Studii de lingvistică 2, 2012, 45 - 58

Bouyei word formation

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Abstract: The Bouyei language is divided into three vernaculars, the southern vernacular, the central vernacular and the southwestern vernacular. This paper aims to describe the lexicology of the southern vernacular of the Bouyei language focusing on word formation process. Bouyei words are formed by affixing, compounding and reduplicating. First, the affixation consists of prefixing and suffixing. Infixing is not found in this language. Second, the compound is divided into the semantic and syntactic compound. Finally, the reduplication is divided into the simple and complex reduplication. The simple reduplication is normally used to emphasize the meaning of the root or to indicate plurality.

Key words: Bouyei grammar, Bouyei word formation, Bouyei word structure, Bouyei language, affixation

1. Introduction[2]

Bouyei is an ethnic minority group found mainly in the south, the southwest, and the central parts of Guizhou Province, P. R. China. Some Bouyei are also found in scattered communities throughout Yunnan and Sichuan. In addition, in northern Vietnam, few Bouyei people can be found with a population just short of 50,000. Nowadays, the population of Bouyei is more than 2.5 million. They have their own language which is classified in the northern branch of Tai language family. The closest related languages to Bouyei are the other Northern Tai languages, Northern Zhuang in neighboring Guangxi province, Saek in Thailand and Laos, and Yay in Vietnam. Ramsey (1941) states that Bouyei are not clearly distinguishable from the Northern Zhuang either linguistically or culturally because linguistic differences between Bouyei and Northern Zhuang are slight. Snyder (1995), following Li (1960), places the Bouyei language in the Northern Tai branch of Tai-Kadai as well as Edmondson and Solnit (1997), Thurgood (1988), and Ostapirat (2000). See figure 1:

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[2] This research was fully supported by the Royal Golden Jubilee Ph.D. Program Scholarship from the Thailand Research Fund.

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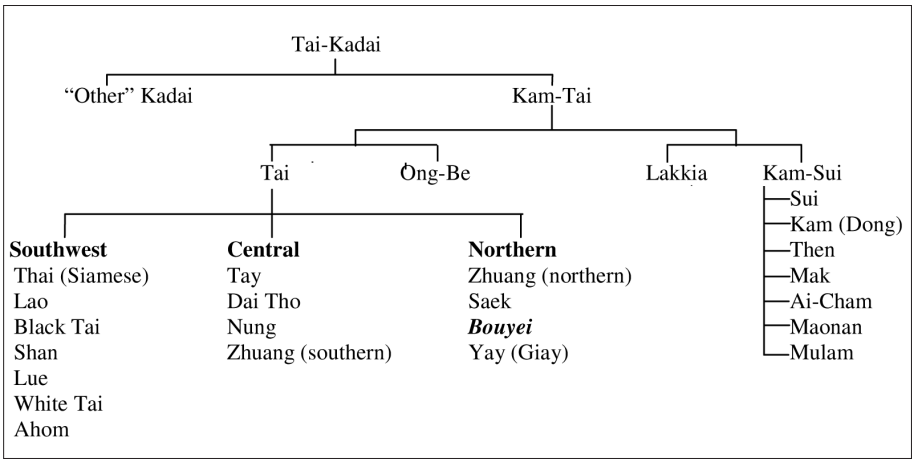


Figure 1: Relationship of Bouyei to other Tai languages
(adapted from Snyder 1995: 13)

The Bouyei language, according to Zhou *et al.* (2001), is divided into three vernaculars as follows:

1) Qiannan vernacular (southern part) is spoken in Wangmo, Anlong, Luodian, Zhenfeng, Xingyi, Cheheng, Dushan and Libo and some parts of Huishui, Changshun, Xingren, Ziyun, Guanling, Pingtang, Duyun and Zhenning;

2) Qianzhong vernacular (central part) is spoken in Guiyang, Guiding, Qingzhen, Longli, Pingba, Anshun, Zhijin and Qianxi and large parts of such counties as Huishui, Changshun, Duyun and a small part of Dushan County;

3) Qianxi vernacular (southwestern part) is spoken in Pu'an, Qinglong, Liuzhi, Puding, Shuicheng, and large parts of Zhenning and Guanling counties and small parts of Ziyun and Xingren counties.

The Wangmo lect of the first vernacular is considered to be the standard language because of a large percentage of speakers. The Bouyei speakers of other lects understand Wangmo, while the speakers of Wangmo lect do not understand the others. The geographical distribution of the vernaculars is shown in Figure 2.

