

Chapter 3

Methodology

The purpose of this thesis is to assess the need for language development among the Lisu people. The sociolinguistic study covers language vitality, language attitudes, and language use to help the Lisu people understand their current language situation. By examining the potential for vernacular language development, this study also aims to enable the Lisu people to participate in the language development effort. Additional reading materials for the Lisu in China, Myanmar, and Thailand could help to protect Lisu from further language shift. This chapter describes the methods and procedures used in this study. Since this study has two major parts, lexicostatistics and sociolinguistics, different methods are used for these parts. These include the selected lexical items used for the lexicostatistic study and the sociolinguistic questionnaires (the Knowledgeable Insider Questionnaire, the Group Sociolinguistic Questionnaire, and the Individual Sociolinguistic Questionnaire) used for the sociolinguistic study.

3.1 Research locations

One of the major foci in this study is to assess the sociolinguistic situation between central (urban) and peripheral (rural) sites. Therefore, out of twelve researched sites, six sites are in central areas and the other six are in peripheral areas. The central sites are expected to have more contact with the language of wider communication (LWC) and the regional languages than the peripheral sites. Because of this, peripheral sites are expected to maintain stronger mother tongue use. This thesis will focus on three Lisu dialects: Central, Northern, and Southern Lisu. Four sites for each Lisu dialect are chosen for the survey. Of the 4 Northern Lisu sites, 2 are in China while the other 2 are in Myanmar. Of the 4 Central Lisu sites, 2 are in China while the other 2 are in Myanmar. Of the 4 Southern Lisu sites, 2 are in Myanmar, and the other 2 are in Thailand. Thus, a total of 12 sites were visited for this study.

Table 17 shows the number of sites by country and dialect visited for this study.

Table 17 Numbers of sites visited in three countries

Lisu dialects/sites	China	Myanmar	Thailand
Northern Lisu	2	2	-
Central Lisu	2	2	-
Southern Lisu	-	2	2
Total	12		

The names of the sites where the survey took place are listed in this section. There are four sites in China, six sites in Myanmar, and two sites in Thailand.

The four survey sites in China are:

1. Yikuaibi village (YKB), San Pha Township, Fugong district, Yunnan province.
2. La Ba Shan village (LBS), Zou Wo Hua village group, Wei Xi township, Ti Chi district, Yunnan province.
3. Shi Tong Hor village (STH), Huan Liang Hor village group, Ping Da sub-township, Long Ling Township, Bao Shan district, Yunnan province.
4. Muchunpo village (MCP), Lu Xi Township, Te Hong district, Yunnan province.

The six survey sites in Myanmar are:

1. Mankhring village (MKH), Mankhring Quarter, Myitkyina Township, Kachin State.
2. Dawobya village (DWB), Dawobya village group, Lwegel sub-township, Kachin State.
3. Hokho quarter (HKH), Putao Township, Putao district, Kachin State.
4. Mulashide village (MLSD), Mulashide village group, Putao Township, Putao district, Kachin State.
5. Thiwangmie (TWM), Bor Pi village group, Nyaung Shwe Township, Shan State.
6. Khitsagoat quarter (KSG), Shaw Li Wai village group, Moegok Township, Mandalay Division.

The two survey sites in Thailand are:

1. Hongkhong (MKT⁴³), Moo. 6, To Kha Puang sub-district, Chiang Dao district, Chiang Mai province.
2. Sidonyang (SDY), Ban Chang sub-district, Mae Taeng district, Chiang Mai province.

Table 18 shows central and peripheral sites by country and dialects.

Table 18 Central and peripheral sites

Country	Central site	Peripheral site	Dialect
China	YKB	LBS	N.LS
China	STH	MCP	C.LS
Myanmar	HKH	MLSD	N.LS
Myanmar	MKH	DWB	C.LS
Myanmar	KSG	TWM	S.LS
Thailand	SDY	MKT	S.LS

The central and peripheral sites in Table 18 are intentionally chosen. The central sites are easy to access while the peripheral sites are not. In other words, central sites are more urban while the peripheral sites are more rural. The survey fieldwork was done in six central sites and six peripheral sites. Since the central sites are more urban than the peripheral sites, bilingual ability and language contact of these sites is expected to be higher than the peripheral sites. In the peripheral sites, the language use and language vitality of Lisu is expected to be higher than the central sites with less contact and lower ability in the LWC.

Figure 13 shows the geographical locations of the sites where the survey fieldwork was conducted.

⁴³ Lisu called this site 'Mokhoto'.

