

Payap University
Thesis Proposal Form
Curriculum: Master of Arts in Linguistics
Department: Linguistics
Faculty: International College
Academic Year: 2559

1. CANDIDATE

Name in Thai:

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2. THESIS TITLE:

(Thai) การเปรียบเทียบระบบเสียงของวิธภาษาละว้าตะวันออกที่พูดในอำเภอฮอด จังหวัดเชียงใหม่

(English) A Phonological Comparison of Eastern Lawa Varieties in Hot District, Chiang Mai Province, Thailand

3. BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE TO THE THESIS TOPIC:

Eastern Lawa is a member of the Waic subgroup of the Palaungic language group, which is itself a branch of the Mon-Khmer language family (Lewis et al., 2016). It and Western Lawa are the only members of the Lawa group within Waic. Apart from Western Lawa, it is most closely related to the Wa and Blang languages (Lewis et al., 2016).

Eastern Lawa is a language with about 7,000 speakers (Lewis et al., 2016). It is located in northern Thailand, within Chiang Mai Province (Blok, 2013).

Much of the literature speaks of Lawa as a single unit, but more recent literature has begun to acknowledge the divide between Eastern and Western Lawa. These two languages

are not mutually intelligible (Nahhas, 2006). Studies have found that Eastern and Western Lawa speakers can only understand one another if one of them has lived in a village where the other variety is spoken, or has some familiarity with that variety already (Nahhas, 2006).

To date, three phonologies of Eastern Lawa have been written, by Mitani (1978), Lipsius (n.d.), and Blok (2013). However, there has been little to no mention, much less phonological description, of the different varieties within Eastern Lawa. Blok mentions two major varieties, which he labels Bo Luang and Bo Sangae respectively. Lipsius likewise identifies two varieties, and gives a list of the villages which speak the first variety and those which speak the second. But neither Blok nor Lipsius makes mention of the ways in which the two varieties differ.

According to Munn (forthcoming), Eastern Lawa has historically had a phonemic register contrast, but now does no longer. However, remnants of this proto-register contrast can still be seen in some areas. For example, vowels which are followed by a glottal stop tend to be creaky. Munn (forthcoming) also discusses an interesting pitch contrast between nouns and verbs or adjectives. In isolation, nouns are always pronounced with a flat or falling pitch, while verbs or adjectives are always pronounced with a rising or high pitch. She gives many examples of minimal pairs of verbs and nouns distinguished in isolation by pitch alone. This study will help to explore whether these features are found in all Eastern Lawa varieties, or whether they are limited to the Bo Luang variety which Munn described.

4. OBJECTIVES OF THE THESIS RESEARCH:

This paper will provide a phonological comparison of Eastern Lawa varieties found in thirteen different villages in northern Thailand. The objectives are (a) to confirm, as Lipsius (n.d.) suggests, that these varieties have similar phoneme and lexeme inventories, and (b) to ascertain in what ways they actually differ.

5. SCOPE OF THE THESIS RESEARCH

The research will be based on data from Eastern Lawa varieties collected in thirteen different Eastern Lawa villages. The comparison will focus on phonological and lexical features, since they are to be expected (Blok 2013). The goal of this research is to identify how many Eastern Lawa varieties exist, and in which ways they differ.

6. HYPOTHESIS OF THE RESEARCH

In relation to the objectives outlined in #4, the following tentative hypotheses are proposed:

Based on Lipsius (n.d.), it is hypothesized that all varieties under investigation have similar phoneme and lexeme inventories. Based on Lipsius (n.d.), it is hypothesized that there are two main dialects of Eastern Lawa. Based on Blok (2013), it is hypothesized that these dialects differ on both the phonological and lexical level.

7. LIMITS OF THE RESEARCH

This comparison is based on a 436-item wordlist. This should be sufficient to identify phonological and lexical differences. Since Mitani (1978), Lipsius (n.d.), and Blok (2013) have already written phonologies of Eastern Lawa, this paper will only focus on the differences between different varieties. It is not intended to be a full phonology of Eastern Lawa.