Most of previous research on the Bouyei language relates to phonology and sociolinguistics, such as *Variation in Bouyei* (Snyder 1995), *Survey of the Guizhou Bouyei Language* (Wu *et al.* 2007), *Killing a Buffalo for the Ancestors: A Zhuang Cosmological Text from Southwest China* (Holm 2003), *Bouyei-Chinese-English-Thai Dictionary* (Zhou *et al.* 2001). The research focusing on the morphology of Bouyei is very scarce. Therefore, the researcher would like to fill a gap in the linguistic study of the Bouyei language

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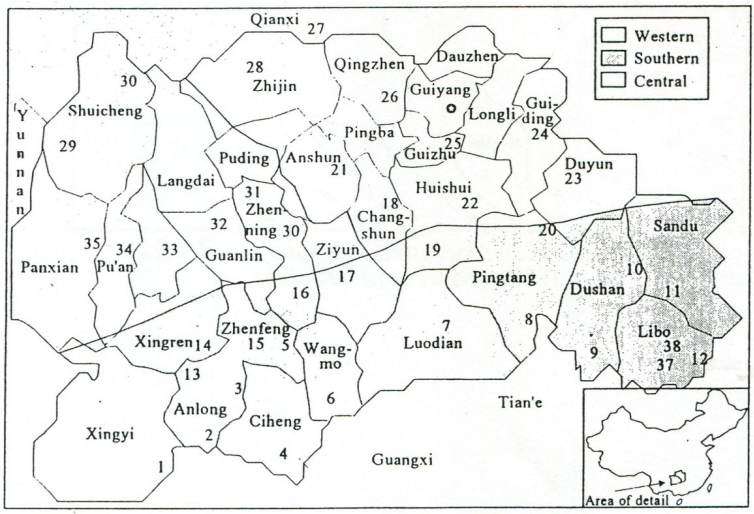


Figure 2: Bouyei areas
(Edmondson and Solnit 1997: 28)

by making a pioneering study of Bouyei word formation, using the structuralist approach.

2. Scope of the study and methodology

Since variation within the Bouyei language from area to area is minimal and vocabulary and grammatical structure are quite similar everywhere (Zhou *et al.* 2001), it is not necessary to collect data in every area where Bouyei people live. The researcher decided to analyze the data collected from Zhenfeng and Wangmo counties in Guizhou province, in both isolated sentences and sentences in context. The former was drawn from the *Bouyei-Chinese-English-Thai dictionary* (Zhou *et al.* 2001) and the latter was collected from the Bouyei speakers living in Guizhou province by Wang and Zhou (2005).

In addition, a list of 300 words adapted from the Southeast Asia word list of Mahidol University, revised in 1990, expressions used in daily life, and basic phrases and sentences in Bouyei were also elicited from my principal informant, Huang Zhenbang. He is a native Bouyei speaker and was an M. A. student at the Central University for Nationalities (CUN) in Beijing, P. R. China. The informant and the researcher, a Thai native speaker, primarily communicated in English. Sometimes the informant could not adequately convey his intended meaning in English, so alternative methods of communication included the use of an explanatory drawing or translation into Chinese, followed by a translation into English. All data were recorded into a computer program called FieldWorks Language Explorer (FLEx), version 5.0. The

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FLEx program proved to be very useful and convenient for arranging data and reducing the time required for arrangement.

3. Word formation process

Word formation is defined as "the whole process of morphological variation in the constitution of words" (Crystal 1991: 381). Bouyei words can be morphologically simplex or complex. A simplex word consists of one free morpheme which can stand as an independent word by itself. Some examples of simplex words are presented below:

Simplex Nouns

[mit^{33}]	'knife'
[kai^{35}]	'chicken'
[ʔdoŋ^{214}]	'forest'
[ʔoi^{31}]	'sugarcane'

Simplex Verbs

[zan^{214}]	'to see'
[siu^{214}]	'to harvest'
[xaɯ^{51}]	'to give'
[pai^{214}]	'to go'

Simplex Adjectives

[laːu^{31}]	'big'
[k^{w}aːi^{214}]	'clever'
[ʔdaːt^{35}]	'hot'
[saːŋ^{214}]	'tall'
[fon^{31}]	'black'

A complex word consists of at least two morphemes. The processes of complex word formation can be divided into three major types: affixation, compounding and reduplication.