SELECTED SITES OF LISU SPEECH VARIETIES IN CHINA, MYANMAR, AND THAILAND

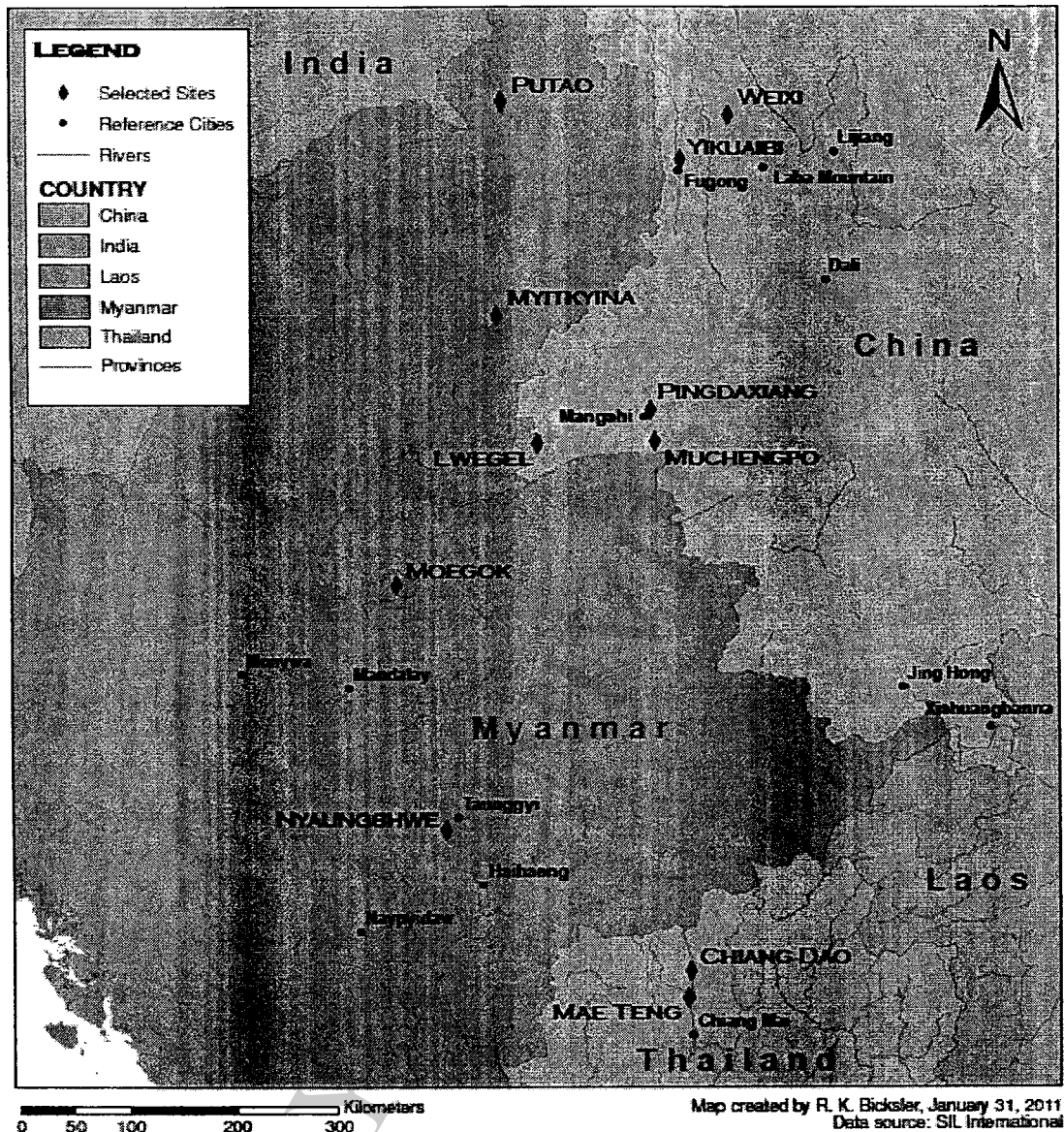


Figure 11 Map showing survey sites⁴⁴

3.2 Wordlist collection and procedures

This section describes how the subjects⁴⁵ were chosen and the wordlists elicited. The SIL MSEA (Mainland South East Asia) 436 wordlist was used for this study. A subset of the words from the wordlist are used for determining the lexical relationship

⁴⁴ Two sites, Mulashide (MLSD) and Hokho (HKH) are in Putao township.