8. DEFINITIONS OF TECHNICAL TERMS

In this paper, the term “Lawa” will be used to refer to the branch of the Waic linguistic group which includes both Western Lawa and Eastern Lawa. “Western Lawa” will refer to all those Lawa varieties spoken in Mae Hong Son Province, which are mutually intelligible with one another but not mutually intelligible with any Eastern Lawa variety. “Eastern Lawa” will refer to all Lawa varieties spoken in Chiang Mai Province, which are not mutually intelligible with any Western Lawa variety.

9. CONTRIBUTIONS OR BENEFITS OF THE RESEARCH

A detailed comparison of the various Eastern Lawa varieties will contribute to language development and orthography development. It will aid in developing an orthography that encompasses all varieties of Eastern Lawa and can be used easily by all speakers.

10. LITERATURE REVIEW

Eastern Lawa is a member of the Waic subgroup of the Palaungic language group, which is itself a branch of the Mon-Khmer language family (Lewis et al., 2016). It and Western Lawa are the only members of the Lawa group within Waic. Apart from Western Lawa, it is most closely related to the Wa and Blang languages (Lewis et al., 2016), perhaps most closely to Vo Wa (Nahhas, 2006).

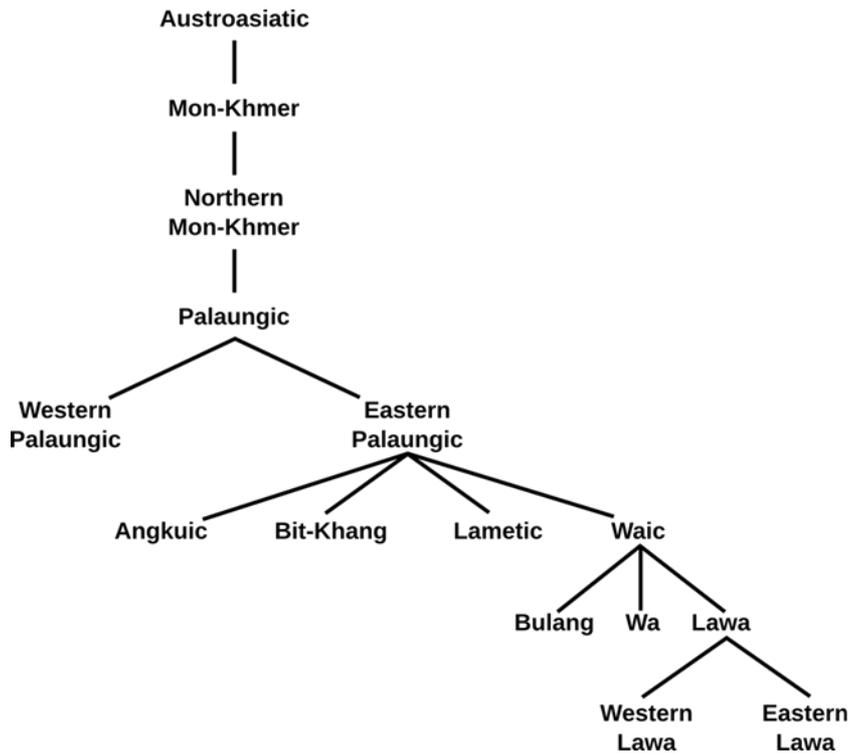


Figure 1: Classification of Eastern Lawa (Lewis et al., 2016)

To date, three phonological studies of Eastern Lawa have been written. The first, by Mitani, was a comparison of Eastern Lawa with three Western Lawa varieties, done in 1978. Mitani (1978) considered Lawa to be one language, and called Eastern Lawa “Bo Luang dialect” to distinguish it from the Western Lawa varieties. (His data from Bo Luang was not compared to any other Eastern Lawa variety.) Mitani notes that the Western Lawa varieties have much more in common with each other than with the “Bo Luang dialect”.