3.1. Affixation

Affixation is a linguistic process that speakers use to form different words by adding bound morphemes (affixes) at the beginning (prefixation), the middle (infixation) or the end (suffixation) of words. In Bouyei, the numbers of affixes are limited. Some affixes are derived from words. Based on the position of affixes, affixation is divided into prefixing and suffixing. Infixing is not found in the formation of Bouyei words.

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3.1.1. Prefixation

A prefix is an affix which is added initially to a root or stem (Crystal 1991). There are a number of prefixes involved in the derivation of Bouyei words. They can be divided into modifying prefixes, noun-forming prefixes, adjective-forming prefixes and adverbial-forming prefixes.

1) Modifying prefixes

Modifying prefixes modify the meaning of the root. Some commonly-used prefixes are as follows:

[tuŋ^{31}-] 'mutual'

This prefix means 'mutual'. It indicates reciprocal action:

[tuŋ^{31}.t͡ɕai^{21}]	'to love each other'
[tuŋ^{31}.ti^{21}]	'to fight each other'
[tuŋ^{31}.puŋ^{21}]	'to meet together'
[tuŋ^{31}.tan^{214}]	'to curse each other'

[po^{21}-] 'pluralizer'

[po^{21}.tɕ^{214}]	'they'
[po^{21}.zau^{21}]	'we'
[po^{21}.su^{214}]	'you (pl.)'
[po^{21}.vɯn^{21}]	'people'

[pau^{35}-] 'elderly kinships'

[pau^{35}.pi^{31}]	'elder brother'
[pau^{35}.t͡ɕɕ^{35}]	'old people'
[pau^{35}.laːu^{31}]	'eldest brother'
[pau^{35}.ya^{33}]	'ancestor'

2) Noun-forming prefixes

A noun-forming prefix is placed before verbs to create nominal words. One commonly-used prefix is exemplified below:

[kaːi^{35}-] 'things'

[kaːi^{35}.kɯn^{214}]	'things to eat (food)'
[kaːi^{35}.tan^{51}]	'things to wear (clothes)'
[kaːi^{35}.seu^{35}]	'things to be embroidered (embroidery)'
[kaːi^{35}.yuŋ^{33}]	'things to be used (appliance)'

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3) Adjective-forming prefixes

Adjective-forming prefixes are added in front of verbs, adjectives or numerals to produce adjectival words. Some prefixes that are commonly used are as follows:

[ʔdi^{214}-] 'having a good characteristic'

[ʔdi^{214}.t͡ɕai^{21}]	'beautiful, lovely'
[ʔdi^{214}.nɐn^{33}]	'beautiful'
[ʔdi^{214}.mai^{21}]	'interesting'
[ʔdi^{214}.ɲia^{214}]	'pleasant to hear'

[ta^{21}-] 'ordinalizer'

[ta^{21}.ʔit^{35}]	'first'
[ta^{21}.ŋi^{33}]	'second'
[ta^{21}.saːm^{214}]	'third'
[ta^{21}.si^{35}]	'fourth'
[ta^{21}.ɕip^{33}]	'tenth'

4) Adverbial-forming prefixes

Adverbial-forming prefixes are placed in front of adjectives or adverbs to create adverbial words. Some prefixes that are commonly used are exemplified below:

[paːi^{33}**-] 'side'**

[paːi^{33}.soi^{31}]	'leftside'
[paːi^{33}.kua^{21}]	'rightside'
[paːi^{33}.la^{51}]	'below'
[paːi^{33}.zo^{33}]	'outside'

[t͡ɕaːŋ^{214}-] 'middle'

[t͡ɕaːŋ^{214}.xat^{35}]	'morning'
[t͡ɕaːŋ^{214}.xam^{33}]	'evening, night'
[t͡ɕaːŋ^{214}.xɯn^{21}]	'midnight'
[t͡ɕaːŋ^{214}.ŋon^{21}]	'daytime'

3.1.2. Suffixation

A suffix is "an affix which is added following a root or stem" (Crystal 1991: 336). The process of suffixation is limited in Bouyei language. One commonly-used suffix found in my data is [-laŋ^{214}] 'next'. It is used to indicate time, for example:

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[pi^{214}.laŋ^{214}]	‘next year’
[ŋon^{21}.laŋ^{214}]	‘next day’
[xat^{35}.laŋ^{214}]	‘next morning’

3.2. Compounding

Compounding is another morphological process for deriving nouns or verbs in Bouyei. A compound is defined as “a linguistic unit which is composed of elements that function independently in other circumstances” (Crystal 1991: 70). Word compounds consist of two or more free morphemes. These morphemes or constituents cannot be separated by any modifier. Bouyei word compounds can be divided into two major types: semantic compounds and syntactic compounds.

