The Study of Personal Pronouns of Dai Le and Thai Languages from Social Culture Perspective

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Abstract: The Dai Le and Thai languages are closely related, and both of Dai Le and Thai languages belong to the Zhuang-Tai branch of the Zhuang-Dong group of Tai-Kadai Language Family (Diller & Edmondson & Luo, 2008:7). Throughout their long historical development, both Dai Le language and Thai language have formed their own complete systems of personal pronouns. Due to their genetic relationship, the personal pronouns of Dai Le and Thai languages have a lot of similarities, including: showing respect for seniority, sharing meanings for some personal pronouns, can use name, position title or kinship terms for addressing others instead personal pronouns, and having dedicated personal pronouns for monks. On the other hand, these pronoun systems also have some differences. For instance, gender is distinguished in the Thai personal pronoun system, but this distinction is not made in the Dai Le language. Furthermore, the Thai language has dedicated personal pronouns for royal, but the Dai Le language lacks these pronouns. The factors that influence the use of personal pronouns in Dai Le and Thai languages are as follows: social hierarchy, interpersonal relationships, religious belief, and political system. Speakers must pay careful attention to the use of personal pronouns depending on situational and social hierarchical contexts.

Keywords: Dai Le language, Thai language, personal pronouns, social culture

1. Introduction
The Dai Le language is mainly spoken by the Dai people who reside in Xishuangbanna Dai Autonomous Prefecture, Yunnan province, China (Zhou & Luo, 2001:10). The Thai language, on the other hand, is the official language of The Kingdom of Thailand, spoken by the Thai people (Ni, 2010:214). The Dai Le language and Thai languages are closely related. Both of the two languages belong to the Zhuang-Tai branch of the Zhuang-Dong

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group of Tai-Kadai Language Family (Diller & Edmondson & Luo, 2008:7).

In their long historical development, both the Dai Le language and Thai language formed their own complete systems of personal pronouns. Due to the genetic relationship, the personal pronouns of Dai Le language and Thai language have lots of similarities. Of course, they also have many differences. This paper uses the methods of comparative analysis to describe the personal pronouns between Dai Le and Thai languages. First, this paper will analyze the similarities of personal pronouns between Dai Le and Thai languages. Second, this paper will analyze the differences of personal pronouns between Dai Le and Thai languages. Discussion concludes through exploration of the factors that affect the usage of personal pronouns in both the Dai Le and Thai languages.

The purpose of this paper is to compare the similarities and differences of the personal pronouns in the Dai Le and Thai languages, as well as highlight the social and cultural factors which reflect these similarities and differences. Through this study, we hope to provide a new perspective for the study of language and culture of the Dai Le and Thai languages and their speakers.

2. The similarities and differences of personal pronouns between Dai Le and Thai languages

2.1 Similarities

The Dai ethnicity in Xishuangbanna and Thai ethnicity in Thailand are homologous (Huang, 1992a:2). Accordingly, they have many similarities in the usage of personal pronouns. Details are as follows:

2.1.1 Respect for seniority

The use of personal pronouns mainly reflects people’s hierarchical relationships and generational relationships, and from the use of personal pronouns we can understand different social relations and statuses between people (Luo, 1989). Thailand is a state of ceremonies and has a very strict hierarchy in society, and the use of personal pronouns in Thai language fully reflects this hierarchy (Sodsongkrit, 2005:27). In brief, people of different seniority or social status must refer to one another with different personal pronouns. The Dai people in Xishuangbanna also have a strong concept of seniority rules, and different personal pronouns should be used between elders and juniors, superiors and subordinates. People should choose different personal pronouns in order to accord to the status of the people with whom they are communicating (Zhou & Luo, 2001:164). Therefore, the primary common feature of Thai and Dai Le languages is the reflection of different social classes and social status between people.
The Study of Personal Pronouns of Dai Le and Thai Languages from Social Culture Perspective

