

## Chapter 4

### Lisu sociolinguistic situation

According to Bradley (2006: xv), Lisu is spoken by close to a million speakers. About 35 percent of Lisu speak Northern Lisu, 45 percent speak Central Lisu, 15 percent of Lisu speak Southern Lisu, and 5 percent speak Eastern Lisu<sup>51</sup>. All of the Eastern Lisu is in China and all of the Southern Lisu is in Myanmar and Thailand. All of the Lisu dialects except Eastern Lisu are found in Myanmar and Thailand while the Northern Lisu are in China, Myanmar, India, and have recently arrived in Thailand. The Central Lisu are spread widely in western Yunnan and northeast Myanmar, and have recently arrived in Thailand. In the 1920s, Christian evangelism brought Central Lisu speakers into contact with Northern Lisu speakers. In the 1970s, the migration of the Northern and Central Lisu to Thailand brought about greater contact with the Southern Lisu in Thailand. Before these events, intelligibility among the Lisu dialects was quite limited (Bradley 2006: xv).

Around the 1950s, the Lisu from southwestern Yunnan of China and the Kengtung area of eastern Myanmar had contact with Nationalist Chinese<sup>52</sup>. Some Southern Lisu women married retired Chinese soldiers and some Southern Lisu men served in the Chinese armies. Thus, half of the Lisu in Thailand have Chinese surnames and some of them can trace their Chinese ancestors a few generations. As a result, Southern Lisu has a greater number of Yunnanese Chinese loanwords than Central or Northern Lisu (Bradley 2006: xvii). Bradley (1994: vii) said “The Southern dialect of Lisu is not entirely typical of Lisu because it has a reduced final particle system and is inundated with Chinese loans.” The Southern Lisu dialect is less similar with Northern and Central Lisu dialects.

This chapter will describe the sociolinguistic findings of three Lisu dialects in China, Myanmar, and Thailand. The following section will present language use and bilingual proficiency.

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<sup>51</sup> The current study focuses on the major Lisu dialect groups of Northern, Central, and Southern and therefore does not include Eastern Lisu.

<sup>52</sup> The members of ‘National People’s Party’ (Kuomintang).

## **4.1 Language use and bilingual proficiency**

In this section, the use of the language of wider communication is presented comparing data from the three countries: China, Myanmar, Thailand, and the three major Lisu dialects: Northern Lisu, Central Lisu, and Southern Lisu. Bilingual proficiency is studied by asking the abilities of the subjects.

The following sections will describe the findings regarding the use of language of wider communication, bilingual proficiency, and the domains of language use.

### **4.1.1 Use of languages of wider communication**

In this study, the languages of wider communication (LWC) refers to the national languages: Chinese, Burmese, and Central Thai, as well as regional languages such as Jingphaw, Pa O, and Northern Thai. The Lisu from China use Chinese as the language of wider communication, the Lisu from Myanmar use Burmese, Jingphaw, and Pa O, and the Lisu from Thailand use Central Thai and Northern Thai. All the subjects from China, Myanmar, and Thailand reported that their first language is Lisu. For the second best language, 60% of the subjects from Myanmar reported that it was Burmese, 25% Jingphaw, 9% Rawang, 4% Pa O, and 2% Lisu<sup>53</sup>. Since Burmese is the national language of Myanmar, it is expected to be the highest percentage. As the Lisu have a long history of living with the Jingphaw and most speakers of these two languages share the same religion, Christianity, they have had intimate contact with each other over the years. Moreover, since Jingphaw is the major regional language in Kachin state and some parts of Shan state in Myanmar, it is reported as the second most common LWC after the national language, Burmese. Of the subjects from China, 100% reported Chinese as the second best language. The majority of Lisu speakers from sites where the survey took place in China could not speak other languages (such as regional languages) except Chinese. Therefore, they reported the national language, Chinese, in the highest percentage as their second best language.

The subjects from Thailand reported that they speak Northern Thai (35%), Central Thai (28%), Lahu (25%), Chinese (6%), Akha (3%), and Shan (3%) as their second best languages. Since the sites where the survey took place are in Northern Thailand, Lisu speakers reported the use of Northern Thai most frequently, then the national—language, Central Thai, and other regional languages least. Central Thai seems to be

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<sup>53</sup> These subjects reported that their first language is LWC and Lisu is second best language.

spoken only by well educated subjects (mostly of the younger generation) while Northern Thai is spoken by almost everybody.

Most of the groups (8 out of 12) mentioned that the younger generation could speak the language of wider communication well in their villages. It is true that the younger generation has more access to education. Access to education gives the younger generation more contact with people speaking the LWC than the older generation. In addition, all of the groups (12) mentioned that students, traders, laborers, village leaders, and the educated could speak the language of wider communication well in their villages. In some cases, the answers were not consistent, while almost all of the groups said the older generation cannot speak the LWC well, however one group said the older generation can speak the LWC well. In general, the older generation is lacking formal education and has less exposure to the LWC than the younger generation. Therefore, almost every group interviewed mentioned the older generation cannot speak the language of wider communication very well.

#### 4.1.2 Bilingual proficiency

Blair (1990: 52) states that bilingualism is skill in using more than one language. It is the capability of a speaker to control two or more languages in several domains. This survey indirectly assesses bilingualism by self-reported proficiency in the LWC. The language of wider communication varies according to the country where the survey took place. The language of wider communication for the Myanmar sites is Burmese, for China it is Chinese, and for Thailand, Central Thai. The ability to give directions, tell about family members, hire workers, repeat what they heard, speak like a native speaker and think like a native speaker is assessed with the Individual Sociolinguistic Questionnaire questions number 41 through 46 (See Appendix B). Table 25 shows self-reported LWC proficiency for the tasks listed above.

**Table 25 Bilingual proficiency in specific tasks**

Tasks Sites	directions	family	hiring	repeating	native	thinking
central sites	98%	92%	89%	85%	26%	24%
peripheral sites	74%	72%	67%	58%	21%	20%

According to Table 25, the subjects from central sites reported higher bilingual proficiency than peripheral sites. This appears to correlate with education since

when the subjects were asked the question ‘About how many grades do most children from this village complete?’, the subjects from central sites said children from their villages complete high school and one subject mentioned various levels while the subjects from peripheral sites mentioned middle school.