Sometime in the 1980s, Lipsius (n.d.) wrote an unpublished description of Eastern Lawa. Lipsius (n.d) writes that within Eastern Lawa “slight differences in dialect are present which, however, cause no communication problem”. He goes on to suggest that each modern Eastern Lawa village was founded by settlers from three “original” Eastern Lawa villages. These original villages are Ban Bo Luang, Ban Bo Phawaen and Ban Bo Sangae. Ban Bo Phawaen and Ban Bo Luang share a linguistic variety, but speakers from Ban Bo Sangae speak differently. Thus, all modern villages whose original settlers were from Ban Bo Sangae speak the Bo Sangae variety today, while those which were founded by settlers from Ban Bo Luang or Ban Bo Phawaen speak the Bo Luang variety. Lipsius lists all modern Eastern Lawa villages, and labels each one as originating from Ban Bo Luang, Ban Bo Phawaen, or Ban Bo Sangae. He points out that the Bo Luang variety is far more common, and suggests that it “be chosen as the written standard”. Lipsius concludes, “No research has been done on the differences (between the two varieties)”. He then gives a phonological analysis of the Bo Luang variety.

The third phonological study appears in a grammatical description of Eastern Lawa (Blok 2013). Blok identifies two distinct dialects, and labels them Bo Luang and Bo Sangae respectively. Blok concurs with Lipsius that the Bo Luang variety is the more widely spoken, and that these dialect differences “do not present any difficulty in comprehension between speakers of these dialects due to their close interaction” (Blok 2013, p. 5). However, it is not clear from either Blok or Lipsius whether the ease of communication is due to phonological and lexical similarity, or merely based on extensive language contact.

Blok (2013) cites both pronunciation and lexeme differences between the two varieties, and gives a short list of five items which are pronounced differently. It is not clear whether the differences between these two items represent systematic differences in the phonologies or not. “Moon” is [k^heʔ] in Bo Luang but [k^heʔ] in Bo Sangae; does this mean that all instances of [e] in Bo Sangae will be [e] in Bo Luang, and if not, what determines the alternation?

Like Lipsius (n.d.), Blok (2013) gives a list of Eastern Lawa villages and notes which villages speak which variety. His findings agree with Lipsius exactly.

Mitani, Lipsius, and Blok’s findings on the phonology of Bo Luang are for the most part similar. At first glance their findings appear very different from each other, and Mitani’s especially egregious, but on closer inspection many of these differences are due to different transcription choices and differing opinions as to whether sequences such as [kh, mb, hn], etc., should be considered consonant clusters or should be considered single phonemes. When all aspirated stops, preglottalized or prenasalized segments, and voiceless nasals and liquids are considered to be single phonemes, there is a great deal more agreement among Mitani, Lipsius and Blok as to what sounds are found in Eastern Lawa. The chart below compares the consonant phonemes of all three authors, including these “consonant clusters” which the authors themselves may not have included as single phonemes. (Only consonant clusters which could be interpreted as single segments are included in the chart below; clusters of a stop and a liquid such as [pl, kr], etc. are still excluded.)

	Labial			Alveolar			Palatal			Velar			Glottal		
Stop	p	p	p	t	t	t	č	c	c	k	k	k	ʔ	ʔ	ʔ
	ph	p ^h	p ^h	th	t ^h	t ^h		c ^h	c ^h	kh	k ^h	k ^h			
	ʔb	b	ʔb	ʔd	d	ʔd	ñj								
	mb	^m b	^m b	nd	ⁿ d	ⁿ d				ŋg	^ŋ g	^ŋ g			
Fricative	f	f	f	s	s	s							h	h	h
		v													

	Labial			Alveolar			Palatal			Velar			Glottal		
Nasal	m	m	m	n	n	n	ñ	ñ	ɲ	ŋ	ŋ	ŋ			
	hm	hm	ᵐ	hn	hn	ᵑ	hñ			hŋ	hŋ	ᵑ̃			
	ʔm	ᵐ	ʔᵐ	ʔn	ᵑ	ʔᵑ				ʔŋ	ᵑ̃	ʔᵑ̃			
Rhotic				r	r	r									
					hr										
Approx- imant	w		w	l	l	l	y	y	j						
	hw, wh			hl	hl	ᵐ									
							yh								
	wʔ						ʔy	ᵑ̃	ʔj						
						yʔ									
								ñj							