Table 1. Thai Personal Pronouns, Which Are Used According to Seniority

| Relationship                  | Person   | Personal pronouns                                                                 |
|-------------------------------|----------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Younger/subordinate to elder/superiors | First    | kra21pʰəm25, di21čən25, nu25, kʰa51pʰəa55caw51, kʰa51caw51, tua:33ʔe:ŋ33       |
|                                | Second   | čʰə:n51, kʰun51, su25čʰə:n51                                                    |
|                                | Third    | tʰə:n51                                                                       |
| Elder/superior to younger/subordinate | First    | raw33 kʰa:51, ku:33, ʔu:ə55                                                   |
|                                | Second   | čʰə:33, raw33, kr:33, ʔe:ŋ33, caw51nu25, muːn33, lə:n21, luː55               |
|                                | Third    | man33, caw51, kr:33                                                           |
| Between same generation/same level | First    | ʔu:ə55, kʰa:51, ʔu:ə55, ʔən33, kʰaw55                                       |
|                                | Second   | čʰə:33, muːn33, kr:33, ʔən33, tua:33ʔe:ŋ33, luː55, caw51, ʔe:ŋ33, muːn33    |
|                                | Third    | man33, kʰaw25, čʰə:33, ʔən33, lə:n21                                         |

Table 2. Dai Le Personal Pronouns, Which Are Used According to Seniority

| Relationship                  | Person   | Personal pronouns                                                                 |
|-------------------------------|----------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Younger/subordinate to elder/superior | First    | to55xa13, pʰu13xa13, tu55xa13, xɔ13, tu55xa13, to55xaw55                        |
|                                | Second   | to55caw13, caw13man51, su55caw13                                               |
|                                | Third    | ta:n33, to55ta:n33, xau55caw13, ta:n51caw13                                    |
| Elder/superior to younger/subordinate | First    | ku51, ku55, kaw55, caw13man51, ku51la51ca11                                   |
|                                | Second   | muːn51                                                                         |
|                                | Third    | man51                                                                          |
| Between same generation/same level | First    | ha51, ha51haw51, tu55, kan55, sew55                                             |
|                                | Second   | su55, hiːn51, hiːn51su55, hiːn51caw13, kan55, sew55                           |
|                                | Third    | xaw55, xaw55taːn33, kan55, sew55                                               |

2.1.1.1 Younger (or junior) speakers to elders

In the Thai language, the first person pronouns “/kra21pʰəm25/, /di21čən25/, /nu25/, /kʰa51pʰəa55caw51/, /kʰa51caw51/” are used by younger (or junior) speakers to elder (or superior) speakers. When the younger (or junior) speak to elder (or superior), they will use these personal pronouns to express their own humility and to express their respects for the listener. The first person pronouns “/kʰa51pʰəa55caw51/, /kʰa51caw51/” are more formal than the others. They are often used in formal occasions, or are used to speak to highly respected people, and are used in the written language. The second person pronouns “/kʰun53/, /kʰa:n51/” are the most commonly used pronouns by the younger (or junior) speakers to address elder (or superior) speakers. The pronoun /kʰun53/ can be used in front of some nouns in order to express respect, examples are as follows:

kʰun53  pʰu53čʰə:j55  (‘Dear host’)  
———  host(or male)
Compared with /k\text{un}^{33}/, the second person pronoun /t\text{a}:n^{51}/ is more formal. When people speak to monks or to a person who has a very high status, they will use /t\text{a}:n^{51}/ to express their specific respects. Furthermore, when people make public speeches in a meeting, they also will use /t\text{a}:n^{51}/ and will often use the phrase /t\text{a}:n^{51}t\text{a}n^{55}l\text{a}:j^{25}/ (‘Gentlemen and ladies’. t\text{a}n^{55}l\text{a}:j^{25} (‘everybody’)). The second person pronoun /su^{25}t\text{a}:n^{51}/ is also a more formal word that expresses specific relationships of respect.

When the word /t\text{a}:n^{51}/ is used as the third personal pronoun, it also expresses a specific relationship of respect. When people talk about another person who has a higher status and it is inconvenient or not suitable to call his (or her) name directly, they will use /t\text{a}:n^{51}/ to refer to that person to express the specific distinction of respect toward that person.