3.2.1. Semantic compounds

Semantic compounds consist of elements which are semantically related in various ways such as synonymy and antonymy (Burusphat and Qin 2010). They can be divided into two subtypes which include coordinative compounds and modifier compounds.

1) Coordinative compounds

A coordinative compound consists of two roots that are identical, interrelated, or opposite in meaning. Some examples are presented below:

Coordinative compounds having the same / similar meanings

[zi^{33}.na^{21}]	[zi^{33}]	[na^{21}]
‘field’	‘farmland’	‘paddy field’
[kaːŋ^{51}.xaːu^{35}]	[kaːŋ^{51}]	[xaːu^{35}]
‘to talk’	‘to speak’	‘to talk’
[ko^{214}.fai^{31}]	[ko^{214}]	[fai^{31}]
‘tree’	‘tree’	‘tree’
[nɐn^{33}.zan^{214}]	[nɐn^{33}]	[zan^{214}]
‘to look’	‘to look’	‘to see’

Coordinative compounds having interrelated meanings

[t͡ɕim^{214}.ŋan^{21}]	[t͡ɕim^{214}]	[ŋan^{21}]
‘property’	‘gold’	‘silver’
[ta^{33}.xaːi^{51}]	[ta^{33}]	[xaːi^{51}]
‘milky way’	‘river’	‘sea’
[mɐ^{33}.taːi^{35}]	[mɐ^{33}]	[taːi^{35}]
‘mother-in-law’	‘mother’	‘grandmother’
[taŋ^{214}.ŋon^{21}]	[taŋ^{214}]	[ŋon^{21}]

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'sun'	'light'	'daytime'
[tua^{21}.p^{y}a^{214}]	[tua^{21}]	[p^{y}a^{214}]
'fish'	'class term (animal)'	'fish'
[ma^{35}.ʔdai^{214}]	[ma^{35}]	[ʔdai^{214}]
'persimmon'	'class term (fruit)'	'persimmon'
[ʔdan^{214}.tom^{35}]	[ʔdan^{214}]	[tom^{35}]
'basket'	'class term (object)'	'basket'
[fa^{33}.mit^{33}]	[fa^{33}]	[mit^{33}]
'knife'	'class term (sharp weapon)'	'knife'

Coordinative compounds having opposite meanings

[po^{33}.mɛ^{33}]	[po^{33}]	[mɛ^{33}]
'parents'	'father'	'mother'
[k^{w}a:n^{214}.pa^{21}]	[k^{w}a:n^{214}]	[pa^{21}]
'spouse'	'husband'	'wife'
[pi^{31}.nuaŋ^{31}]	[pi^{31}]	[nuaŋ^{31}]
'sibling'	'elder brother'	'younger brother'
[ta:i^{214}.t͡ɕau^{214}]	[ta:i^{214}]	[t͡ɕau^{214}]
'life or death, fate'	'to die'	'living, alive'

It should be noted that, in the last four examples of coordinative compounds having interrelated meanings, the semantic relation in each pair of morphemes, such as [ma^{35}.ʔdai^{214}] 'persimmon' and [fa^{33}.mit^{33}] 'knife,' is a shape-object relation (Singnoy 2006: 66). Class terms occurring in the first position of compounds are considered as the shape of the object. Even though they seem like classifiers, class terms and classifiers are different. According to DeLancey (1986: 441), class terms and classifiers differ in the way that "class terms occur with their classified nouns in lexicalized compounds, while classifiers occur with their classified terms in nonce syntactic constructions". Therefore, class terms and classifiers can be identified with the following structures:

Noun compound:	Class term + Noun
Noun phrase:	Num + Classifier + Noun

In the following example :

[**tua^{21}**.moi^{214}	fon^{31}	tɯk^{33}	soŋ^{214}	**tua^{21}**	kuk^{35}	xap^{33}	ta:i^{214}	pai^{33}]
bear	black	to suffer	two	cls.	tiger	to bite	to die	already

'The black bear was bitten to death by two tigers.'