⁴⁵ Language resource persons.

between the Lisu dialects. The wordlist is translated into three national languages Chinese, Burmese, and Central Thai for use in three countries China, Myanmar, and Thailand (See Appendix A). Chinese was used while eliciting the wordlist in China, Burmese in Myanmar, and Central Thai in Thailand.

The subjects were about 45 years old and male. They must have been born and lived in the same site where the survey took place, and have never lived outside of their area for more than one year. They must have no speech difficulties. They must be respected members of the community, who were not too busy and who were willing to help with the wordlist. Twelve subjects helped with the wordlist in this study. They represent each of the 12 sites where the fieldwork was conducted.

While the words were being collected, some native speakers of the language community were allowed to sit together and help to think of the words being elicited. If the subjects said clearly that they did not have the word, the surveyor skipped those words. For example, the Lisu language does not have native words for 'house lizard', 'crocodile', and 'coconut'. The surveyor transcribed all the words in International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) along with their meanings while the subjects were also asked to write the words in Lisu. Therefore, the person whom the wordlist was elicited from could read the words during the audio recording session. If they could not write in Lisu, they can read the elicited words on the researcher's sheet of wordlist that is in one of the four LWCs: English, Chinese, Burmese, or Thai. The vocabulary was recorded from the same subject from whom the words were elicited. Each word was repeated three times for the audio recording, and the vocabulary was recorded periodically, in groups of fifty words.

After the data is collected and checked, the wordlists will be compared using a modified Blair-type method as described in Section 5.1. The resulting cognate counts will be used to determine if the varieties are so different lexically that intelligibility will be marginal. The criteria to evaluate this is whether the cognate count is below 70%.

3.3 Sociolinguistic questionnaires

For the sociolinguistic part of this thesis, three questionnaires were used for the survey: the Knowledgeable Insider Sociolinguistic Questionnaire (KISQ), Group Sociolinguistic Questionnaire (GSQ), and the Individual Sociolinguistic

Questionnaire (ISLQ). The Knowledgeable Insider Questionnaire was used to elicit background information on the selected site from village leaders. Knowledgeable insiders included village chiefs, assistant of the village chiefs (if the village chief was not available), or the ex-village chiefs (if the current village chief was not available). The Knowledgeable Insider Questionnaire was elicited at the selected site. It is designed to enable the surveyor to determine the population, the language groups, and what types of basic media are available. Sometimes the data from the village leaders may differ from the perspective of others in the group. Therefore, the Group Sociolinguistic Questionnaire is also needed.

The Group Sociolinguistic Questionnaire is used for eliciting information from a group of people at the selected site. Normally, respected members of the community are chosen for the group interview. A minimum of at least four persons, and a maximum of five, including both genders, are included in the group. Biographical data was collected each group member before the questions were asked. When asking questions, the answers which represented the whole group were taken down first, and then individual answers were also noted. Since one of the purposes of the Group Questionnaire is to find out the attitudes of the people from the selected site toward other dialects, it is mainly focused on the answers from those who have travelled to areas where other Lisu dialects are spoken.

The survey also collected information from individuals, as well as the group, using an individual interview during the survey. The Individual Sociolinguistic Questionnaire was used for asking the view of various individuals at the selected site. Table 19 gives the criteria of used for choosing the individual subjects.

Table 19 Age and gender criteria for choosing the individual interview subjects at each site

Individual Interviews	Men	Women
Age 15-34	3	3
Age 35 +	3	3
Subtotal	6	6
Total	12	

According to Table 19, the individual subjects can be divided into two age groups: the 15-34 year old group and 35+ year old group. For each group, three subjects of

each gender were interviewed, for six subjects (3 male and 3 female) in each age group. The total number of subjects for the Individual Sociolinguistic Questionnaire at each site was 12. The subject must be someone who lived for a significant amount of time at the selected site, speak Lisu as his or her first language, and must have at least one Lisu parent. The following sub-sections present the content, administration, and limitation of the questionnaires. An additional section also provides the sources of the data for both the wordlists and questionnaires.

3.3.1 Questionnaire content

The Knowledgeable Insider Questionnaire is divided into sections as shown in Table 20.

Table 20 Knowledgeable Insider Questionnaire content

Question Numbers	Content
1-19	biographical information of the subjects
20-22	village name and population
23	migration
24-29	language and ethnic groups
30	intermarriage
31-35	education and literacy rates
36	background information
37-44	media
45-51	interviewer observations

The following table shows the sections of the Group Sociolinguistic Questionnaire.