In the Dai Le language, the first person pronouns “/t\text{o}^{55}x\text{a}^{13}/, /p\text{h}\text{u}^{13}x\text{a}^{13}/, /t\text{u}^{55}x\text{a}^{13}/” are often used by the younger (or junior) to elder (or superior) in order to express respect. These pronouns are also used by same generation (or same level) in order to express modesty. Among these first personal pronouns, the original meaning of the word /x\text{a}^{13}/ is "slave". When the serfdom society ended, the word /x\text{a}^{13}/ became a first person pronoun that expresses humility. The word /x\text{a}^{13}/ is a variant of /x\text{a}^{13}/ and its original meaning is “the lowest slave” (Luo, 1989). In the ancient society of the Dai people, the slaves were divided into the native slaves and foreign slaves. The native slaves are the Dai people, and the foreign slaves are the people from other nations. Most of these slaves were prisoners of war and had the lowest status. Thus, the Dai people changed the sound of /x\text{a}^{13}/ into /x\text{a}^{13}/ to refer to the foreign slaves, in order to distinguish the foreign slaves from native slaves (Luo, 1989). The first person pronoun /x\text{a}^{13}/ is often used by the younger (or junior) to elder (or superior) in order to denote the self-contempt.

The second person pronouns “/t\text{o}^{55}c\text{a}^{13}/, /c\text{a}^{13}m\text{a}^{51}/, /s\text{u}^{55}c\text{a}^{13}/” and the third person pronouns “/x\text{a}^{55}c\text{a}^{13}/, /t\text{a}^{n^{33}}c\text{a}^{13}/” have a shared morpheme /c\text{a}^{13}/. The original meaning of /c\text{a}^{13}/ is “lord, master, official, headman”, and in the period of the Dai feudal lords society, the appellation of feudal lords, nobles and officials were entitled with /c\text{a}^{13}/ in order to express respect (Luo, 1989), examples are as follows:

\begin{itemize}
  \item \text{caw}^{13} \text{xa}^{53}\text{str}^{55} (‘Dear king’)
  \item \text{caw}^{13} \text{phn}^{33}\text{dim}^{55} (‘Dear area lords (the largest feudal lord)’)
\end{itemize}
The Study of Personal Pronouns of Dai Le and Thai Languages from Social Culture Perspective

—— area

caw¹³  tseŋ³⁹ha⁵¹  (‘Dear chief administrative officer’)

—— chief administrative

caw¹³  man⁵¹  (‘Dear local chieftain’)

—— local

caw¹³  naŋ⁵¹  (‘Dear Mrs., or Miss (used with Aristocratic women)’)

—— female

Originally, the personal pronouns with the morpheme /caw¹³/ were used by the servant to the host or common people to the officials and nobles, in order to indicate the different social classes. However, nowadays, the status of people is equal in Dai society. When people use these personal pronouns, they only indicate their respect for others.

The use of third personal pronouns “/ta:n³³/, /to⁵⁵ta:n³³/, /ta:n³³caw¹³/” expresses the speaker’s respect for the listener. The word /ta:n³³/ expresses common respects, the word /to⁵⁵ta:n³³/ expresses an intermediate degree of respect, and the word /ta:n³³caw¹³/ expresses the highest degree of respect.

2.1.1.2 Elders to younger (or junior) speakers

In the Thai language, the personal pronouns that the elder (or superior) uses to younger (or junior) can be unceremonious. The first person pronouns that can be used by the elder (or superior) to younger (or junior) are “/raw³³/, /kʰa:⁵¹/, /ku:³³/, /u:a⁵⁵/”. Pronoun /raw³³/ is a more popular word, and it is often used in spoken language. Pronouns /kʰa:⁵¹/ and /ku:³³/ are seen as less elegant words and can only be used by elder (or superior) speakers to younger (or junior) speakers. Furthermore, younger (or junior) speakers cannot use it toward elders (or superiors).