The following table shows self-reported basic bilingual ability of the subjects analyzed by Lisu dialect.

**Table 26 Bilingual proficiency by dialects**

Tasks Dialects	directions	family	hiring	repeating	native	thinking
Northern Lisu	69%	73%	60%	60%	17%	17%
Central Lisu	92%	88%	90%	77%	23%	25%
Southern Lisu	83%	85%	83%	77%	33%	21%

Based on Table 26, subjects from the Central Lisu dialect reported higher or equal bilingual proficiency than Southern Lisu and Northern Lisu in the specified tasks.

For thinking in the LWC as well as native speakers, Southern Lisu speakers reported 33%, but Central and Northern Lisu dialects reported 23% and 17% respectively. Southern Lisu speakers from Moegok area and Thailand reported high fluency in the language of wider communication. Therefore, their percentage of being able to speak as well as native speakers is higher than other sites. For thinking more easily in the language of wider communication than in Lisu, Central Lisu speakers reported 25% while Southern and Northern Lisu speakers reported 21% and 17%, respectively.

Subjects from the Central Lisu dialect reported higher bilingual proficiency compared to Southern and Northern Lisu subjects except in repeating, where speakers of both Central and Southern reported 77% in the ability to speak the language of wider communication as well as native speakers. The subjects from Northern Lisu dialect reported lowest bilingual proficiency in all abilities. This correlated with Lisu being one of the languages of wider communication in the Northern Lisu speaking areas regardless of countries. This information will be discussed more in the following section of bilingual proficiency analyzed by country. The following table shows self-reported bilingual proficiency of the subjects, analyzed by country.

**Table 27 Bilingual proficiency in the national languages by country**

Tasks Countries	directions	family	hiring	repeating	native	thinking
China	73%	79%	71%	63%	19%	8%
Myanmar	86%	83%	82%	76%	22%	26%
Thailand <sup>54</sup>	83%	83%	79%	75%	38%	33%

According to Table 27, the subjects from Myanmar reported higher or equal bilingual proficiency than from Thailand and China in the abilities of tasks.

Bilingual proficiency in the LWC for Myanmar, China, and Thailand was generally high except when compared to native speakers and in thinking in the language of wider communication. Moreover, the data is uniform while it is analyzing according to central or peripheral sites, dialects, and by country. Higher bilingual proficiency tends to occur in central sites compared to peripheral sites, with some exceptions. Central Lisu speakers tend to have higher bilingual proficiency than Southern and Northern Lisu speakers while the Northern Lisu speakers tend to have the lowest bilingual proficiency. Based on author's observations, most Central Lisu sites are in the areas where has more language diversity. It is particularly true in Myanmar because more languages are found in the Central Lisu sites, Mankhring and Dawobya than the Northern Lisu sites, Hokho and Mulashide. Moreover, though Hokho is a central site of the Northern Lisu speakers in Myanmar, the language use of Lisu is quite strong because the author was able to buy things at the market using the Northern Lisu. Lisu is one of the languages of wider communication in the Northern Lisu sites in Myanmar. Although Yikuaibi (YKB) is the central site of the Northern Lisu in China, Lisu is one of the languages of wider communication in this site. On the other hand, the Central Lisu sites, Shitonghor (STH) and Muchunpo (MCP) are located in the areas where Lisu is not spoken as one of the languages of wider communication. Lisu use is still strong in most of the Southern Lisu sites though it is not one of the languages of wider communication. Therefore, the bilingual proficiency of the Central Lisu speakers is higher than Northern Lisu and Southern Lisu while the Northern Lisu speakers appear as the lowest.

<sup>54</sup> Note that Central Thai was used in this comparison for consistency with other National languages, although reported proficiency in Northern Thai was higher among the Lisu in Thailand.

Myanmar tends to have the highest bilingual proficiency, followed by Thailand, and China has the lowest. Some sites where the survey has taken place in Myanmar are more urban than the sites from China and Thailand. Moreover, the Lisu is not one of the languages of wider communication in the sites of Myanmar (except in Putao township) as in the sites of China. On the other hand, the population of Lisu is small compared with the numbers of speakers of regional or national languages. Therefore, the Lisu speakers from Myanmar have more contact with the speakers of language of wider communication and their bilingual proficiency is higher than Lisu speakers of China and Thailand are.

### **4.1.3 Domains of language use**

This section presents language use in different domains, including home, outside the home, and church. All of these domains are also analyzed by countries: China, Myanmar, and Thailand. The following sub-section describes language use in the home domain.

#### **4.1.3.1 Language use in the home domain**

Out of 144 subjects in the home domain, Lisu subjects reported they use Lisu (99%), with grandchildren (98.3%), with parents (98.3%), with grandparents (98%), with siblings (95%), with spouses (93.4%), and with Lisu friends (91.2%). Aside from Lisu, they also reported using national languages such as Burmese and Chinese or regional languages such as Northern Thai, Jingphaw, Pa O, Shan, Lahu, Rawang, English, Karen and Akha when they speak with non-Lisu friends. With non-Lisu friends, the subjects reported limited use of Lisu (15%). The use of national and regional languages in the home domain with non-Lisu friends will be discussed further when the data is analyzed according to country. In conclusion, Lisu is used the most in the home domain, although the national languages Burmese and Chinese are also used here. Some subjects speak Chinese, Burmese, Central Thai, Northern Thai, Akha and Rawang because their spouses or one of their parents speaks one of these languages.

#### **4.1.3.2 Language use in the home domain in China, Myanmar, and Thailand**

The following table shows Lisu use in the home domains by country.