[tua^{21}] in [tua^{21}.moi^{214}] 'bear' is identified as a class term, while [tua^{21}] in [soŋ^{214} tua^{21} kuk^{35}] 'two tigers' is identified as a classifier. Their structures are as follows:

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[tua^{21}		moi^{214}]	'bear'	(Noun compound)
Class term		Noun		
[soŋ^{214}	tua^{21}	kuk^{35}]	'two tigers'	(Noun phrase)
Num.	cls.	Noun		

2) Modifier compounds

A modifier compound consists of two morphemes. The first morpheme functions as the head of the compound. Another morpheme functions as the modifier which specifies the head. Examples of modifier compounds are as follows:

Bouyei word	**Head**	**Modifier**
[ka^{214}.la:u^{31}]	[ka^{214}]	[la:u^{31}]
'thigh'	'leg'	'big'
[me^{33}.va:i^{21}]	[me^{33}]	[va:i^{21}]
'cow'	'mother'	'buffalo'
[xa:p^{33}.fai^{31}]	[xa:p^{33}]	[fai^{31}]
'coffin'	'box'	'tree'
[naŋ^{214}.fai^{31}]	[naŋ^{214}]	[fai^{31}]
'bark'	'skin'	'tree'
[zeu^{214}.la:u^{31}]	[zeu^{214}]	[la:u^{31}]
'to laugh'	'to laugh'	'big'
[zeu^{214}.ni^{35}]	[zeu^{214}]	[ni^{35}]
'to smile'	'to laugh'	'small'

3.2.2. Syntactic compounds

According to Burusphat and Qin (2012), a syntactic compound is distinguished from a semantic compound by having the same structure as a sentence. Syntactic compounds in Bouyei can be classified into two subtypes: subject-predicate compounds and verb-object compounds.

1) Subject-Predicate compounds

A subject-predicate compound consists of two roots that function respectively as subject and predicate. Some examples of subject-predicate compounds are presented below:

Bouyei word	**Subject**	**Predicate**
[mok^{33}.xom^{35}]	[mok^{33}]	[xom^{35}]
'blanket'	'blanket'	'to cover'
[sam^{214}.ɲa:p^{35}]	[sam^{214}]	[ɲa:p^{35}]
'angry'	'mind'	'trouble'

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[ʔdaːŋ^{214}.taːi^{214}]	[ʔdaːŋ^{214}]	[taːi^{214}]
‘dead body’	‘body’	‘to die’
[pu^{31}.ka^{31}]	[pu^{31}]	[ka^{31}]
‘businessman’	‘class term (people)’	‘to trade’
[tua^{21}.ʔbin^{214}]	[tua^{21}]	[ʔbin^{214}]
‘fly’	‘class term (animal)’	‘to fly’

2) Verb-Object compounds

A verb-object compound consists of two morphemes. The first morpheme is a verb which indicates an action. The other one functions as an object of the verb. Verb-object compounds are exemplified below:

Bouyei word	**Verb**	**Object**
[ɕaːu^{31}.zaːn^{21}]	[ɕaːu^{31}]	[zaːn^{21}]
‘to get married’	‘to begin’	‘house’
[ʔdam^{214}.na^{21}]	[ʔdam^{214}]	[na^{21}]
‘to transplant rice seedling’	‘to transplant’	‘paddy field’
[tok^{35}.t͡ɕa^{51}]	[tok^{35}]	[t͡ɕa^{51}]
‘to sow’	‘to scatter’	‘rice seedling’
[nɯ^{51}.ɕɯ^{214}]	[nɯ^{51}]	[ɕɯ^{214}]
‘to breathe in’	‘to suck’	‘air’
[ɕuaŋ^{35}.ɕɯ^{214}]	[ɕuaŋ^{35}]	[ɕɯ^{214}]
‘to breathe out’	‘to release’	‘air’

3.3. Reduplication

Reduplication is a morphological process of repetition of the root which is used to modify or emphasize the basic meaning of the root. Reduplication in Bouyei can be divided into simple reduplication and complex reduplication.

3.3.1. Simple reduplication

Simple reduplication emphasizes the meaning of the root or indicates plurality. Reduplicated words include nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs.

