1. Is the Bai language likely to be maintained in the foreseeable future?
2. Do Bai speakers have positive attitudes towards the Bai language and such related issues as Bai culture, Bai speakers and Bai language development programs?
3. Do Bai speakers from the county seat differ from Bai speakers from the villages in their language attitudes, language use and proficiency in Hanyu¹?

1.2 The scope of the study

The Bai people primarily live in Dali Bai Autonomous Prefecture in north-west Yunnan Province, China. The population is 1,085,293 (2000 Census). A number of 470,000 Bai population is found in other parts of Yunnan and Sichuan, Hunan and Guizhou provinces. This study investigated the language use and language attitudes of the Bai people living in Jianchuan County in Dali Bai Autonomous Prefecture. According to the 2000 national census, the ethnic Bai population in Jianchuan County is 151,331. Bai ethnic group make up 92% of the population of the county. Figure 1 presents the Dali Bai Prefecture in a map of China, and Figure 2 is a map of the Bai prefecture. The Jianchuan County is marked with a star.

¹ Hanyu refers to the language variety spoken by the ethnic Han people in the area. See 1.4 for a detailed definition.

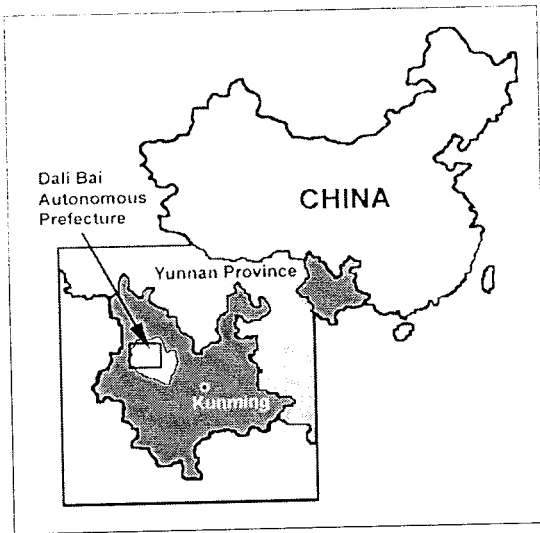


Figure 1 Location of Dali Bai Prefecture in China (adapted from Allen 2004)