Key: Blue – Mitani, Green – Lipsius, Black - Blok

Figure 2: Consonant chart comparing the findings of Mitani, Lipsius, and Blok, including “consonant clusters”

Mitani is the only one to include a prenasalized palatal stop /ñj/ and a voiceless palatal nasal /hñ/ in his data. Mitani also included /hw/ in his list of consonant clusters, but noted that this was phonetically realized as [f]. Mitani interpreted [f] as /hw/, but found no instances of phonetic [hw] or any voiceless [w̥] occurring syllable-initially. He does, however, find it to occur syllable-finally as [wh], and [yh] also occurs syllable-finally. So Mitani suggests syllable-final voiceless approximants may occur in Eastern Lawa, but he is the only one to do so. Mitani also shows syllable-final [wʔ] and [yʔ], which could be interpreted as postglottalized approximants. All three phonologies show syllable-initial preglottalized [ʔy], but none show a syllable-initial preglottalized *[ʔw] and Mitani is the only one to show postglottalized approximants syllable-finally. Lipsius is unique in showing instances of [hr] in his data; Mitani and Blok show no voiceless [ɾ̥] or [hr] sequences.

Blok and Lipsius have identical inventories of ten monophthongs, and Mitani is almost identical; he lacks only /ɒ/. (In the words where Blok and Lipsius transcribed /ɒ/, Mitani transcribed /ə/.)

	Front			Mid			Back		
	Unrounded						Rounded		
Close	i	i	i	i	i	i	u	u	u
Mid-close	e	e	e	ə	ə	ə	o	o	o
Mid-open	ɛ	ɛ	ɛ				ɔ	ɔ	ɔ
Open	a	a	a				ɒ	ɒ	

Key: Blue – Mitani, Green – Lipsius, Black – Blok

Figure 3: Chart of phonemic monophthongs comparing the findings of Mitani, Lipsius, and Blok

Blok is the only one who interpreted his vowel sequences as phonemic diphthongs and triphthongs. Lipsius and Mitani simply interpreted them as vowel sequences, not single segments. And neither Mitani nor Lipsius showed any sequences of three vowels together. The chart below shows Blok’s phonemic diphthongs and triphthongs, together with Mitani’s and Lipsius’s vowel sequences. Many of these are suspect, particularly the triphthongs, occurring only in suspicious environments or hardly appearing in the data.

Diphthongs									Triphthongs
		iu					ui	ui	iau
iə	iə	iə/	iə			uə		uə/	uai
	ia	ia		ia	ia		ua	ua	
		ei		əi	əi		oi	oi/ɔi	
eə						oə			
							oa		
	æi			ai	ai		ɔi		
ɛi	æi			au	au				
	æu		ai	ai	ai		ɒu	ɒu	

Key: Blue – Mitani, Green – Lipsius, Black - Blok

Figure 4: Chart of diphthongs, triphthongs, and vowel sequences comparing the findings of Mitani, Lipsius, and Blok

11. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

I will collect data from thirteen different Eastern Lawa villages. In each village, I will use a 436-item wordlist, and will collect data from three to four speakers. If possible, I will collect data from two male and two female speakers in each village. When the data has been collected, I will transcribe the data using Speech Analyzer. I will analyze and compare the data and look for differences between different villages using Fieldworks and Phonology Assistant. The phonetic and phonological transcription of Munn's (forthcoming) in-depth analysis of the Bo Luang variety will serve as a starting point for further comparison.