1) Emphasis

The reduplication of verbs, adjectives and adverbs usually emphasizes the meaning of the root. Some examples are:

[ʔaːŋ^{35}.ʔaːŋ^{35}]	‘very happy’
[ʔim^{35}.ʔim^{35}]	‘very full’

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[t͡ɕai^{214}.t͡ɕai^{214}]	‘very far’
[lok^{33}.lok^{33}]	‘dark green’
[na:i^{33}.na:i^{33}]	‘very slowly’
[sa:ŋ^{214}.sa:ŋ^{214}]	‘very high’
[ya:ŋ^{33}.ya:ŋ^{33}]	‘very happy’

Besides, the reduplicative compound of modifiers also heightens the degree of intensity of the quality expressed by the adjective root, for example:

Bouyei word	**Adjective root**	**Modifier**	**Reduplicant**
[ʔau^{31} zum^{33}.zum^{33}] ‘very wet’	[ʔau^{31}] ‘wet’	[zum^{33}]	[zum^{33}]
[xa:u^{214} po^{35}.po^{35}] ‘very white’	[xa:u^{214}] ‘white’	[po^{35}]	[po^{35}]
[la:u^{31} ʔu^{31}.ʔu^{31}] ‘very big’	[la:u^{31}] ‘big’	[ʔu^{31}]	[ʔu^{31}]

2) Plurality

The simple reduplication of nouns and adverbs can indicate plurality as shown below.

[pi^{214}.pi^{214}]	‘every year’
[xam^{33}.xam^{33}]	‘every night’
[ŋon^{21}.ŋon^{21}]	‘every day’
[za:n^{21}.za:n^{21}]	‘every family’
[ya:ŋ^{21}.ya:ŋ^{21}]	‘everything’

However, there is one reduplicated word found in my data indicating onomatopoeia. [fu^{21}.fu^{21}] in [ʔbin^{214} fu^{21}.fu^{21}] ‘to fly’ is onomatopoeic of the wind.

3.3.2. Complex reduplication

The pattern of complex reduplication in Bouyei is ABAC where A is a simple reduplicated word, while B and C are separated coordinative semantic compounds, for example:

	A	**B**	**A**	**C**
[kua^{33}.zi^{33}.kua^{33}.na^{21}] ‘to work in the field’	[kua^{33}] ‘to do’	[zi^{33}] ‘farmland’	[kua^{33}] ‘to do’	[na^{21}] ‘paddy field’
[kua^{33}.xoŋ^{214}.kua^{33}.mɐu^{21}] ‘to cultivate’	[kua^{33}] ‘to do’	[xoŋ^{214}] ‘work’	[kua^{33}] ‘to do’	[mɐu^{21}] ‘crop’

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[tuŋ^{31}.lum^{51}.tuŋ^{31}.saːu^{33}]	[tuŋ^{31}]	[lum^{51}]	[tuŋ^{31}]	[saːu^{33}]
‘to be equal’	‘each other’	‘same’	‘each other’	‘same’
[pan^{21}.ɕian^{214}.pan^{21}.faːn^{33}]	[pan^{21}]	[ɕian^{214}]	[pan^{21}]	[faːn^{33}]
‘to be rich’	‘to be’	‘thousand’	‘to be’	‘ten thousand’
[ʔdaːŋ^{214}.ʔdeu^{214}.ʔdaːŋ^{214}.to^{33}]	[ʔdaːŋ^{214}]	[ʔdeu^{214}]	[ʔdaːŋ^{214}]	[to^{33}]
‘to live alone’	‘body’	‘one’	‘body’	‘single’
[mi^{21}.taŋ^{31}.mi^{21}.tuan^{33}]	[mi^{21}]	[taŋ^{31}]	[mi^{21}]	[tuan^{33}]
‘never stop’	‘neg.’	‘to stop’	‘neg.’	‘to finish’

4. Conclusion and discussion

In this study, Bouyei word formation process has been analyzed. The results reveal that Bouyei complex words are formed by affixing, compounding and reduplicating. The affixation consists of prefixing and suffixing. Infixing is not found in this language. The compounds are divided into semantic and syntactic compounds. The class term is differentiated from the classifier to form the word compound. Reduplications are divided into simple and complex reduplications. Simple reduplication is normally used to emphasize the meaning of the root or to indicate plurality.

It is noted that some monosyllabic nouns in Bouyei can be reduplicated to express the meaning of “every” as well as in Chinese. Some examples are:

Bouyei	**Chinese**	**Meaning**
[pu^{31}.pu^{31}]	gè gè (个个)	‘every one’
[ŋon^{21}.ŋon^{21}]	tiān tiān (天天)	‘every day’
[zaːn^{21}.zaːn^{21}]	jiā jiā (家家)	‘every family’

Even though this characteristic is normally found in Tai languages, the meaning of these reduplicated words in Bouyei slightly differs from the meaning they have in other Tai languages. For example, [wan^{33} wan^{33}] in Thai language means “each day” whereas [ŋon^{21}.ŋon^{21}] in Bouyei means “every day”. Therefore, this pattern may be borrowed from Chinese as a result of language contact.

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