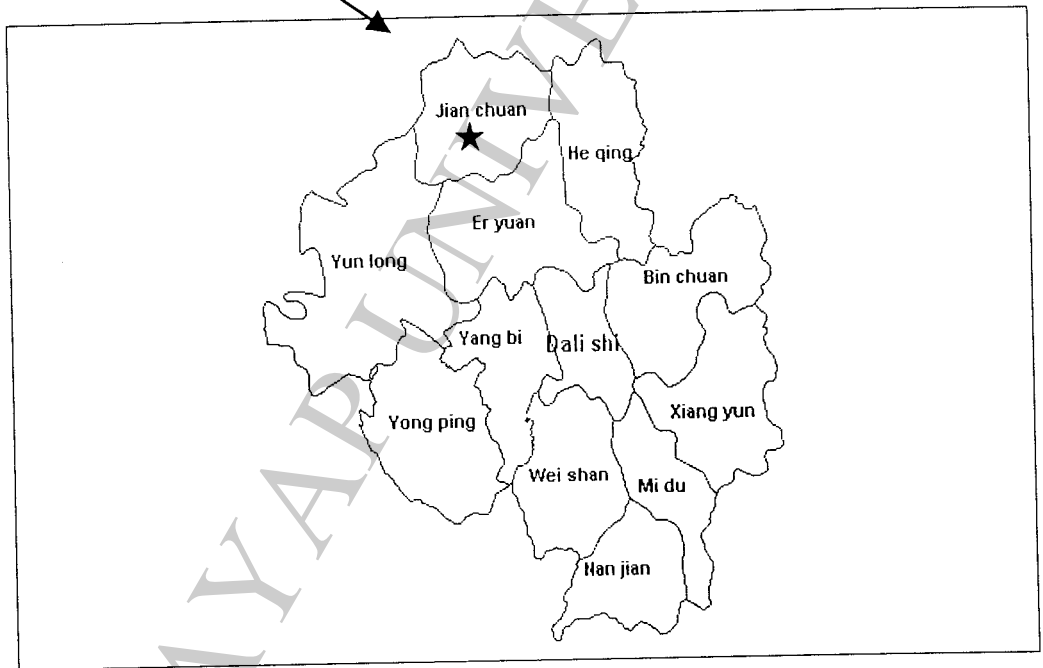


Figure 2 Map of Dali Bai Prefecture

1.3 Background information about the Bai

In her dissertation, Wiersma²(1990:8-9) described the community of Bai speakers from the perspectives of political facts of recognized nationality and language policy as the follows:

That group centered around the Erhai lake sharing a borrowed core vocabulary of (often) archaic Chinese pronunciations, a complex idiom of dress styles that features black and blue (and red) head-wrapping and apron skirts, and a diffused tradition of local ancestor and spirit worship mixed with eclectic elements from the “three doctrines” of Chinese tradition. They are the people who speak of themselves as [pɛ42+ xo44+] (a syllabic collocation composed of their autonym and a collective plural suffix that is restricted to {+human} nouns), who pursue a mixed agricultural economy based on wet rice cultivation in the lower plateaus and dry-field cultivation at upper altitudes, who build lofted courtyard dwellings of cut stone masonry foundations and wood beam upper stories generally surrounding the Erhai region and into the mountain regions to the north of it...

From the description above, a picture of contemporary Bai life is shown from a geographic, cultural and economic perspective.³ However, some issues concerning the Bai still remain unsolved, such as the origin of the Bai and their language.

1.3.1 The Bai people

Bai-speaking people have been traditionally known as 名家 *MingJia*, both in China and abroad. Before the term *MinJia* came into use in the Ming Dynasty (AD1368-1644), the people living around the Erhai Lake was recorded with different names, such as 白蛮 *BaiMan* (White Barbarians), 乌蛮 *WuMan* (Black Barbarians), 滇 *Dian*,

² In the dissertation entitled '*A study of the Bai (Minjia) language along historical lines*', Wiersma did research on the Bai language from different perspectives under the light of past Chinese influence.

³ More information concerning Bai history and culture can be found in Jianchuan (1990, 2002), Yang Zh (1990, 1994)

叟 *Sou*, 西爨 *XiCuan*, and 白夷 *BaiYi* in the historical documents. According to Wiersma (1990:13), the term 名家 *MingJia* had two possible meanings in its historical context: 1) a Chinese term for local villages in Yunnan that were composed of non-militia households ‘local commoners’ as opposed to the military settlers 军家 *JunJia* (soldier households) or 2) a reduced form of the Chinese term 名家 *MingJia* that had earlier been applied to the local aristocratic families in the Nanzhao Kingdom during the Tang Dynasty (AD 618-907).

The term 名家 *MingJia* is still in use today in contrast with 客家 *KeJia* (guest households) referring to Han Chinese who have lived in this area for several generations.

In 1956, the PRC government recognized the people group as Bai and set their residence region around Erhai Lake as Dali Bai Autonomous Prefecture, which includes 11 counties and 1 city, Dali Shi, as in Figure 2.

1.3.2 The Bai language

Bai has a very long history of borrowing from Chinese both culturally and linguistically. As a result, the influence of Chinese is seen in every aspect of the Bai language.

1.3.2.1 Genetic affiliation

The genetic affiliation of the Bai language has always been controversial, largely because of the tremendous lexical and grammatical influence of Chinese over the millennia. It is always difficult to distinguish genuine cognates from borrowing from a related language. Many linguists have contributed their views to solve this ongoing controversy. One view is that Bai is associated with Chinese in a branch of Sino-Tibetan called Sinitic, to be set apart from Tibeto-Burman proper. Benedict adopted this view in the last couple of years of his life (Matisoff 2001).