**Table 28 Language use in the home domains by country**

Countries Domains	China			Myanmar				Thailand				
	Lisu	Chinese	Total	Lisu	Burmese	Other	Total	Lisu	Central Thai	Northern Thai	Other	Total
Home	48 (100%)	-	48 (100%)	72 (100%)	-	-	72 (100%)	22 (92%)	1 (4%)	1 (4%)	-	24 (100%)
Grandparents	45 (98%)	1 (2%)	46 (100%)	59 (98%)	-	1 (2%)	60 (100%)	18.5 (97%)	-	0.5 (3%)	-	19 (100%)
Parents	48 (100%)	-	48 (100%)	71 (99%)	1 (1%)	-	72 (100%)	22.7 (95%)	0.3 (1%)	0.3 (1%)	0.7 (3%)	24 (100%)
Grandchildren	8 (100%)	-	8 (100%)	15.5 (97%)	-	0.5 (3%)	16 (100%)	8 (100%)	-	-	-	8 (100%)
Siblings	47.5 (99%)	0.5 (1%)	48 (100%)	68 (94%)	4 (6%)	-	72 (100%)	20.6 (86%)	0.5 (2%)	2.2 (9%)	0.7 (3%)	24 (100%)
Spouses	42 (98%)	1 (2%)	43 (100%)	47 (93%)	3 (7%)	-	50 (100%)	20.3 (85%)	1.2 (5%)	1.7 (7%)	0.8 (3%)	24 (100%)
Children	37 (93%)	3 (7%)	40 (100%)	36.5 (91%)	3.5 (9%)	-	40 (100%)	20 (87%)	1 (4%)	2 (9%)	-	23 (100%)
Lisu friends	46 (98%)	1 (2%)	47 (100%)	57 (80%)	10.5 (15%)	3.5 (5%)	71 (100%)	18 (75%)	2 (8%)	3 (13%)	1 (4%)	24 (100%)
Non-Lisu friends	15 (35%)	28 (65%)	43 (100%)	3 (4%)	48 (69%)	19 (27%)	70 (100%)	1.5 (6%)	2.3 (10%)	13.8 (58%)	6.4 (26%)	24 (100%)

According to Table 28 Chinese is reported to be used rarely with Lisu speakers but with non-Lisu friends (65%). Although there is some use of Chinese with children (7%), the use of Chinese in other domains is rare (below 5%).

In Myanmar, the national language, Burmese, is reported to be used somewhat with siblings (6%), with spouses (7%), with children (9%), and with Lisu friends (15%). Burmese use is reported to be strong with non-Lisu friends (69%) but is weak with parents below (5%). Other languages used with non-Lisu friends include Jingphaw (13.5%) and Pa O (7%). In other domains such as with grandparents, with grandchildren, with friends, and with non-Lisu friends, the regional languages use is weak (below 5%), these languages included Jingphaw, Pa O, Rawang, Shan, and Chinese.

In Thailand, the national language, Central Thai, is reported to be used somewhat: with non-Lisu friends (10%), with Lisu friends (8%), and with spouses (5%). In other domains, Central Thai use is weak (below 5%). For regional and miscellaneous languages, Northern Thai is reported to be used with non-Lisu friends (58%), with Lisu friends (13%), with siblings (9%), with children (9%), and with spouses (7%). Other languages are reported to be used with non-Lisu friends include Chinese (8.7%), Shan (7.5%), and Lahu (6.3%). In other domains, the regional and miscellaneous languages use is weak (below 5%).

Lisu use is strongest in China, followed by Myanmar and then Thailand. The only exceptions are where the use is reported to be equal in the home domain in China and Myanmar (100%) and with grandchildren in China and Thailand (100%), while the use in Myanmar is reported to be lower (97%). In addition, with non-Lisu friends the subjects from Myanmar reported lower usage (4%) than those from Thailand (6%). It should be noted that reported Lisu use in home domains appears strong for the three countries, except with non-Lisu friends.

The following sub-section presents language use outside the home domain.



#### **4.1.3.3 Language use outside the home domain**

Outside the home, Lisu is reported to be strongly used in several domains, including with Lisu co-workers (96%), with Lisu friends at the market (94%), with Lisu friends (92%) (everywhere at outside of home), at funerals (89%), and at village meetings (84%). However, Lisu use was reported to be less strong in the domains of dealing with government workers (19%), with non-Lisu co-workers (11%), with non-Lisu friends (10%) and with non-Lisu friends at the market (8%).

Where Lisu is not used, the author expected national languages such as Burmese, Chinese, and Central Thai to be used, but only Burmese and Chinese appear to have strong use in some domains. For Burmese, these domains include use with government workers (43%), with non-Lisu friends at the market (40%), with non-Lisu friends (40%) and with non-Lisu co-workers (37%). Burmese is also used in funeral and village meetings. Chinese is reported to be used with non-Lisu friends at the market (31%), with non-Lisu co-workers (28%), with non-Lisu friends (27%), and with government workers (22.2%). In other domains, Burmese and Chinese appear weak (below 5%) and the use of Central Thai appears to be weak in all domains.

For regional and miscellaneous languages, use of Northern Thai is appreciable with non-Lisu friends at the market (13.4%), with non-Lisu workers (11%), with government workers (10%), and with non-Lisu friends (10%). Jingphaw use appears appreciable with non-Lisu friends (6%). Use of other languages appears weak (below 5%).

The following section presents the language use in the home domain analyzed according to country.

#### **4.1.3.4 Language use outside the home domain in China, Myanmar, and Thailand**

Table 29 shows language use of the subjects outside the home domains by country.

