Chapter 1

Introduction

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1.1 Statement of a Problem

In the grammar book of the Zhuang language[1], published in 1986 by the Guangxi Nationality Publishing House, there is a section in chapter 2 on Morphology, listing a group of syllables as "suffixes" * and another group as post-positional sound imitatives when they occur after a preceding syllable in the word classes of verb, noun or adjective. For instance, "riu he he" (to chuckle) as suffixes after a verb and "raek byat" (to break apart) as sound imitatives after a verb. (The examples of other Zhuang dialects quoted here cannot be transcribed into IPA symbols without knowing their phonological systems.)

The criteria of this grammar book to discriminate the twocategories --- the suffixesand the sound imitatives --- are not clear. "he he" bears more resemblance to the sound of laughing than "byat" to the sound of breaking something apart. Hence placing the former example as suf-

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[1]see "Vuj Mingz Vah Ceungh Yij Faz" (1989:41).

*This is translated from a termcalled " hou zhui " by Chinese grammarians, meaning a post-positional independent element; it is a kind of bound morpheme inthis sense.

fixes and the latter as sound imitatives contradicts the condition.

Moreover the examples of "suffixes" --- also called post-position elements in the same book --- are given in separated groups in the same section. The first group of examples illustrates the formation of one or two suffixes after a verb, such as "vwt vak" (to throw away) "gwn gawq" (to eat up) and "riu he he", without giving any reasons for dividing the examples of suffixes into two groups.

The examples in the second group illustrate the formation of suffixes with a headword, such as "lauz lwd lwd" (greasy), and "bwn yam yam" (hairy). It also includes the example of "nyap nyuk" (meaning annoying).

The properties and patterns of the "suffixes" have been seen to be arrayed in a very confusing way so far. It does not help to understand those elements at all, but instead I begin to see an underlying problem in these post-positional elements.

Professor Liang Min (197?) has written an article on the post-positional syllables of the Zhuang language. His comments on these "suffixes" confirm my questioning of these syllables. He said that examples of "suffixes" given in

Introduction to Zhuang Yu Morphology (1959) included segments of a syllable, suffixal syllables and even full lexical words, actually anything that is placed after a verb, a noun and an adjective. The examples he quoted are listed here for reference:

Verb + Suffix : ram^{3} ra:k^{7} (to cut down)

Adj + Suffix : dei^{1} rau^{6} (very good)

Noun + Suffix : jieŋ^{1} sop^{8} sop^{8} (the sap running down)

Liang further concluded that the Zhuang grammarians had not yet agreed on the classification of these post-positional syllables.

So when I noticed that there are also such kinds of syllables existing in the Debao dialect, I decided to explore further into the problem and try to observe the more precise roles these syllables undertake in the grammar.

I name the post-positional syllables within my scope of study the tallied syllables. Are there any patterns of their formation in the lexicon? What are the semantic properties revealed by these syllables? These are the problems to be solved.

1.2 Purpose

The aim of this research is to discover the patterns of vocalic iconicity in the tallied syllables of the Debao dialect of Southern Zhuang language and to study their semantic functions.

1.3. Hypothesis

There exist predictable patterns of vowels in the tallied syllables of the Debao dialect and these vowels reveal iconicity.

1.4 Scope

In this thesis, the post-positional tallied syllables under study will be narrowly restricted to monosyllabic formations and to a limited set of iconic vowels { /a:/ /e:/ /eɯ/ /ɯ/ }.

Hence according to my defined scope, the post-positional monosyllabic tallied syllable must be bound to a headword to form a lexical construction. Other iconicity formations such as reduplicatives, multi-syllable expressives etc. are excluded from my scope of study.

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1.5 Methodology

It is divided into two stages, the collection of data and data analysis.

1.5.1 Collection of Data

Collection of data includes collection from documents and elicitations from fieldwork. Then the corpus of data is being screened to select only those entries that meet the criteria of a tallied syllable.