Table 21 Group Sociolinguistic Questionnaire content

Question Numbers	Content
1-21	biographical information of the subjects
22-25	bilingualism
26-30	language vitality
31-34	orthography and literacy
35-36	media
37-46	dialect perceptions of the Lisu dialects
47-53	interviewer observations

The following table shows the content of the Individual Sociolinguistic Questionnaires.

Table 22 Individual Sociolinguistic Questionnaire content

Question Numbers	Content
1-24	biographical information of the subjects
25-26	domains of language use
27-31	domains of language use for Christians
32-34	language attitudes
35-39	language use of children
40-46	bilingual proficiency evaluation
47-49	contacts or travel patterns
50-52	reported comprehension of Lisu
53-55	dialect attitudes
56-58	literacy
59-63	media
64-68	orthography and literature
69-76	interviewer observations

3.3.2 Questionnaire mapping procedure

The following table shows the mapping procedure of sociolinguistic questionnaires.

Table 23 Research goals, questions, concepts, and indicators

Goal	Research Question	Concept	Indicator
Assess the need for vernacular literature development among the Lisu people.	1.1 Do Lisu speakers master the LWC adequately?	Bilingual Proficiency	KSLQ 26-27; GSLQ 24-25; ISLQ 40-46, 56
		Domains of Language Use	ISLQ 25-26, 28-31
		Background Information – Subject Demographics	KSLQ 1-19; GSLQ 21; ISLQ 1, 3, 7, 9, 24
	1.2 What are the attitudes of Lisu speakers toward the LWC (positive, neutral, negative)?	Background Information – Languages and Ethnic Groups	GSLQ 22, 23
		Ethno linguistic Identity (Primary attitude)	ISLQ 32, 33
	1.3 Do Lisu speakers adequately comprehend Lisu?	Language Attitudes (secondary attitude)	KSLQ 30
	Dialect Perceptions	GLSQ 37-43	
	Comprehension	KSLQ 28-29; ISLQ 50-55	

Goal	Research Question	Concept	Indicator
	1.4 What are the attitudes of Lisu speakers toward a certain Lisu variety (positive, neutral, negative)?	Dialect Attitudes	ISLQ 53-55
	1.5 What are the attitudes of Lisu speakers towards Lisu scripts currently in use?	Current use (Fraser, modified Fraser, Burmese, Pinyin (Romanized Chinese))	GSLQ 33-34; ISLQ 67
	1.6 Does it appear likely that variety/language Lisu will continue to be spoken by future generations?	Preference/Interest	ISLQ 68
		Proficiency of children in Lisu language	GSLQ 26-27, 30; ISLQ 35-39
		Domains of Language Use	GSLQ 29; ISLQ 25-26, 28-31, 35
		Language Attitudes	KSLQ 30; GSLQ 28, 30; ISLQ 34
		Ethnolinguistic Identity	KSLQ 30
		Ethnolinguistic make-up of villages	KSLQ 24-25; GSLQ 22-23
	1.7 What modes of media do Lisu people currently use?	Reported language shift	KSLQ 29
		Motivation	ISLQ 58
		Print	ISLQ 59-60, 64
		Audio	KSLQ 38-39; ISLQ 61-62
		Audio-Visual	KSLQ 40-44; GSLQ 35-36; ISLQ 63
	1.8 What is the potential for Lisu mother-tongue literacy development to be successful?	Current literacy	KSLQ 35; ISLQ 57
		Motivation	GSLQ 31-32; ISLQ 58, 65-66

In Table 23, the Individual Sociolinguistic Questionnaire numbers 25-26 and 28-31 were used in research questions number 1.1 and 1.6 because both questions are asking about domains of language use. The Knowledgeable Insider Sociolinguistic Questionnaire number 30 was used in both concepts 'language attitudes' and 'ethno-linguistic identity' of research question number 1.6. Since this question is asking about mixed marriages and what ethnicities the Lisu people marry, it is related to both concepts, 'language attitudes' and 'ethno-linguistic identity'. The Individual Sociolinguistic Questionnaire number 58 is used in both research questions number 1.6 and 1.8. The Individual Sociolinguistic Questionnaire number 58 is asking the benefits of being able to read and write in Lisu, it is related both to research questions asking about the future of the Lisu language and about the potential development of mother tongue literacy.