The second person pronouns that can be used by the elder (or superior) speakers to younger (or junior) speakers are “/tʰa:³³/, /caw⁵¹/, /nu²⁵/, /raw³³/, /kɛ:³³/, /ʔɛŋ³³/, /mɯŋ³³/, /lɔ:n²¹/, /lɯ⁵⁵/”. When elders (or superiors) use “/tʰa:³³/, /caw⁵¹/, /nu²⁵/” to younger (or junior) speakers, it expresses the elder’s (or superior’s) love and intimacy for younger (or junior). In most cases, /raw³³/ will be used as the first personal pronoun and it is only used as second person pronoun when it is used by the elder (or superior) to younger (or junior). “/kɛ:³³/, /ʔɛŋ³³/, /mɯŋ³³/, /lɯ⁵⁵/” are not very elegant pronouns. Typically, elder (or superior) speakers use these words to younger (or junior) speakers in order to either show his (her) higher status, or express intimacy. Originally, /lɔ:n²¹/ is a third female personal pronoun. However, when elder (or superior) speakers speak to younger (or junior) females, /lɔ:n²¹/ can be used as second female personal pronoun by the elder (or superior) speakers.

The third personal pronouns that can be used by the elder (or superior) speakers to younger (or junior) speakers are “/man³³/, /caw³¹/, /kɛ:³³/”. Originally, the word /man³³/ is used to refer to animal or inanimate objects, but when it is used as third person pronoun, it
is insulting. However, nowadays, the word /man\textsuperscript{33}/ gradually became a normal third personal pronoun that is used by elders to younger (or junior) speakers, and the insulting meaning slowly disappeared (Sodsongkrit, 2005:86-91). As a noun, the word /caw\textsuperscript{51}/ means “king, prince, governor, marshal, gods, etc.”. However, when it is used as a third personal pronoun, it only can be used by elders to younger (or junior) speakers. Finally, the word /ke:\textsuperscript{33}/ is a common and popular pronoun that is used by elders to younger (or junior) speakers.

In the Dai Le language, the personal pronouns that can be used by the elder (or superior) to younger (or junior) often have a meaning of arrogance or disdain. The first person pronouns /ku\textsuperscript{55}/ and /kaw\textsuperscript{55}/ for instance, carry a meaning of arrogance and disdain. They only can be used by elders. If younger (or junior) speakers use these words to an elder (or superior) speaker, their behavior will be regarded as impolite. The morpheme /caw\textsuperscript{13}/ as in the pronoun /caw\textsuperscript{13}man\textsuperscript{51}/, has the meaning of “master, or official”. Furthermore, the morpheme /man\textsuperscript{51}/ has the meaning of “he, she, or it” and can refer to human, animal, or inanimate things. When this pronoun is used to refer to humans, it is an impolite manner to the referred people. Originally, the word /caw\textsuperscript{13}man\textsuperscript{51}/ means “someone’s or something’s master”, when it is used as a personal pronoun, it expresses contempt for referred people. When the word /ku\textsuperscript{51}/ is used as a personal pronoun, it is used by elders to younger (or junior) speakers in order to show modesty. The first personal pronoun /ku\textsuperscript{51}la\textsuperscript{51}ca\textsuperscript{11}/ is often used by elders to juniors in order to express modesty.

The second person pronoun /mɯŋ\textsuperscript{51}/ and the third person pronoun /man\textsuperscript{51}/ are not very elegant pronouns. They are often used by elders to younger (or junior) speakers, in order to either show his or her higher status, or to express intimacy.

2.1.1.3 Between same generation (or same level)

In the Thai language, when people talk with someone in same generation (or at same level), they are very casual in the use of personal pronouns. They often use the personal pronouns that are not elegant in order to express intimacy. The personal pronouns that are used by elders to younger speakers (or junior) also can be used between people in same generation (or at same level), such as “/ku:\textsuperscript{33}/, /kha:\textsuperscript{51}/, /ku:a\textsuperscript{55}/, /ku:s\textsuperscript{33}/, /mɯŋ\textsuperscript{33}/, /ke:\textsuperscript{33}/, /man\textsuperscript{33}/, /khaw\textsuperscript{25}/”, etc.