12. PLAN FOR RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

½ month: Preparing wordlist and identifying speakers

1 ½ months: data collection

½ month: data processing

2 months: writing research article

1 ½ month: analysis

1 ½ month: thesis writing

13. LOCATION OF THESIS RESEARCH:

I will be collecting data from the following villages:

1. Ban Wang Kong, บ้านวังทอง, T. Bo Luang, A. Hot, Chiang Mai Province
2. Ban Khun, บ้านขุน, T. Bo Luang, A. Hot, Chiang Mai Province
3. Ban Naa Fon, บ้านนาฟอน, T. Bo Luang, A. Hot, Chiang Mai Province
4. Ban Kiu Lom, บ้านคิ้วลม, T. Bo Luang, A. Hot, Chiang Mai Province
5. Ban Mae Sanaam, บ้านแม่สะนาม, T. Bo Luang, A. Hot, Chiang Mai Province
6. Ban Bo Sangae, บ้านบ่อสะแง้, T. Bo Luang, A. Hot, Chiang Mai Province
7. Ban Bo Phawaen, บ้านบ่อพะวาน, T. Bo Luang, A. Hot, Chiang Mai Province
8. Ban Bo Luang, บ้านบ่อหลวง, T. Bo Luang, A. Hot, Chiang Mai Province
9. Ban Sam Lang, บ้านสามหลัง, T. Bo Luang, A. Hot, Chiang Mai Province
10. Ban Bo Sali, บ้านบ่อสลี, T. Bo Sali, A. Hot, Chiang Mai Province
11. Ban Kong Loi, บ้านกองลอย, T. Bo Sali, A. Hot, Chiang Mai Province
12. Ban Thung (Luang), บ้านทุ่ง, T. Bo Sali, A. Hot, Chiang Mai Province
13. Ban Thung Son, บ้านทุ่งสน, T. Bo Sali, A. Hot, Chiang Mai Province

I will be collecting data from speakers who are from each of these villages, but depending on what is most convenient for the speakers, I may be actually meeting them and collecting data from them elsewhere. For example, some speakers who grew up in Ban Naa Fon frequently visit Ban Bo Luang, so it remains to be seen whether I will actually visit each of these villages in the course of my data collection.

14. LENGTH OF TIME FOR RESEARCH ACTIVITIES:

Sept: Prepare for data collection and identify speakers, begin data collection

Oct: Continue data collection

Nov: Begin data processing, begin writing research article

Dec: Continue writing research article

January: Finish writing research article, submit research article for publication

February: Await feedback from publisher, begin analysis of collected data

March: Continue analysis, begin thesis writing

April: Continue thesis writing, revise research article after getting feedback from publisher

May: Thesis defense

15. REFERENCES:

Blok, Gregory Robert. 2013. A descriptive grammar of Eastern Lawa. Chiang Mai: Payap University M.A. thesis.

http://ic.payap.ac.th/graduate/linguistics/theses/Greg_Blok_Thesis.pdf.

Although focused on grammar, Blok gives a good description of Eastern Lawa phonology in chapter 2.

Diffloth, Gérard. 1977. "Mon-Khmer Initial Palatals and "substratumized" Austro-Thai." *The Mon-Khmer Studies Journal*, 6: 39-57.

Diffloth explores the historical roots of initial consonants in different Mon-Khmer languages, using Lawa (among others) as an example, based on Mitani's writings on Lawa phonology.

Diffloth, Gérard. 1980. The Wa Languages. *Linguistics of the Tibeto-Burman Area* 5. 1–182.

<http://sealang.net/sala/archives/pdf8/diffloth1979wa.pdf>.

Diffloth uses six basic sources, Western Lawa among them, to reconstruct the phonology of Proto-Waic. He describes the history of register and tone in the Waic family and the modern correlates of proto-register in Lawa.

Huffman, Franklin E. 1976. The Register Problem in Fifteen Mon-Khmer Languages.

Austroasiatic Studies Part 1, ed. by Philip N. Jenner, Laurence C. Thompson, and Stanley Starosta, 575–589. Oceanic Linguistics Special Publication No. 13. Honolulu:

The University Press of Hawaii.

<http://sealang.net/sala/archives/pdf8/huffman1976register.pdf>.