Table 29 Language use outside the home domains by country

Domains	China			Myanmar				Thailand				
	Lisu	Chinese	Total	Lisu	Burmese	Other	Total	Lisu	Central Thai	Northern Thai	Other	Total
Lisu co-workers	47.5 (99%)	0.5 (1%)	48 (100%)	66.5 (95%)	3 (4.3%)	0.5 (0.7%)	70 (100%)	22 (92%)	-	2 (8%)	-	24 (100%)
Lisu friends	46.5 (97%)	1.5 (3%)	48 (100%)	65 (90%)	6 (8%)	1 (2%)	72 (100%)	20 (83%)	1 (4%)	3 (13%)	-	24 (100%)
At market with Lisu friends	46 (96%)	2 (4%)	48 (100%)	68 (94%)	3 (4%)	1 (2%)	72 (100%)	21 (88%)	1 (4%)	1.5 (6%)	0.5 (2%)	24 (100%)
At funerals	43.5 (90.6%)	4.5 (9.4%)	48 (100%)	62 (88.5%)	8 (11.5%)	-	70 (100%)	21 (88%)	1 (4%)	1.7 (7%)	0.3 (1%)	24 (100%)
At meeting	40 (87%)	6 (13%)	46 (100%)	52.8 (80%)	11.8 (18%)	1.4 (2%)	66 (100%)	20 (87%)	0.5 (2%)	2.5 (11%)	-	23 (100%)
Government workers	17.5 (38%)	28.5 (62%)	46 (100%)	6 (9%)	55 (86%)	3 (5%)	64 (100%)	1 (5%)	5 (25%)	12.6 (63%)	1.4 (7%)	20 (100%)
Non-Lisu co-worker	11.5 (27%)	31.5 (73%)	43 (100%)	2 (3%)	47.5 (72%)	16.5 (25%)	66 (100%)	-	3 (14%)	14 (67%)	4 (19%)	21 (100%)
Non-Lisu friends	11 (25.5%)	32 (74.5%)	43 (100%)	2 (3%)	51 (75%)	15 (22%)	68 (100%)	-	3.8 (19%)	12.8 (64%)	3.4 (17%)	20 (100%)
At market with non-Lisu friends	9 (22%)	32 (78%)	41 (100%)	-	53 (77%)	16 (23%)	69 (100%)	1 (4%)	3 (14%)	17.5 (80%)	0.5 (2%)	22 (100%)

In Table 29, comparing the reported use of Lisu outside the home domain by country, Lisu use is strongest in China, followed by Myanmar and then by Thailand. The only exceptions are where the use is reported to be equal in the meeting domain in China and Thailand (87%) while the use in Myanmar is reported to be lower (80%). In addition, with non-Lisu friends at the market the Lisu use of the subjects from Myanmar (0%) is lower than that of the subjects from Thailand (4%).

For other languages, the subjects from Myanmar reported Jingphaw (32.9% in all domains except for at funerals), Chinese (21.8% in all domains except for with government workers, Lisu co-workers, and at funerals), Pa O (18.5% in domains with government workers, non-Lisu co-workers, non-Lisu friends, and at the market with non-Lisu friends), and other miscellaneous languages such as Shan (4.5% in domains with non-Lisu co-workers, non-Lisu friends, and at the market with non-Lisu friends), English (1% in the domain with non-Lisu co-workers), and Rawang (0.5% in the domain at the market with non-Lisu friends). The subjects from Thailand reported Chinese (17.9%), Shan (15.3%), Burmese (9.8%), and Lahu (5%). The subjects from China reported no other language except the national language, Chinese.

The following table shows the language use in church domains analyzed by country.

**Table 30 Language use in the church domains by country**

Countries Domains	China			Myanmar				Thailand						
	Lisu	Chinese	Total	Lisu	Burmese	Jingphaw	English	Total	Lisu	Central Thai	Northern Thai	English	Chinese	Total
Language at church	44 (97.7%)	1 (2.3%)	45 (100%)	46 (92%)	3 (6%)	1 (2%)	-	50 (100%)	8 (88%)	0.3 (3%)	0.4 (6%)	0.3 (3%)	-	9 (100%)
Preaching	39 (86.6%)	6 (13.4%)	45 (100%)	41 (82%)	7 (14%)	2 (4%)	-	50 (100%)	7 (78%)	-	1.5 (16%)	0.5 (6%)	-	9 (100%)
Fellowship	44.5 (98.8%)	0.5 (1.2%)	45 (100%)	39 (79.6%)	8 (16%)	2 (4.4%)	-	49 (100%)	8.5 (94.4%)	-	0.5 (5.6%)	-	-	9 (100%)
Singing	44 (97.7%)	1 (2.3%)	45 (100%)	34 (67.8%)	13 (26%)	2.7 (5.4%)	0.3 (0.8%)	50 (100%)	6.6 (73%)	1.3 (15%)	-	0.7 (7%)	0.4 (5%)	9 (100%)
Announcing	43 (95.5%)	2 (4.5%)	45 (100%)	44.5 (89%)	5 (10%)	0.5 (1%)	-	50 (100%)	7.5 (83.4%)	1.5 (16.6%)	-	-	-	9 (100%)
Praying	43.5 (96.7%)	1.5 (3.3%)	45 (100%)	46 (91.8%)	3.3 (6.6%)	0.5 (1%)	0.2 (0.6%)	50 (100%)	7 (78.9%)	0.6 (6.7%)	0.4 (3.3%)	1 (11.1%)	-	9 (100%)
Praying alone	42 (93.3%)	3 (6.7%)	45 (100%)	45 (90%)	4.5 (9%)	0.5 (1%)	-	50 (100%)	9 (100%)	-	-	-	-	9 (100%)
Most used Bible	44 (97.7%)	1 (2.3%)	45 (100%)	43.5 (87%)	5.5 (11%)	1 (2%)	-	50 (100%)	3 (94.4%)	0.5 (5.6%)	-	-	-	3.5 (100%)

As seen in Table 30, most subjects from China reported they used Lisu as the language of church, and in domains such as preaching, fellowship, singing, announcing, public praying, and praying alone. The subjects also reported that their churches used the Lisu Bible the most, followed by the Chinese Bible, in all domains.

Most subjects from Myanmar answered that they used Lisu for the language at church and for the domains such as preaching, doing fellowship, singing, announcing, praying, and praying alone. The subjects also reported that their churches used the Lisu Bible most; followed by the Burmese Bible, and then Jingphaw in the same domains. Use of the English is also reported in the singing and praying domain, but it is less than 5%.

Most subjects from Thailand reported they used Lisu the most in the church and in the domains such as preaching, fellowship, singing, announcing, public praying, and praying alone. They also reported their churches used the Lisu Bible most, followed by the Central Thai, Northern Thai, English, and Chinese Bibles. Generally, Lisu is used the most in all domains, followed by the national languages, Burmese, Chinese, or Central Thai, according to country.