1.5.1.1 Data Collection

(a) Documentary Wordlist

The preliminary part of the data that I started to work with in 1990 was extracted from an unpublished wordlist of the Debao dialect, numbering altogether more than 9,000 entries, which was collected by a working group from the Language Department of the Guangxi Institute for Nationalities at Nanning City.

This was one of the academic programs between Chulalongkorn University and the Guangxi Institute of Minorities. The wordlist has been edited by Dr. Pranee Kullavanijaya and was published in 1992 by the Faculty of Arts,

Chulalongkorn University[2].

I selected a whole corpus of data of those post-positional syllables based on the criteria that they convey expressive meanings and are not compound words. It amounts to nearly 450 entries. The iconic meanings of the vowels still did not come out very sharply, and the data was considered not sufficiently complete to work out any conclusion at the preliminary stage.

(b) Fieldwork

In 1991, I went to the Institute in Guangxi Province to check on the meanings, senses and productivity of the tallied syllables, and to elicit some more entries from the informant*.

All of the tallied syllables have been checked with the informant to make sure that none of them are lexical units in the dialect. Overtones of the lexical construction as a whole were also repeatedly detected and con-

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[2]P. Kullavanijaya. (1992) Southern Zhuang-Thai Dictionary. Bangkok : Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University.

*The working result is quite satisfactory; the entries have increased to about 178 entries, from 150 entries selected from the 450 entries (cf. 1.5.2)

firmed with the informant *.

1.5.1.2 Data Selection

After extracting the 450 entries from the wordlist, a sorting proccess was executed to exclude onomotapoeic words, reduplicatives, and couplets with no headwords etc. from the data. Excluded examples are " sa: 31 sa: 31 " (sound of falling rain), " pjou 33 pjou 33 " (describing a object waving in the wind), " ʃok 33 ʃek 33 " (struggling before death), respectively. The number of entries came around 150 before my field trip to Nanning.

During my fieldwork trip the number of entries increased relatively because of further elicitation. The entries were again filtered by the criteria that define a tallied syllable in this thesis and also by the condition of studying only a limited set of vowels; thus the number is finally being cut down to around 178 entries.

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*Mr. Zhang Zheng-ye, in his forties, is my informant. He is now the associate professor of the Zhuang language at the Guangxi Institute of Nationalities Nanning City. His home community is about 15 kilometers from the municipal town of Debao. He was born and raised in Lung Guang Village, Debao County, Guangxi Province, the Guangxi Autonomous Region of the Zhuang People, the People's Republic of China.

1.5.2 Data Analysis

The 178 entries of lexical construction are analysed according to the following steps:

(1) The entries are separated into two groups according to whether the tallied syllables are open or closed syllable stuctures

(2) The nature of productivity of the tallied syllable is reflected by the phonological constraint that exists between the headwords[3] and the tallied syllables.

(3) The phonological properties between the headword and the tallied syllables are then analysed under the parameters of paradigmatic and syntagmatic relationship (cf. 3.2.1 & 3.2.2).

Phonological Patterns of forming the lexical construction are thereby discovered. The data are also arranged in comparable sets of entries such that semantic oppositions and semantic components in the iconic segments can be evaluated correctly (cf.4.1).

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[3]S. Luksaneeyanawin (1986:50) would call it a base word, which is actually "a free form that can occur by itself as a word" such as in the case of reduplicatives.

1.6 Significance of the research

The study of the formation of these tallied syllables in the Debao dialect of the Zhuang language will present additional evidence regarding the non-arbitrary domain of languages, which is a universal linguistic phenomenon.

In addition, the findings help to increase the knowledge and understanding of the Zhuang languages and also other Tai languages, and may stimulate further studies into a new domain of iconicity in these dialects.

1.7 The Zhuang People

The Zhuang people represent over one third of the population in Guangxi Province -- the Autonomous Region of the Zhuang Nationality, reaching a figure of 16 million, and listed as the largest minority group in China. There are other territories of Zhuang settlement in the neighboring provinces of Guizhou, Yunnan, Hunan and Canton[4] .

The majority of the Zhuang people live in Guangxi

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[4]see Nationalities in China, 1981, edited by the People's Publishing House, Foreign Language Press, Bejing.