In the Dai Le language, the usage of personal pronouns between members of the same generation (or same level) is similar to the usage in the Thai language. When speaking with people of same generation (or same level), they are very casual in the use of personal pronouns. The first person pronouns “/ha\textsuperscript{51}/, /haw\textsuperscript{51}/, /haw\textsuperscript{51}ha\textsuperscript{51}/, /tu\textsuperscript{55}/, /kan\textsuperscript{55}/, /sew\textsuperscript{35}/” can be used between people of same generation (or same level), in order to express intimacy. The words /ha\textsuperscript{51}/ and /tu\textsuperscript{55}/ are often used between husband and wife, between people of similar ages, or between close friends. The word /haw\textsuperscript{51}/ means “we”. It is a very
casual and cordial first person pronoun. On the other hand, the word /haw₅¹ha₅¹/ means “two of us”, and it only can be used between friends of similar ages. In a different context, the word /kan₅⁵/ can be used as either a first person, a second person, or a third person pronoun. The word /sew₃⁵/ is mainly used between friends of similar ages, and in a different context, it also can be used as either a first person, a second person, or a third person pronoun. The word /su₅⁵/ is a common second person pronoun. The second person pronouns /hiŋ₅¹/ and /hiŋ₅¹su₅⁵/ are used between friends of similar ages in order to show intimacy and friendship. However, the second person pronoun /hiŋ₅¹caw₁³/ will be used between friends of similar ages in order to show courtesy and respect. The third personal pronouns /xaw₅⁵/ and /xaw₅⁵ta:n₃³/ are commonly used, reflecting casual and informal relationships.

From the above analysis, it can be seen that the strict restrictions of using personal pronouns between elder (or superior) and younger (or junior) speakers in Thai and Dai Le languages is mainly restricted younger (or junior) speakers. When speaking to elders, younger people must use polite and elegant personal pronouns, and cannot use the personal pronouns that have arrogant meanings. However, when elders (or superiors) speak to younger (or junior) speakers, they can use any personal pronouns, either elegant or arrogant. In addition, when talking with people of same generation (or same level), people can use personal pronouns freely regardless of elegance.

2.1.2 One Personal Pronoun has several meanings

Some of the personal pronouns in the Thai and Dai Le languages have more than one meaning. In different contexts, the same word can be used as different personal pronouns. The personal pronouns of Thai and Dai Le languages that have several meanings are as follows:

| Table 3. Polysemous Personal Pronouns in the Thai Language |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|
| Pronouns | First person | Second person | Third person |
| raw₃³ | ✓ | ✓ |  |
| k₃⁵raw²⁵ | ✓ |  | ✓ |
| t⁴:a:n⁵¹ |  | ✓ | ✓ |
| t⁴⁰:₃³ |  | ✓ | ✓ |
| nu²⁵ | ✓ |  |  |
| caw⁵¹ |  | ✓ | ✓ |
| p⁹ra₅⁵?oŋ₃³ |  | ✓ | ✓ |
Table 4. Polysemous Personal Pronouns in the Dai Le language

| Pronouns  | First person | Second person | Third person |
|-----------|--------------|---------------|--------------|
| ta:n³³    | √            | √             | √            |
| kan⁵⁵     | √            | √             | √            |
| sew³⁵     | √            | √             | √            |
| caw¹³man⁵¹ | √            | √             |              |

It can be seen from the tables above that there are many polysemous personal pronouns in Thai and Dai Le languages, and that they can be used as different personal pronouns in different contexts. For instance, while the Thai personal pronoun /kʰaw²⁵/ is usually used as a third person pronoun, however, in some contexts it can also be used as first or second person pronoun. The word /tʰa:n⁵¹/ is a second personal pronoun which is used by the younger (or junior) speakers to elders, however, in some contexts, it can be used as third person pronoun. In the Dai Le language, /ta:n³³/ is a respected and polite personal pronoun. In most cases, it is used as a third personal pronoun but sometimes it can be also used as a second personal pronoun. The word /caw¹³man⁵¹/ can be used as the first or second personal pronoun. When it is used as the first personal pronoun, it expresses an impolite attitude towards the listener; however, when it is used as the second personal pronoun it expresses a polite attitude towards the listener. So, in both the Thai and Dai Le languages when we decide whether a personal pronoun belongs to a first person, or a second person, or a third person, we have to look at the context in which it appears.