Lisu use is strongest in China in all church domains, followed by Myanmar, and somewhat less strong in Thailand.

The following table shows the most used Bibles, whether or not the subjects understand the most used Bible, and if not, why they do not understand that Bible.

**Table 31 Bible language and comprehension**

	most used Bible	Understand that Bible?			If not Why?	
		Yes	No	No response	don't study	miss to ask
Lisu	96 (92%)	92.5 (97%)	2.5 (3%)	1	1.5 (100%)	1
Burmese	5.5 (5.5%)	5 (91%)	0.5 (9%)	-	0.5 (100%)	-
Chinese	1 (1%)	1 (100%)	-	-	-	-
Jingphaw	1 (1%)	1 (100%)	-	-	-	-
Central Thai	0.5 (0.5%)	0.5 (100%)	-	-	-	-
Total	104 (100%)	-	3	1	2	1

According to Table 31, Lisu Bible is reported as the most used (92%), followed by Burmese Bible (5.5%), and others Bible (below 5%). Of those who answered that Lisu Bible is the most used, 92.5 (97%) subjects answered they understand it and 2.5 (3%) subjects answered they do not understand it.

If the subjects answered they do not understand, they were asked the question ‘Why not?’ Out of 2.5 subjects who answered they do not understand the Lisu Bible, 1.5 subjects answered that they do not understand because they do not study the Bible, and one subject was not asked. 0.5 subject answered he or she does not understand the Burmese Bible because he or she does not study it.

If the subjects’ churches do not use the Lisu Bible, they were asked the question ‘Do you understand the Lisu Bible?’ All seven subjects whose churches used non-Lisu Bibles answered that they do understand the Lisu Bible.

In general, almost all subjects reported that their churches use the Lisu Bible and understand that Bible. Their reason for not understanding the Lisu Bible is not the language problem but lack of studying the Bible.

## 4.2 Attitudes toward languages of wider communication

This section presents attitudes of Lisu speakers to the language of wider communication in each area. Since the questions on attitudes toward languages of

wider communication in the Individual Sociolinguistic Questionnaires are based on 12 subjects at each site, they are specific and more likely to represent the research community. Therefore, they are used as the primary representative of language attitudes. The questions on attitudes toward the language of wider communication in the Knowledgeable Insider Sociolinguistic Questionnaires are based on the view of only one leader from each site. Therefore, the leader's view may be broader and more general, and less likely to represent the whole community. Thus, they are used secondarily. The following sub-section discusses the language attitudes of Lisu speakers toward the language of wider communication in this area.

### 4.2.1 Primary attitudes

Fasold (1990: 34-60) states that language attitudes are the ways in which a person or community perceives the relevance and status of their language, often reflecting their attitudes about themselves relative to other groups. Language attitudes play a key role in language maintenance, shift, and death.

In this study, the subjects were asked questions related to the relationship with native speakers of the language of wider communication, such as marrying a speaker of the language of wider communication, or living next door to them. This method is an indirect indicator of attitudes which relies on reported information. The following table shows self-reported attitudes regarding marriage to a native speaker of the LWC.

**Table 32 Reported attitude regarding marriage to a person of the LWC**

Attitude regarding marriage to an LWC person	Number of subjects
Depends	1
Don't know	8
No	72.5 (54%)
Yes	62.5 (46%)
Total	144 (100%)

In Table 32, one subject who answered 'depends', and eight subjects who answered 'don't know' are not counted. More than half of the remaining subjects (54%) reported that it is not acceptable for a young Lisu man or woman to marry a person of the language of wider communication, while less than half of the remaining subjects (46%) reported that it is acceptable. According to author's observations, the common reason why it is not good for a young Lisu man or woman marry to a

person of language of wider communication is they mistreated to the Lisu people. Thus, generally the subjects have less positive attitudes toward the person of language of wider communication.

The following table shows self-reported attitudes regarding marriage to a native speaker of the LWC, analyzed by country.

**Table 33 Reported attitude toward marriage to an LWC speaker by country**

Nationalities	Attitudes			
	positive	less positive	I don't know	depend on them
Chinese	36 (75%)	12 (25%)	-	-
Thai	14 (58%)	9 (38%)	-	1 (4%)
Burmese	13 (18%)	53 (74%)	6 (8%)	-

According to Table 33, the subjects from China reported the highest positive attitude (75%) toward marriage to an LWC speaker, followed by Thailand (58%), and then Myanmar (18%).

Table 34 shows the reasons of the subjects who have less positive attitudes regarding Lisu people marrying native speakers of the LWC.

**Table 34 Reported attitude on marriage to an LWC person according to reason**

Reasons given by those with less positive attitudes regarding marriage to [LWC] person	Number of subjects
Identity	28 (35%)
Language	19 (24%)
Religion	14 (17.5%)
Morality	9 (11%)
Tradition	8 (10%)
Don't know	2 (2.5%)
Total	80 (100%)

In Table 34, 'identity' is interpreted from the answers: 'we will lose our people group', 'we must love our people group', 'we are from different people groups', 'we don't want to mix with other people groups', 'we want only Lisu young men/women to marry Lisu', 'because they married to non-Lisu', 'because they are not from our



people group', 'their children will become impure Lisu', 'not good for our people group', 'it is not good that [LWC] people live in my village because they are a different people group', 'the [LWC] people look down on us because we are from a different people group' and 'they can't live here because their spouses are from a different people group'.

'Language' as a reason for the language attitude is interpreted from the answers 'because of different languages', 'cannot communicate through the language', 'she or he can't teach Lisu to their children', 'Lisu language will be lost', 'the [LWC] people look down on us because we speak a different language from them', and 'the [LWC] people can't live here because their spouses speak different languages'.

'Religion' as a reason for the language attitude is interpreted from the answers 'because of different religions', 'because they are not Christians', 'we will lose our religion', 'the [LWC] people look down on us because we have a different religion from them', and 'they cannot live here because their spouses have a different religion from us.'