Province in the autonomous region specially reserved for them. This region is a hilly area featuring precipitous hills rising straight up from a flat horizon of paddy fields, and the jagged edges of endless mountain ranges are drawn across the skyline. Agriculture and farming being the Zhuang people's major occupation, they choose to live in the low basin areas of the land or at the foot of a mountain. The upper level of these rising heights are inhabited by other minorities such as the Yao, the Miao etc. The level of height is a critical factor in determining the domain of a given minority group in this region.*

The Chinese ruling class in the past had not set up any policy for this important minority group of people, but in the early fifties the Chinese Communist Government decided to use 'pou 6uŋ' as a generic name; the corresponding Chinese name will be 'Zhuang' in romanized transcription. Prime Minister Zhou Enlai also officially declared that the conventional Chinese character 㺜 would also be replaced by a homonym with positive meanings, ie. 壯 , expressing the respect and well wishes of the Chinese authority to the people.

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*From the lecture "The Yues and the Dais", presented by Professor Huang Hui-Kun at the Auditorium of Chulalongkorn University in October, 1990.

The Zhuang people can be divided into separate branches by different geographical areas and by different ethnic names that they use to address themselves. To the northwest, they call themselves ´pu jai´, some Zhuang in Yunan Province call themselves ´bu dai´, most of the Zhuang in the central, the northern and the western part of the region call themselves ´pou 6u:ŋ´.[5]

In terms of linguistic perspectives, there is definitely a difference between the Northern and Southern Zhuang people. Debao can be justly represented as a demarcation of the Southern group. In the whole area of the Southern Zhuang districts, Debao county is one of the few districts where 98% of the people living there are Zhuang. They are addressed as ´phu noŋ´, they call themselves ´phu tho´, and they refer to the other Zhuang groups such as those people of Wu-Ming as´phu tsu:ŋ´. Thus they consider themselves quite a unique group of people related to the ZHuang, and claim themselves to be least influenced by Chinese culture.

1.8 The Zhuang Language

General information on the typology, and the writ-

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[5]See Preface of Zhuang Yu Jian Zhi, 1980, edited by Qin Guo Sheng & Wei Qing Yin, People´s Publishing House, Bejing.

ing system of the Zhuang languages is given as follows.

1.8.1 Typology

According to the classification of the Chinese linguists, Zhuang language is grouped together with Thai, Dai and Buyi languages as a main group under the heading of the Tai language under the Kam-Tai linguistic stock. In China, the term Dong-Tai or Zhuang-Dong are more frequently used if compared to the term Kam-Tai, which is better known to linguists outside China.[6]

A high percentage of cognates present in both the Zhuang and Thai language in terms of basic vocabulary has irrefutably pointed toward a kind of genetic relationship between the two languages. F.K. Li divided the Tai dialects into three groups, in which the northern Zhuang dialects are classified as the Northern group, southern Zhuang dialects such as Tho and Nung are classified into the Central group whereas the Siamese (the Standard Thai language) is classified into the Southwestern group. It still depends upon future studies to decide how close the are the languages of Siamese and southern Zhuang can be really related.

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[6]see Fang-Kuei Li (1965) "The Tai and the Kam-Sui languages", published in Lingua 14:148-79.

1.8.2 Romanized Alphabets

The Zhuang language includes many dialects and variations, as is apparent with its wide division of community groups that spread over a vast territory totaling vlose to 230,000 square kilometers (as compared to 514,000 sq.km with Thailand). In 1958, the Chinese Government decided to promote a modified version of the Wu-Ming dialect as a standardized dialect for all the Zhuang people. A standardized set of romanized alphabet has also been worked out by a Minority Language Committee, designed to be used as a common writing system for the Zhuang people.

This policy is not actually very practical, due to the fact that the Zhuang language can be basically categorized into two groups -- the Northern group and the Southern group. The main criterion of the dichotomy resides in the absence or presence of aspiration in the class of voiceless stops. Thus, the Southern dialect needs a chain of supplementary alphabets to fit its bigger body of linguistic unit.