2.1.3 Using name, position titles or kinship terms instead of personal pronoun

In daily life, Thai and Dai Le people try to avoid the use of personal pronouns. Instead, they often use names, position titles or kinship terms to refer to themselves and others. In conversation, people use names instead of using personal pronouns is most common (Tong & Dao, 1958). Using names instead of using personal pronouns is most common. For instance, when people talk with someone of same generation (or same level), they often use their own name instead of the first person pronoun. At the same time, the listener also can use the speaker’s name in place of the second person pronoun. When the speaker is an elder or superior, they often choose to use position titles or kinship terms to refer to themselves. For example, when parents speak to their children they often choose to use “mother” or “father” to refer to themselves and when teachers speak to their students, they often choose to use the position title “teacher” to refer to themselves. The usage of names, position titles or kinship terms in place of personal pronouns in both the Thai and Dai Le languages have a clear reference and expresses a close relationship between the speakers.

2.1.4 Use of a monk’s dedicated personal pronoun

In Thailand, there are more than 90% people believe in Hinayana Buddhism (Qin & You,
2004:168), and the Thai Constitution stipulates that the king shall be a Buddhist. Furthermore, the Thai flag consists of three colors: white, red and blue, of which white represents the religion (Hinayana Buddhism) of Thailand (Huang, 1992b). This reflects that Hinayana Buddhism has a high social status in Thailand. Accordingly, there are many religious taboos in Thai social life, and interrelated language taboos are prevalent. In Thailand when ordinary people speak to Buddhist monks, they must use honorifics. In Xishuangbanna, Dai people also believe in Hinayana Buddhism, Hinayana Buddhism infiltrates all aspects of Dai people's lives, such as festivals, etiquette, language, etc. (Zhang & Wang, 2002:4-5). In Xishuangbanna, Buddhist monks have a very high social status. They are the most respected people in society. Whether in Thailand or in Xishuangbanna people must pay attention to courtesy when speaking to Buddhist monks, and must use the monk’s dedicated personal pronouns.

In Thailand, when the monks speak to others, they will use the personal pronouns /təː maː/ and /pʰap/ to refer to themselves, and will use the personal pronoun /joː/ to refer to the listeners (Sodsongkrit, 2005:79). In Xishuangbanna on the other hand, when monks speak to others, they will use the personal pronoun /xaw/ to refer to themselves and will use the personal pronoun /ke/ to refer to the listeners.

When people speak to monks in both in Thailand and Xishuangbanna, people must use the monk’s dedicated personal pronouns. In the Thai language, the personal pronouns that are used by people to address monks include /tʰaːn/, /caw kʰun/, /phra kʰun/, /phra kʰun tʰaːn/, /phra kʰun phra kʰun/. All of these personal pronouns express respect for monks. Given the strict hierarchical system dictated by Hinayana Buddhism in Xishuangbanna, Buddhist monks are divided into seven levels from low to high: /pʰa/, /tu/, /xu b/, /sa m/, /saŋ xə l/, /son h/, and /pʰa caw h/ (Zhang, 1986:149-152). When people speak to monks, they will use the position titles to refer to the monks if the position is known. On the other hand, if they do not know the positions of the monks, they will use the word /sin tham/ or /tu l/ to refer to the monks who are more than 20 years old and will use the word /pʰa/ or /caw kʰa/ or /sam mə n/ to refer to the monks who are less than 20 years old.

2.2 Differences

2.2.1 Gender

Gender distinction is an important feature of Thai personal pronouns. On the other hand, the personal pronouns of the Dai Le language do not have this feature. In the Thai language, personal pronouns distinguish gender. The first person pronouns have a strict distinction between genders, however, the second and third personal pronouns do not have a strict distinction between genders. The Thai personal pronouns distinguished by gender are as follows:
Table 5. Thai Personal Pronouns Distinguished by Gender

| Person | Gender | Prouns |
|--------|--------|--------|
| First  | Male   | kra21, phom25, phom25, ku33, kan33 |
|        | Female | di21, chan25, chan25, nu25 |
| Second | Male   | tha:n51, khun33, su25, tha:n51, thә:33, raw33, ke33, eŋ33, caw51, nu25, mɯŋ33, lɯ55 |
|        | Female | lɔ:n21 |
| Third  | Male   | klaw23, man33, caw33, kr33, thә:n51, thә:n33, ι33 |
|        | Female | lɔ:n21, naŋ33 |

As can be seen in the table above, the first person pronouns have a strict distinction between genders, speakers use different personal pronouns according to their gender. However, the gender distinction is not strict for the second and third person pronouns, the personal pronouns used for males can also be used for females, but there are special personal pronouns exclusively for females.