'Morality' is interpreted as the reason for the language attitude from the answers 'it is not good that the [LWC] people live in my village because they have bad morality', and 'the [LWC] people are lazy and smoke, use drugs, drink alcohol, beat our daughters, don't want to take responsibility for the family, divorced and even kill their wives'.

The reason 'tradition' is interpreted as the reason from the answers 'we have different traditions', 'the [LWC] people look down on us because we practice different traditions from them', and 'they can't live here because their spouses practice different traditions from us.'

Table 35 shows the self-reported attitudes of the subject for the question living next to language of wider communication people.

**Table 35 Reported attitudes about living next to LWC people**

Attitudes about living next to LWC people	Subject		Percentage
	Central	Peripheral	Total
Negative (not good)	27.5 (19%)	35 (25%)	62.5 (44%)
Positive (good)	33.5 (23.4%)	26 (18.2%)	59.5 (41.6%)
Neutral	5 (3.4%)	7 (5%)	12 (8.4%)
Undecided (I don't know)	6 (4%)	3 (2%)	9 (6%)
Total	72 (49.8%)	71 (50.2%)	143 (100%)

Out of 144 subjects, one subject who gave no response is not accounted in Table 35. More subjects (44%) expressed less positive attitudes toward living next door to an [LWC] person. The subjects from peripheral sites have less positive attitudes than those from the central sites in terms of attitudes regarding the language of wider communication. It is usual to see in this way because the Lisu speakers from the central sites have more opportunity to build relationship with the speakers of language of wider communication than of those from the peripheral sites. Since the Lisu speakers from the peripheral sites have less opportunity to build relationship with the speakers of language of wider communication, it is usual that they have less positive on them.

Table 36 shows self-reported attitudes toward living next to the LWC people according to country.

**Table 36 Reported attitudes to living next to LWC people by country**

Countries Attitudes	China	Myanmar	Thailand	Total
Negative (not good)	12 (8%)	43 (30%)	7.5 (5%)	62.5 (43%)
Positive (good)	29 (20%)	15 (10.5%)	15.5 (10.5%)	59.5 (41%)
Neutral	4 (3%)	8 (6%)	-	12 (9%)
Undecided (I don't know)	3 (2.8%)	5 (3.5%)	1 (0.7%)	9 (7%)
No response	-	1 (0%)	-	1 (0%)
Total	48 (33.8%)	72 (50%)	24 (16.2%)	144 (100%)

Out of 144 subjects, one subject gave no response is not counted. According to Table 36, the subjects from Myanmar reported the highest negative attitudes toward the language of wider communication, followed by China and then Thailand. For positive attitudes toward the language of wider communication, the subjects from China reported the highest percentage (20%) and the subjects from Myanmar and Thailand reported the same percentage (10.5%). The attitudes toward the language of wider communication among the subjects from Myanmar may be related to issues of ethnicity. Except the two central sites, Mankhring (MKH) and Khitsagoat (KSG), the sites from Myanmar are mostly mono-ethnic. The people living in these sites may have less positive attitudes since they have less contact with speakers of language of wider communication.

#### **4.2.2 Secondary attitudes**

The following sub-section presents secondary language attitudes, based on the Knowledgeable Insider Sociolinguistic Questionnaires.

When the leaders were asked the question 'Is it common for Lisu people from this village to marry non-Lisu people?' 5 leaders (42%) out of 12 answered 'Yes', and 7 (58%) answered 'No'.

Table 37 shows the people groups that Lisu people marry.

**Table 37 Non-Lisu people groups that the Lisu marry<sup>55</sup>**

People	Number of subjects
Burmese	1.3 (22%)
Chinese	1.2 (20%)
Japan	0.6 (10%)
Jingphaw	0.3 (5%)
Malaysian	0.3 (5%)
Isan	0.3 (5%)
White people	0.3 (5%)
Others <sup>56</sup>	0.7 (11.5%)
Undecided	1 (16.5%)
Total	6 (100%)

Table 37 shows the results when the leaders who answered ‘Yes’ were asked the question ‘What non-Lisu people do they marry?’ Out of 12 leaders, six leaders to whom the question was not applicable are not counted. Of the remaining six leaders, 22% answered Burmese, 20% answered Chinese, 10% answered Japanese, and 5% each answered Jingphaw, Malaysian, Isan, and White people. Some subjects reported other groups such as Shan, Rawang, Northern Thai, and Akha are very few (below 5%).

Out of 12 subjects, the question was not applicable for six subjects. When asked the question ‘Usually, what language do their children end up speaking?,’ half of the remaining six subjects answered Lisu, and the other half answered Chinese, the non-Lisu parents language, mother’s language (probably Lisu), or Rawang. Lisu is still spoken by half of the children in mixed-marriage families. Mixed marriage couples are mostly the Lisu women with non-Lisu men than the Lisu men with non-Lisu women. Since mothers speak more to children than the fathers speak, Lisu is still spoken by half of the mixed marriage families.

### **4.3 Contact between Lisu dialects**

Bradley (2006: xv) states that all of the Southern Lisu dialect is located in Myanmar and Thailand. The Northern and the Central Lisu dialects are mainly in China,

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<sup>55</sup> 6 subjects are not applicable for this question because they answered that there is no Lisu people who marry to non-Lisu people in their villages.

<sup>56</sup> ‘Others’ includes ‘Shan’, ‘Rawang’, ‘Northern Thai’, and ‘Akha’.

Myanmar, and only recently have migrated into Thailand. Since the Lisu dialects are spread throughout different countries, it raises the question, ‘are all the Lisu dialects intelligible each other?’ The following section presents reported intelligibility of the Lisu dialects.

### 4.3.1 Reported contact of Lisu dialects

The intelligibility among the three major Lisu dialects is compared by using Individual Sociolinguistic questions and Knowledgeable Insider Sociolinguistic questions (see Table 23 researching question 1.3, the concept ‘comprehension’).

Figure 12 shows reported contact among the major Lisu dialects.