The Debao dialect has been concluded to be one of the important Southern Zhuang dialects, upon which very few independent studies have been made. The only romanized alphabet that is used to transcribe the speech of the dia-

lect begin with the publication of the Debao lexicon in 1992.

The original wordlist is written in the adapted Standard Zhuang Romanized Alphabets. But during my field trip in 1991, I revealed the selected entries on a 60-minute tape. The data used in this paper are transcribed accordingly in the International Phonetic Symbols based upon my phonological analysis.

Owing to the limited types of fonts in my word processor, there will be some strange IPA fonts appearing in this thesis. In Appendix II a comparative list of the default fonts, the romanized alphabets and the IPA symbols is presented for easier understanding and reference.

1.8.3 The Phonological System of the Debao dialect.

In this section, a detailed analysis of the Debao dialect's phonological system will be introduced. Starting with the syllable structure, the consonant and vowel inventories and the tones follow.

1.8.3.1 Syllable Structure

The syllable structure of the Debao dialect is

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very much similar to that of Siamese language. It is a tonal language and the word units are monosyllablically based. The tones will be considered as a suprasegmental property of the syllabic structure. The segmentation will be described as:

$$C_1\ (C_2)\ V_1\ (V_2)\ (C_3)^{T}$$

C_1 is the initial consonant.

C_2 is the second element of a consonant cluster, which carries the main features of palataliztion and labialization.

C_3 represents finals which are either nasals or obstruents, with a unreleased stop thus forming two main types of syllables, the obstruent ending syllables and the sonorant ending syllables.

V_1 (or simply V)is the vowel. Vowel length is distinctive and : is used to mark a long vowel. V_2 is the second element of the diphthong. The vowel can be either monophthongs (such as V, or V:), or dipthongs (such as VV or V:V).

^{T} represents the phonological value of lexical tones in the Debao dialect.

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1.8.3.2 Consonants

There are altogether 21 phonemes that can occur in the paradigmatic slot of the initial consonant. They are listed in Table 1:

Place of Articulation	Manner of Articulation							
		nasals	plosives			fricatives		approximants
			vl.		vd.	vl.	vd.	
			asp.					
			+	-				
	bilabial	m	ph	p	b			
	labio-dental					f		
	apical	n	th	t	d	s	ɬ	l
	palato-alv.					ʃ		
	palatal			ts				j
	velar	ŋ	kh	k				
	labio-velar							w
	glottal			?		h		

Table 1.1 The Consonant Phonemes in the Debao Dialect.

Note: There is a contrast involving palatal approximants and fricatives. The fricative [v ~ ʋ][7] only occurs as the initial consonant, whereas the approximant [w] only occurs as the second segment of the consonant cluster .

Based on the rule of pattern congruity, we can consider the two phonetic segments as one phoneme /w/ in the Debao phonological system.

The same case applies to [j], an initial voiced palatal fricative, and [j] when occuring as a palatal approximant at the second element of a consonant cluster. The two phonetic units are represented by a single phoneme /j/.

(a) Initials

There are 21 phonemes that can fill in the slot of Initial Consonants. Word examples are:

/p/	pa	52	to paste
/ph/	phak	55	pod
/b/	bo:m	325	puddle
/t/	tam	52	to pound

[7] In Peter Ladefoged's "Preliminaries to Linguistic Phonetics" p.60, he cites an example of such contrasts in the Margi language. He suggests the use of the diacritic mark ^ to indicate a closer (and hence fricative) version of the preceding sound.

/th/	tha:	31	eye
/d/	deŋ	52	red
/k/	ka:	52	a crow
/kh/	kha:	52	leg
/ts/	tsau	325	host
/m/	ma:	52	dog
/n/	na:	52	thick
/ŋ/	ŋe:	55	twig
/f/	fai	31	fire
/s/	sa:	31	grilled
/w/	wo:m	213	to surround
/ʃ/	ʃa:	31	tea
/j/	jou	33	lacquer
/h/	ha:	325	five
/ɬ/	ɬa:	33	epidemic
/l/	lai	31	a sting
/ʔ/	ʔa:	325	to open wide

(b) Clusters

In the Debao dialect, the second segments are restricted to /w/ and /j/, the approximants that reflect palatalization and labialization on the phonetic level.