Another view is that it is a member of the Yi-Burmese subgroup of Tibeto-Burman. This view is subscribed to by many linguists in China such as Luo Changpei and Li Fanggui and Zhao Yansun (Yunnan Minority Affairs Committee 1999). Another common view is that Bai constitutes a separate co-equal subgroup of Tibeto-Burman, even though it has undergone exceptionally intense Chinese influence. Some scholars hold the view that Bai is a Tibeto-Burman language (probably Yi) having borrowed heavily from Chinese. Several Chinese scholars classified Bai as a dialect of Chinese. In a recently published book, the scholars claimed “Bai is not a dialect of Chinese, neither a language in the Yi family, but a separate language branch of TB, which is the Bai branch.”⁴ (Yunnan Minority Affairs Committee 1999:36). Figure 3 is a summary of all the views listed above.

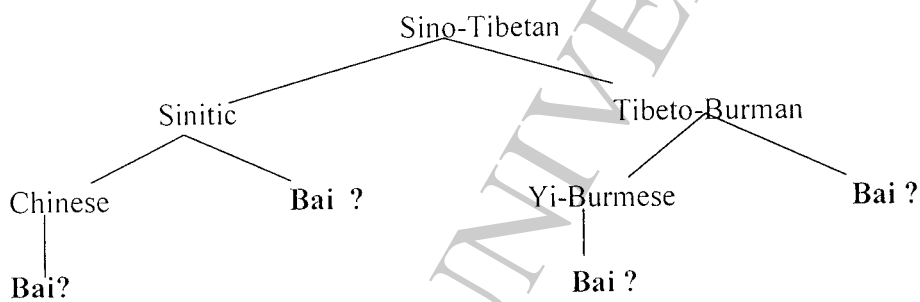


Figure 3 Summary of views on possible Bai affiliation

Dialects:

Traditionally, linguists have claimed that there are three dialects of Bai: the Southern dialect spoken in the counties around Dali city, the Central dialect around Jianchuan, and the Northern dialect around Nujiang (Xu and Zhao 1984). The three dialects are considered rather similar especially in grammar and lexicon, but different in phonology. However, the Jianchuan dialect (the central dialect) is often considered

⁴ This quote is originally in Chinese and the author translated it into English.

the most conservative, preserving features such as nasalization and SOV structure, which have been lost in the Dali dialect. It is therefore the Jianchuan dialect that has been the subject of most linguistic investigation. The revised Roman-based orthography (Jianchuan education bureau and language committee:1988) and the Chinese-Bai Dictionary (Zhao and Xu 1996) were both based on the Jianchuan dialect.

A recent study (Allen 2004) on dialects which employed both the recorded-text testing method and the wordlists method confirmed the three dialects division. The Central dialect is spoken in Eryuan, Jianchuan, Heqing, Lanping and Yunlong, the Southern dialect is spoken in Dali, and the Northern dialect is spoken in various parts of Nujiang prefecture. Eryuan and Yunlong cluster as a communication center. The speakers of other dialects have similar intelligibility figures for Yunlong as for Eryuan. This study also discovered that the varieties of the Central dialect have between 84% and 91% lexical similarity, with the exception of Yunlong, whose figures drop to 77%.⁵

1.3.2.2 Phonology

The phonology of Bai is comparable to that of northern Yi and certain other Yi-Burmese languages, where historical checked syllable endings have been lost and have given rise to tense/lax phonation type contrasts. However it is also the case that syllable prosodies, including register and voice quality, contrast from earlier initial voicing found in Lolo-Burmese and are linked to historical contact with Mon (Bradley 1982: 127-9).

⁵ Xi (1984) did a comparison study of syntax between two Bai dialects Jianchuan Bai and Dali Bai.