2.2.2 Royal Personal Pronouns

Thailand is a constitutional monarchy with the king as head of state. The royal family holds a high level of respect in Thai society as well as a very important role in Thai political life (Wei, 2014). There is a strict hierarchy inside the royal family – king, queen, prince, princess, etc. (from high to low) (Wang, 2013:31-32). The Thai language has a large number of dedicated personal pronouns used in the royal family, and their usage must strictly follow this principle of hierarchy, and must not be confused. However, in Dai Le language, there are no royal personal pronouns.

The personal pronouns that are dedicated to the royal family in the Thai language are as follows:

/taj51fa21la55ʔŋ33ϕra21ba:t21/ (for the king (the second personal pronoun))
/taj51fa21la55ʔŋ33ϕra21ba:t21/ (for the queen, crown prince and so on)
/taj51fa21ϕra21ba:t21/ (for the royal family)
/taj51ba21aw35/ (used to respected ones)
/taj31ba21aw35ku23ra21na:33/ (used for high-ranking officials)
/khun33ϕra21ϕ-rai33/ (used men of the royal family, expressing respects)
/khun33na:33/ (used for the wife of Mom Luang, Phra Chaya and Khun)
/khun33ϕ-rai33/ (used for Mom Luang and Phra Chaya, expressing respects)
/khun33ϕ-rai33/ (used for Mom Luang, expressing respects)
/pϕra21ϕra21aw35ta:33/ (used to refer to the prince’s teacher)
/pϕra21ϕra21aw35xua25/ (king, often used as the third personal pronoun)
The Study of Personal Pronouns of Dai Le and Thai Languages from Social Culture Perspective

3. The factors that influence the usage of personal pronouns in Dai Le and Thai languages

The usage of personal pronouns in Thai and Dai Le languages is not arbitrary. Through comparative analysis of the personal pronouns of the Thai and Dai Le languages, we can summarize some basic factors that affect the use of personal pronouns in Thai and Dai Le languages include social hierarchy, interpersonal relationships, religious beliefs, and the political system.

3.1 Social hierarchy

Social hierarchy is the most important factor influencing the use of personal pronouns in both the Thai and Dai Le languages.

Thai society has distinct hierarchies including three classes (i.e. upper-class, middle-class, and lower-class) (Cao, 1988; Kong, 2010). The upper-class includes the king, monks, the royal family members, and the state leaders. The middle-class includes intellectuals, businessmen, and officials. The lower class includes farmers, workers, waiters, and others. In the usage of personal pronouns, the royal family will use the royal dedicated personal pronouns, monks will use monk’s dedicated personal pronouns, and the people will use different personal pronouns when they speak to others who have different social statuses. On one hand, when the people of middle and lower classes speak to the people of upper-classes they should use humble and polite personal pronouns. However, when the
people of upper and middle classes speak to the people of lower-classes, they can use personal pronouns arbitrarily. On the other hand, amongst people in the same class or family, the younger (or junior) speakers should use the humble and polite personal pronouns to talk with elders while the elder speakers can use personal pronouns freely when they talk to younger (or junior) speakers.

Dai society in Xishuangbanna also has distinct hierarchies (Zhang, 1982). With regard to the usage of personal pronouns, monks use their own dedicated personal pronouns and when people speak with each other, the younger (or junior) speakers should use the humble and polite personal pronouns to talk to the elder speakers while the elder (or superior) speakers can use personal pronouns freely when they talk to younger (or junior) speakers.

As can be seen from the above analysis, both in the Thai and Dai Le languages, the use of personal pronouns is greatly affected by the social hierarchy.