\ C2 C1\	w	j
p	-	+
ph	-	+
k	+	+
kh	+	+
m	-	+
n	-	+
ŋ	+	-
?	+	+

Table 1.2 The combination of the consonant clusters in the Debao Dialect with /j/ and /w/ as the second segment of the cluster unit.

Word examples:

pjo:	52	boiling
phja:i	325	to go
kwe:n	33	a small loop
kjo:n	52	lock up

khwei	52	to ride upon
khjai	52	fever
mja:	31	mushy
nja:	325	grass
ŋwa:t	33	to brandish
?wek	33	to vomit
?ja:	31	herbs

(c) Finals

There are only two groups of consonant finals, the nasals -m, -n, and -ŋ and the stops -p -t and -k. Syllables thus formed with the unreleased finals can also be termed checked syllables.

Word examples:

ka:m	31	fence
ka:n	31	soap
kaŋ	325	talk
kap	55	narrow
bo:t	33	blind
tak	33	male animal

1.8.3.3 Vowels

The vowels can be divided into segmental analysis

which include the monophthongs and the diphthongs.

(a) Monophthongs

There are six vowels in the Debao dialect. Vowel length is distinctive in the dialect and should be included in the vowel inventory, hence the vowel phonemes will amount to 11, with no contrast of length in /e/.

Short Vowels				Long Vowels		
i	ɯ	u		i:	ɯ:	u:
		o		e:		o:
	a				a:	

Table 1.3 The 11 vowel phonemes in the Debao dialect.

Note:

1) There are no vowel length contrasts in the open-syllables.

2) /e:/ occurs with both closed and opened syllables and has no contrast of length. Phonetically speaking, it is uniquely long in most cases, especially in the system of the tallied syllables, when it is paired with /a:/. Otherwise, /e/ would have been used in the conventional way

to denote this phoneme.

3) The short vowel /ɯ/ is actually pronounced a centralized [ə] in a closed syllable such as pət 55 .

Word examples of monophthongs:

/a/	kat	55	chilling, cold
/a:/	ka:t	55	a kind of vegetable
/e:/	?e:	325	to make love
/i/	?in	33	seal, chop
/i:/	?i:n	33	a Chinese shuttlecock
/o/	lom	52	broke financially
/o:/	lo:m	52	loose, not tight
/u/	thuŋ	33	to hold back, to sink
/u:/	thu:ŋ	33	to get through
/ɯ/	thɯŋ	31	arrived at
/ɯ:/	thɯ:ŋ	31	sugar

(b) Diphthongs

There are only monophthongs and diphthongs in the Debao dialect.

Word examples of diphthongs are:

/ai/	tsai	52	plough
/a:i/	kha:i	31	to sell
/au/	tsau	325	host

/a:u/	sa:u	213	a wooden post
/aɯ/	kaɯ	33	swollen
/eɯ/	seɯ	213	to buy
/ei/	khei	325	feces
/eu/	kheu	31	stink
/iu/	thiu	31	picky
/oi/	khoi	325	I
/ou/	khjou	31	ear
/ui/	kui	325	banana

Note: there are no contrastiveness of vowel length in the diphthongs of /ou/, /oi/, /eu/ and /ui/.

1.8.3.4 Tones

There are six lexical tones in the open-syllables and syllables with nasal finals in Debao dialect: rising-falling, low-falling, high-rising, low-rising, high and mid tones. The phonetic values in numbers are only notational symbols to invoke the association of the pitch ranges in different tones. The tone sticks (tone letters) are based on the convention of Professor Chao Yuan-Ren, a system to represent the contour of normalized tone curves with simple symbols.

No.	Tone Types	sticks	values
1	high - falling	˥˩	52
2	low- falling	˨˩	31
3	high - rising	˥˧	325
4	low - rising	˨˩˦	213
5	high	˥	55
6	mid	˧	33

Table 1.4 The six tones of Debao dialect. The numbers of the tones are casually labelled.