Jianchuan Bai consonant initials are listed in Table 1:

	Bilabial	Labio-dental	Alveolar	Alvolo-palatal	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
Plosive	p p ^h		t t ^h			k k ^h	ʔ
Fricative		f v	s	ç		x ɣ	
Affricate			ts ts ^h	tç tç ^h			
Nasal	m	n				ŋ	
Approximant					j		
Lateral approximant			l				

Table 1 Consonant chart of Jianchuan Bai

Jianchuan Bai vowel rhymes are listed in Table 2:

i y	i	u ʉ
e		o
ɛ	ɤ	ɔ
æ		ɑ

Table 2 Vowel chart of Jianchuan Bai

Diphthongs in Jianchuan Bai are /iɛ ia io iu iu ui ue ua iao/. All rhymes except /u/, /ao/, and /iao/ have nasalized reflexes, although the distribution of such nasalized rhymes is limited.

Many scholars have done research to determine the tone system of Bai. However, difficulties lie in the correlation between vowel quality and tone. The following table shows three tone phonetic classifications of Jianchuan Bai:

Tone numbers	Wiersma (2003)	Zhao and Xu (1996)	Duan (2001) ⁶
66	High, level, tense voice	High level, tense vowel	High level, tense vowel
55	High, level	High level, lax vowel	High level, lax vowel
44	Non-high, level, tense voice	Non-high level tense vowel	Non-high level tense vowel
33	Non-high, level	Mid-level, lax vowel	Mid-level, lax vowel
35/ 34	High, rising	Mid-rising lax vowel	Mid-rising lax vowel
42/43	Non-high falling, tense voice	Non-high falling tense vowel	Non-high falling tense vowel
31/21	Low, falling, breathy voice	Mid-falling lax vowel	Mid-falling lax vowel

Table 3 A summary of possible tone classification

In Wiersma (2003), Jianchuan Bai has eight tones, organized into two groups with modal and non-modal phonation as presented in Table 4.

Non-modal voice	Modal voice
Tone 1 (66) High, level, tense voice	Tone 6 (55) High, level
Tone 2 (44) Non-high, level, tense voice	Tone 7 (33) Non-high, level
Tone 3 (31) Low, falling, breathy voice	Tone 8 (35) High, rising
Tone 4 (42) Non-high, falling, tense voice	
Tone 5 (21) Low, falling, harsh voice	

Table 4 Wiersma's Bai tone categorization

In Zhao and Xu (1984), Bai has five tones, and the tense vowel quality adds three more tones to the tone categorization.

Lax	Tense
55	66
33	44
31	42
21	
35	

Table 5 Zhao and Xu's Bai tone categorization

⁶ Zhao and Xu and Duan described the tones in a similar way but analyzed the tones differently, as will be apparent in the following discussion.

In (Duan 2001), there are four basic phonemic tones in Bai which are 55 high, 33 middle, 31 mid-falling, and 34 mid-rising. Tone 66, 44, 42 and 41 are allotones of the four basic tones as a result of the involvement of vowel quality and phonation type.

1.3.2.3 Grammar

Grammatically, modifiers follow modified constituents as in other Tibeto-Burman languages. But Bai does not have the most distinctive typological feature of other TB languages, namely the SOV ordering. SOV ordering may sometimes be found in the Jianchuan dialect of Bai especially in sentences where the object is a proper name or a personal pronoun and it is followed by an object marker /no/ or /ny/. Such verb final ordering is the default order in Jianchuan interrogative sentences, regardless of whether an object marker appears (Wiersma 1990:194-201, Xi 1989).

Four syllable expressions occur very often in Bai expressing an idiomatic meaning through a sequence of morphemes, some obligatory and some changeable according to the lexical situation, but in a fixed pattern. There are six main patterns: ABCD, AABB, ABAB, ABAD, ABCB, ABCC. The follows are examples of each pattern:

Pattern	Examples	Meaning
ABCD	a ⁵⁵ fu ³³ ja ³³ du ³¹	'comfortable'
AABB	k ^h v ⁵⁵ k ^h v ⁵⁵ k ^h ua ³³ k ^h ua ³³	'spacious'
ABAB	lu ³³ ji ⁵⁵ lu ³³ ji ⁵⁵	'green'
ABAD	bæ ³¹ ci ⁵⁵ bæ ³¹ lo ³³	'kind'
ABCB	k ^h v ³¹ lv ³¹ ts ^h v ³¹ lv ³¹	'secretly'
ABCC	xu ³³ mo ³³ tey ³³ tey ³³	'dark'

With regard to use of number and case in pronouns, Wiersma (1990:168) states "in Jianchuan Bai a residual system of obligatory morphophonemic alternations characterizes the operation of number and case paradigms upon the pronoun, whereas Mandarin achieves similar grammatical results through suffixing and morphosyntactic construction."