3.2 Interpersonal relationships

In both the Thai and Dai Le languages, interpersonal relationships directly affect the choice of personal pronouns. For instance, when the speaker and listener are husband and wife, or close friends, they can use personal pronouns arbitrarily. Sometimes, they may use some impolite personal pronouns, or they may use nicknames instead of personal pronouns. However, when younger (or junior) speakers speak to elder (or superior) speakers, they should use polite and respectful personal pronouns. On the other hand, when elders (or superiors) speak to younger (or junior) speakers, they can use personal pronouns freely. Furthermore, when the speaker and listener are strangers they usually choose to use polite and respectful personal pronouns.

3.3 Religious belief

Both Thai and Dai Le people believe Hinayana Buddhism. Buddhism was introduced to Thailand as early as the 7th century AD. In the Sukhothai period (about 13th century AD), the king Ram khamhaeng invited eminent monks to Thailand from Ceylon. From then on, Hinayana Buddhism gradually replaced Mahayana Buddhism and Hinduism in Thailand (Canbancea, 2008:144-145). Since then all of the kings of Thailand respect Hinayana Buddhism and became devout Buddhists (Kusalasaya, 1983:6). Afterwards, monks held a high social status in Thailand and the Thai language created personal pronouns dedicated to monks.

The exact time of the Hinayana Buddhism introduced into Dai area in Xishuangbanna is inconclusive. At the end of the 12th century, the first leader of kingdom Jinglong called himself the supreme Buddha and made all of the Dai people become Hinayana Buddhists, (Zhang & Wang, 2002:20-24). As the society developed, Hinayana Buddhism came to hold a very high status in the Dai area and the Dai Le language created personal pronouns dedicated to monks.
Hinayana Buddhism has had an important influence on both the Thai and Dai societies. Monks have a very high social status and are well respected in society. When people speak to monks they must use the monk’s dedicated personal pronouns. The emergence of personal pronouns dedicated to monks is not accidental. It is the result of the influence of Hinayana Buddhism on both the Thai and Dai Le languages.

3.4 Political system

Strongly influenced by politics, the Thai language has dedicated personal pronouns for royalty, which is opposed with personal pronouns used by common people. The Dai Le language still retains the personal pronouns that were only used for feudal lords in the previous days. Thailand is a constitutional monarchy. The king has a supreme position and the royal family members are also highly respected by the people. The royal dedicated personal pronouns play a significant role to emphasize the special status of king and royal family members.

In the past, the Xishuangbanna Dai area had a feudal lord system in which the feudal lords had the highest status in society, and the common people needed to use special personal pronouns to speak with feudal lords. After the establishment of the People's Republic of China, the difference between the status of serfs and serf owners has disappeared. However, the special personal pronouns that were used by common people to address feudal lords still exist, and have become the personal pronouns that are used by younger (or junior) speakers to elders (or superiors), in order to express respect; and these personal pronouns include: /to55caw13/, /su55caw13/, /xaw55caw13/, /ta:n55caw13/, /to55xa13/, /pu13xa13/, /tu55xa13/, /xɔj13/, and /tu55 xɔj13/.

4. Conclusion

Personal pronouns are the most basic vocabulary used in people's daily life. Through comparative analysis we can know that both Dai Le language and Thai language have formed their own complete systems of personal pronouns throughout history. Due to their genetic relationship, the uses of personal pronouns of in the Dai Le and Thai languages share a lot of similarities. The personal pronouns in both the Dai Le and Thai languages demonstrate respect for seniority. They have several meanings which can be substituted with personal names, position titles, or kinship terms, and both of them have personal pronouns dedicated to monks. Of course, they also have some differences. For instance, Thai personal pronouns distinguish gender and include personal pronouns dedicated to royalty. These features are not found in the Dai Le language.

Through comparative analysis of the personal pronouns in Thai and Dai Le languages, we also can observe aspects about the social attributes of language. Language is a tool for people to communicate, the use of language as well as the development of language is
affected by various social factors. With the development of society, some vocabulary disappears, some new vocabulary is produced, and the meaning of some vocabulary changes. All of these phenomena can be observed in the development of personal pronouns in Thai and Dai Le languages.

Social hierarchy, interpersonal relationships, religious beliefs, and the political system affect the usage of personal pronouns in the Thai and Dai Le languages. People must pay careful attention to the decency of using personal pronouns when talking with different people from different social backgrounds as well as in different situations.

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