Huffman describes the history of register in Mon-Khmer languages and identifies different languages at different stages in the process of registrogenesis and register loss. He identifies Lawa as a pre-register language.

Komonkitisun, Jiranan. 1985. Some General Characteristics of Lawa Grammar (La-Up Dialect). Bangkok, Thailand: Mahidol University Master's thesis.

Komonkitisun gives a five-page overview of the phonology of La-Up Lawa before continuing with a detailed grammatical analysis.

Lipsius, Friedhard. n.d. *Lawa Baluang dialect: phonological write-up*. Manuscript. Chiang Mai, New Tribes Mission.

Lipsius gives a phonology of Eastern Lawa, as well as a short discussion of varieties within Eastern Lawa and a list of villages in which each variety is spoken.

Mitani, Yasuyuki. 1978. Phonological studies of Lawa: description and comparison. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University PhD. Thesis.

Mitani gives a phonological description of one Eastern Lawa variety and three Western Lawa varieties, spending the most time on the Eastern Lawa variety. He then compares the four varieties and uses them to reconstruct Proto-Lawa.

Nahhas, Ramzi. 2007. *Sociolinguistic Survey of Lawa in Thailand*. Chiang Mai: Payap

University. <http://li.payap.ac.th/images/stories/survey/Sociolinguistic%20Survey%20of%20Lawa%20in%20Thailand.pdf>.

Nahhas shows that Western Lawa is not mutually intelligible with Eastern Lawa. He compares several Western Lawa varieties, but shows that the divides among them are dwarfed by the divide between East and West. Nahhas' work is detailed and informative, giving a thorough overview of the sociolinguistic situations of both Western and Eastern Lawa.

Peiros, Iliá., ed. 1997. *A Lawa dictionary*. Translated by Suriya Ratanakul and Vinya Sysamouth. Bangkok: Institute of Language and Culture for Rural Development, Mahidol University.

This dictionary is based on Ratanakul's work with Ban Pa Pae Lawa, a Western Lawa variety, and includes more than 2,000 items with many example sentences.

Purnell, Herbert C. 1972. "Toward Contrastive Analysis Between Thai and Hill Tribe Languages: Some Phonetic Data." In *A Conference on Tai Phonetics and Phonology*, ed. Jimmy G. Harris and Richard B. Noss. 113-130. Mahidol University.

Purnell gives a short phonology of Western Lawa, giving a consonant, vowel, and diphthong inventory, inventory of final consonants, and a few short notes on phonotactics.

Ratanakul, Suriya; and Lakhana Dao Ratanahongse. 1985. The phonology of Lawa. (Ed.) Ratanakul, Suriya, David Thomas, and Suwilai Premsrirat. *South East Asian Studies presented to A.G. Haudricourt*. 264–309.

<http://sealang.net/sala/archives/pdf8/suriya1985phonology.pdf>.

Ratanakul gives a phonological description of Ban Pa Pae Lawa, a Western Lawa variety, and includes a short Western Lawa lexicon.

Phanintra Teeranon. 2007. "The Intrinsic Pitch and Intrinsic Length of High and Low Vowels in Mon-Khmer Language." *The Mon-Khmer Studies Journal*, 37: 41-52.

Teeranon uses data from Umphai Lawa (a Western Lawa variety), Wa, and Plang to show that high vowels intrinsically have a higher pitch than low vowels do. This remained true regardless of the gender or age of the speakers. However, Teeranon did not find that high vowels were consistently longer regardless of language or speaker; different languages and different age groups showed different patterns.

Watkins, Justin. 2002. *The phonetics of Wa: experimental phonetics, phonology, orthography, and sociolinguistics*. Canberra: Australian National University.

Watkins give a thorough phonetic and phonological description of Wa, one of the most closely related languages to Eastern Lawa.

16. THESIS ADVISOR:

APPENDIX: OUTLINE OF THE THESIS

[ON A SEPARATE PAGE—ONLY ONE PAGE IN LENGTH. Include a one-page outline of the thesis to facilitate discussion at your proposal defense.]