1.4 Important concepts in this study

In this section, some important concepts involved in this study are presented with explanations of the common definition as well as the special applications in this study.

zhōngwén refers both to written and spoken forms of Chinese. The second element, *wén*, strictly means ‘written language’, but this term in everyday usage can refer to spoken language as well (Norman 1988:137). This term is used to refer to the written form of Chinese in this current study.

pútōnghùà is the official name of the standard language in China. It is the common speech based on Beijing pronunciation. *pútōnghùà* represents a variety of speech that lies somewhere between the local and the standard proper. The Beijing dialect is the dialect on which *pútōnghùà* is based. However, this doesn’t mean that the Beijing dialect and *pútōnghùà* are identical (Norman 1988:247-248). When the term *pútōnghùà* occurs in this paper, it refers to this standard language norm.

hànyǔ literally means ‘the language of the *hàns*’, that is the ethnic Chinese. In practice, this term seems to be gaining currency at the expense of *pútōnghùà* (Norman 1988:137). In this study, the term *hànyǔ* stands for the language variety spoken by the Han people in a particular area, especially the Hanyu variety of Yunnan.

Chinese: It is not easy to give a definition to Chinese in one or two sentences, as noted in (Norman 1988:1) “Few language names are as all-encompassing as that of Chinese.” In this current study, the term Chinese is served as a cover term to include PTH (the national standards), Hanyu (LWC) and *zhōngwén* (written Chinese).

LWC: This is the acronym of the term 'Language of Wider Communication'. In this study, the term LWC refers to the Hanyu variety of Dali area.

Diglossia: The term diglossia was first used by Charles Ferguson in 1959 to describe a language situation in which two varieties of the same language exist side by side and are used for different functions (Ferguson 1959). A more prestigious, standardized, and formal variety is termed the *High dialect* (H); its informally learned and used counterpart is the *Low dialect* (L). Fishman revised and extended the concept in 1967 to include unrelated languages as well as dialects of the same language (Fishman 1967). In this study, Fishman's broad sense of diglossia is employed. Bai and Hanyu are two language varieties involved in the diglossic situation.

Language use pattern: This term describes a phenomenon in which members of a community use different languages or speech varieties in different social situations, referred to as *domains*.

Domain: Domains are social contexts in which the choice to use a certain language variety is more apt to be appropriate than the use of another language variety (Fasold 1984:183). In this research, language use in 7 domains is investigated. These domains are family, school, work place, temple, market, government and strangers.

Language attitudes: This term refers to people's feelings and preferences towards their own language and other speech varieties around them, and what value they place on those languages. Some language-attitudes studies are strictly limited to attitudes about language itself, and some studies are broadened to include attitudes towards speakers of a particular language or dialect. Further broadening of the studies treat all sorts of behavior concerning language including attitudes toward language maintenance and planning efforts (Fasold 1984:148). This research deals with the

broad definition of language attitudes including attitudes towards language itself, speaker and language development issues.

Bilingualism: This term is difficult to be defined within one or two sentences. Many different aspects involve in the definition such as origin, internal, external identification, competence and function (Skutnabb-Kangas 2000). However, for the purpose of this study, bilingualism is defined as the knowledge and skills acquired by individuals which enable them to use a language along with their mother tongue (Blair 1990:52, Baker 2001). In this study, the bilingual proficiency focuses on Bai people's acquired knowledge and skill in Hanyu.

PAYAP UNIVERSITY