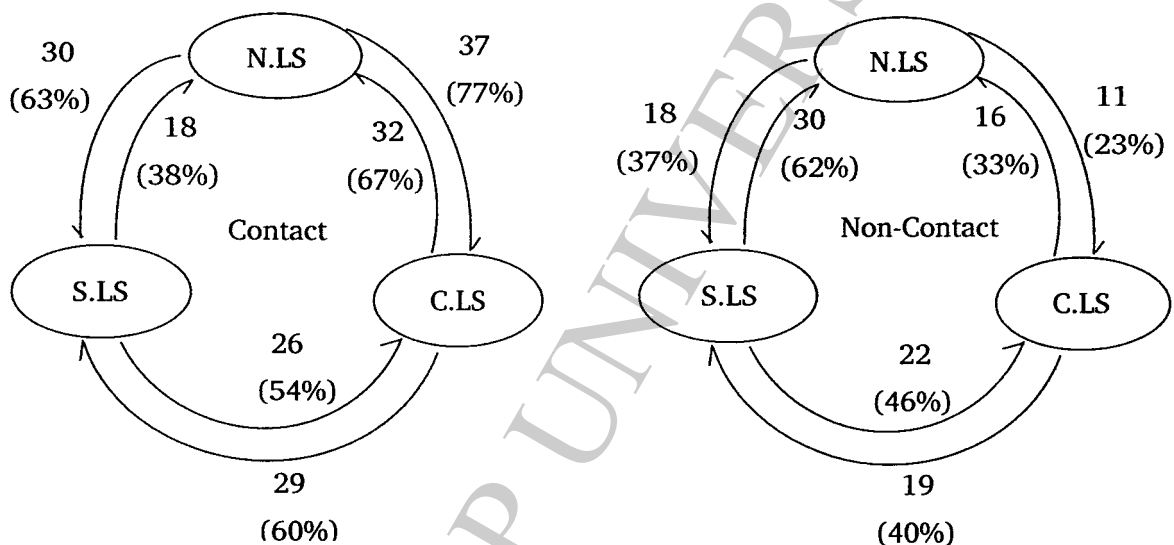


Figure 12 Reported contact among Lisu dialects

Figure 12 shows that 77% of the Northern Lisu speakers report they have contact with Central Lisu speakers, while only 63% report contact with Southern Lisu speakers. Of the Central Lisu speakers, 67% reported contact with Northern Lisu speakers, while only 60% reported contact with Southern Lisu speakers. Of the Southern Lisu speakers, 38% reported contact with Northern Lisu speakers, while 54% reported contact with Central Lisu speakers. Thus, the Northern Lisu has slightly more contact with other dialects, followed by Central Lisu, and Southern Lisu has the least contact with the other dialects.

Thus, the greatest lack of contact was reported by Southern Lisu speakers, followed by Central Lisu speakers; and Northern Lisu speakers reported the least. This can be

assumed that the Southern Lisu dialect is the most isolated and the Northern Lisu dialect is the least isolated dialect. It is true that most of the Southern Lisu sites are located in areas further from Northern and Central Lisu dialects while the Northern and Central Lisu dialects are easier to get access to each other. When Northern Lisu missionaries go to the Southern Lisu speaking areas, the contact between these two dialects increases. This is still happening in Shan state of Myanmar and in Northern Thailand. Moreover, geographically, the Northern Lisu speakers need to pass the Central Lisu speaking area for travelling purposes. The Northern Lisu speaking areas are not that much developed comparing with the Central Lisu speaking areas in Myanmar. This situation makes the Northern Lisu people travel more than the people of the other two dialects. That is why this dialect is the most active in contact with other dialects.

The following figure shows reported contact of the Lisu dialects by gender.

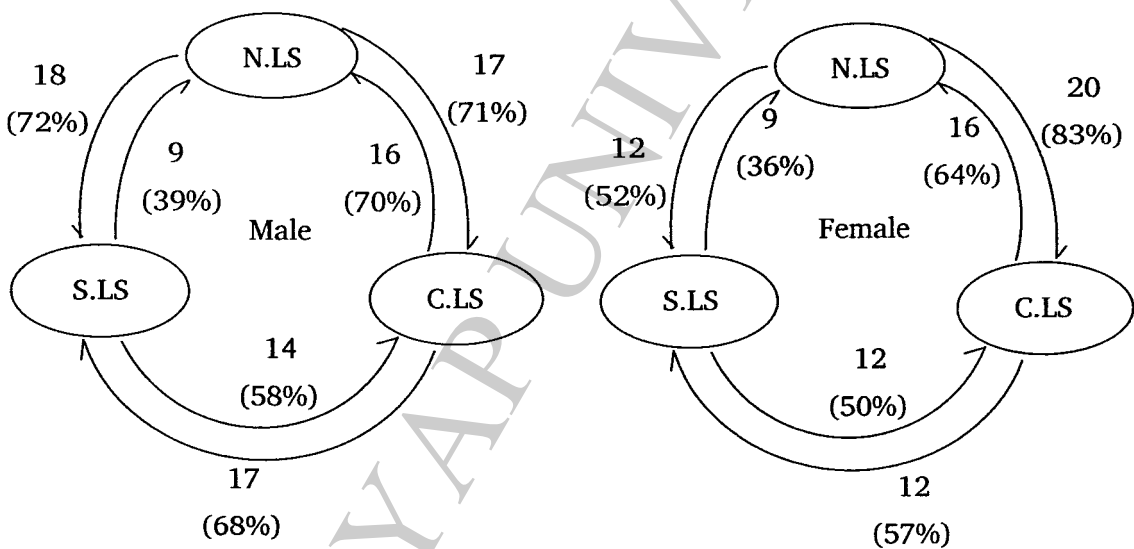


Figure 13 Reported contact by gender

According to Figure 13, generally the male subjects have more contact with other dialect speakers than women, with the exception of the female subjects from the Northern Lisu dialect (the Northern Lisu males have lesser contact with the Central Lisu speakers in comparison with the females) and the Northern Lisu females reported an unusually high 83% contact with Central Lisu speakers.