3.3.3 Limitations of the questionnaires

The sociolinguistic questionnaires which were used in this study do have some limitations. The answers which have significant results are merely used in this thesis while some answers which do not contribute significant results are neglected. One of these is that some subjects had problems understanding the terms [lo³³ wu⁵⁵] 'Northern Lisu', [ja³³ ja³³] 'Central Lisu', and [lo³⁵ jy³³] 'Southern Lisu' when asked about their attitudes toward other Lisu dialects. These words seemed too technical and not so familiar to the local people. Therefore, the places (provinces, towns, and villages) among the three Lisu dialects were used instead of the dialect names. For example, instead of asking whether they have been to a Central Lisu place or not, it is better to ask them whether they have been to Mankhring village in Myitkyina or other Central Lisu places. For the Northern Lisu speaking area, it is better to ask them whether they have been to Putao or not or other well-known Northern Lisu speaking places. In the same way, it is better to ask them whether they have been to the southern Shan State Namsan⁴⁶ or other places for Southern Lisu speaking places.

The other limitation is that most of the subjects did not know how to answer the question 'What kinds of books do you think Lisu people would be interested in having in Lisu?' Most of the subjects could not answer this question unless the interviewer gave them suggestions, such as historical, poetic, and agricultural.

⁴⁶ There is also a town named 'Namsan' in northern Shan State.

The method for analyzing the answers follows that outlined by Nahhas (2007: 99). The subject could be counted 0.5 or 1.5 subjects. For example, when asked the question 'What language of Bible is used most often in your church service?' the subjects may answer 'Lisu' or 'Lisu and Burmese'. For the answer 'Lisu', it is simple to say that the number who answered Lisu is '1'. However, for the answer 'Lisu and Burmese', the subject for answering 'Lisu' is counted 0.5 while the other 0.5 is counted for 'Burmese'. Similar situation can see when asked the question such as 'Is it common for Lisu people from this village to marry non-Lisu people?' One subject may answered 'yes' and the other subject 'yes and no' based on their own perspective. For the answer of first subject 'yes', it is counted '1'. However, for the answer of second subject 'yes and no', 'yes' is counted 0.5 as well as 'no'.

The number of sites visited were different from country to country. Four sites are visited in China, six sites in Myanmar, and two sites in Thailand. When analyzing responses by country, percentages are used so that comparisons can be made.

3.3.4 Data sources

In this study, it was necessary to interview four types of subjects. The first was the subject for the wordlist, the second was the knowledgeable insider or village leader, the third was a group of respected people from the site, and the fourth was the individual subjects. One subject from each site was chosen for the wordlist⁴⁷. One leader from each site was interviewed for the Knowledgeable Insider Questionnaire. For the Group Sociolinguistic Questionnaire, four to five interview subjects were required. Finally, six subjects of each gender were interviewed. Among these 12 individual subjects, six subjects (three each from both genders) were 15-34 years old and the other six subjects (three each from both genders) were over 34 years old. In other sociolinguistic surveys, the age groups might be divided into three but in this thesis, only two age groups of subjects were interviewed. The following figure shows the numbers of the subjects interviewed for this study.

⁴⁷ For wordlist elicitation, there were at least three to four people who sat together to help think of vocabulary for the items being elicited. Recording, however, took place with only one main subject, who was chosen according to the criteria of the language resource person for the wordlist.

Table 24 Numbers of subjects interviewed

Sites	Subjects for Wordlist	KISQ ⁴⁸	GSQ ⁴⁹	ISQ ⁵⁰			
				(15-34)		(35+)	
				male	female	male	female
YKB	1	1	5	3	3	3	3
LBS	1	1	5	3	3	3	3
HKH	1	1	5	3	3	3	3
MLSD	1	1	5	3	3	3	3
STH	1	1	5	3	3	3	3
MCP	1	1	5	3	3	3	3
MKH	1	1	4	3	3	3	3
DWB	1	1	5	3	3	3	3
KSG	1	1	5	3	3	3	3
TWM	1	1	5	3	3	3	3
SDY	1	1	4	3	3	3	3
MKT	1	1	5	3	3	3	3
Total	12	12	58	36	36	36	36
	226						

According to Table 24, each site has 19 subjects except Mankhring (MKH) in Myanmar and Sidonyang (SDY) in Thailand, for which there were only four subjects each for the Group Sociolinguistic Questionnaire. The total number of the subjects who provided data for the survey was 226.

⁴⁸ Knowledgeable Insider Sociolinguistic Questionnaire

⁴⁹ Group Sociolinguistic Questionnaire

⁵⁰ Individual Sociolinguistic Questionnaire