(i) All six tones occur in open syllables.

Examples :

dau	52	knife
dau	31	peach
dau	325	to weld a mold
dau	213	anyway
dau	55	to return
dau	33	taoist

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(ii) The two tones in closed syllables.

There are only two tones in the checked syllables of the Debao dialect. They can be considered as allotones of the high and mid tones i.e. /55/ and /33/ due to complementary distribution.

Examples showing the contrastive vowel length in closed syllables with their corresponding high or low pitch types are:

kap	55	narrow
kat	55	to bite
kak	55	mad at
ka:p	55	combine
ka:t	55	tapioca
ka:k	55	a horn
tap	33	to fold up
tat	33	protruding
tak	33	male animal
ta:p	33	mat
ta:t	33	a patch
ta:k	33	land leech

Note: /55/ is consistently pronounced at a fixed pitch type which is perceptually definable. /33/ on the contrary tends

to be floating between the mid and below mid interval due to the influence of vowel length. The variation in the phonetic values can be considered allophonic.

(i) Contour and Level Tones

The tone shapes of the six lexical tones in the Debao dialect are represented in the following chart:

Tone	1	2	3	4	5	6
	52	31	325	213	55	33

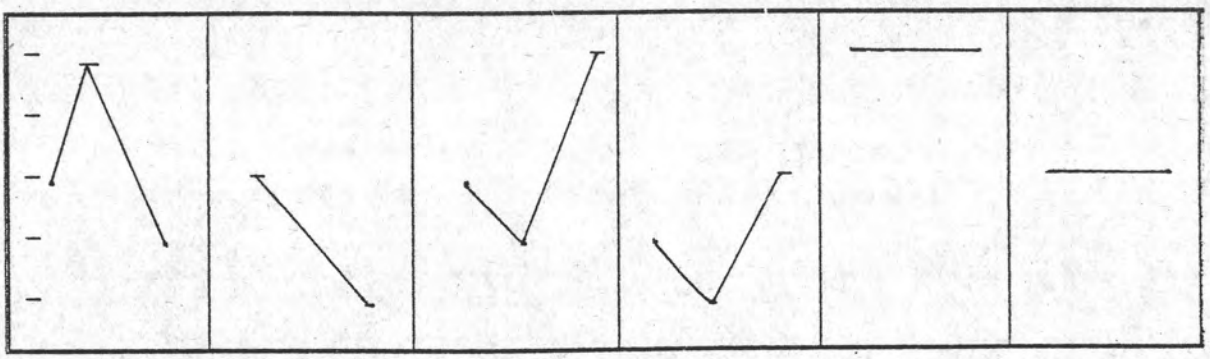

Table 1.5 The six tones of the Debao dialect, manifested by the stylized tone shapes to verify the tone shape categories and pitch types.

By looking at the tone shapes[8] of the six tones in the Debao dialect, the tones can be divided into two categories of tones shapes, the contour tones and the level tones. The contour tone category consists of 4 tones { 52, 31, 325, 213 }, while the level tone category consists of { 55, 33 }.

(ii) The Pitch Types

The five marking points on the vertical of the scale corresponds to the five degree scales of Chao Yuan-Ren. Basically, No. 1, 3 , 5 can be seen to be of a higher pitch type and No. 2, 4, 6 of a lower pitch type. These pitch types also correspond to the phonological fact that the high pitch type represents a high pitch tone and the low pitch type represents a low pitch tone.

The tone shape categories and the pitch types are extremely significant in understanding the patterns of

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[8]The normalized curves of all six tones of the Debao dialect (Yen Dong location), plus the three different pitches of the checked syllables, are listed in Tables 4 of an article titled "The Zhuang People of Debao" by T. Luangthongkum T. and P. Kullavanijaya (1986:16).

forming the tallied syllables. Because in the tallied syllables, the pitch type of the headword and the tone shape category of the tallied syllable will react to each other in the process of tonal configuration (cf.section 3.3.3).