Figure 14 shows reported contact among the Lisu dialects by age.

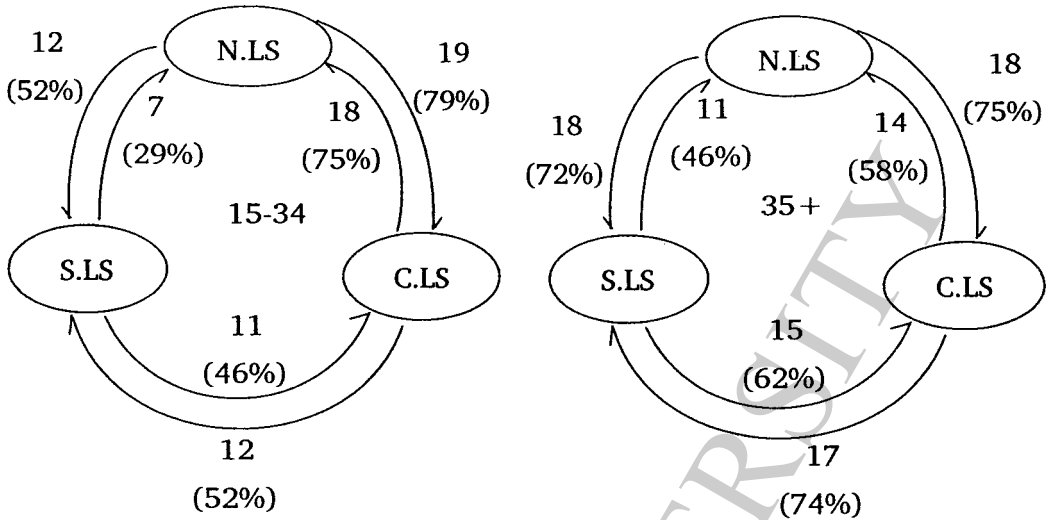


Figure 14 Reported contact by age

The younger generation (age 15-34) has more contact than the older generation (35+) between Northern and Central Lisu dialect. This is because the Central and Northern Lisu dialects are geographically close, and the younger generation of both dialects travels more than the older one, due to seeking education or jobs.

The older generation (age 35+) has more contact than the younger generation (15-34) between the Central and Southern Lisu dialects. Among several migrations, the migration due to the Cultural Revolution<sup>57</sup> in China brought many Central Lisu into Myanmar, then on to Thailand where they came into contact with Southern Lisu speakers. In the 1970s, many Southern Lisu from the highlands of Shan state, Myanmar also migrated into other areas (mostly plains areas) where they came into contact with the Central Lisu in Myanmar. After that, no further major migration took place, and the younger generations of Central and Southern Lisu speakers have had less contact with each other than the older generation. Among Southern Lisu, the older generation (35+) has more contact with speakers of other dialects than does the younger generation (age 15-34). It could be true because the older generation has more chance to travel than the younger generation in some communities. It is particularly true among the Southern Lisu speakers of Thailand because the older generation have more chance to meet with other dialects in China

<sup>57</sup> Also called 'Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution' which took place in People's Republic of China from 1966-1967.

or Myanmar before they moved into Thailand. The younger generation who were born in Thailand has less chance to meet with the speakers of other Lisu dialects because the majority of Lisu population in Thailand is Southern Lisu speakers.

#### 4.4 Attitudes toward Lisu dialects

During the study, one Central Lisu subject stated that the Northern Lisu speakers, the Lisu from China, and Moegok Lisu (who are Southern Lisu) are not Lisu because they do not use the Bible language and he does not understand what they say to him. In the same way, a Northern Lisu speaker from Myanmar also said he does not understand Southern Lisu at all.

There was no place whose speech people could agree is the most pure. When asked the question 'In your opinion, in what place is Lisu the most pure?' there were many different answers, but most people (68%) said their own community. This was particularly true among the Northern and Central Lisu sites, and less common among Southern Lisu sites. Out of many reasons, one might be the way the Southern Lisu speakers speak and write in Lisu are quite different since Lisu writing system is basically based on the Central Lisu dialect. Therefore, the Southern Lisu speakers may have a common perspective of their dialect is not a standard dialect. A few people also said Myitkyina, Putao, or China<sup>58</sup> are the most pure. Of the remaining 32%, more than half said their dialect was the most pure. Thus, the subjects have positive attitudes toward their vernacular.

Table 38 shows the self-reported reasons of the subjects regarding why they said a particular place speaks the most pure Lisu.

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<sup>58</sup> Myitkyina, Putao, and China only have speakers of the Northern and Central Lisu dialects.



**Table 38 Reported reasons for most pure places**

Reasons that Lisu is the most pure	Number of subjects
Prestige <sup>59</sup> or polite	22.5 (22.5%)
We speak this Lisu	20 (20%)
Pure	14 (14%)
Understandable or clear	11 (11%)
Lack of exposure to other varieties	10.5 (10.5%)
Bible language	9 (9%)
I don't know	6 (6%)
Everyone thinks own language is the purest	3 (3%)
Lisu from everywhere is the same	3 (3%)
Unclear <sup>60</sup>	1 (1%)
Total	100 (100%)

Out of 144 subjects, 36 subjects whose answers are not applicable for this question, 6 subjects who gave no response, one subject who is neglected to ask, and one subject whose is skipped because someone helped him are not counted. Of the remaining 100 subjects, 22.5% gave the reasons of 'prestige or polite' for saying a particular dialect or variety is the most pure. 20% say 'we speak this Lisu', 14% say 'pure', 11% say 'understandable or clear', 10.5% say 'lack of exposure to other varieties', and the other reported reasons are less than 10%.

Out of 144 subjects, the question was not applicable for 104 subjects<sup>61</sup>. When asked the question 'Have you gone to that place?' (52.5%) of the remaining 40 subjects answered 'Yes', and (47.5%) of the subjects answered 'No'.

Table 39 shows the reported attitude of the subjects regarding their own village dialect.

<sup>59</sup> The word 'prestige' includes answers such as 'the birth place of the Lisu is China', 'it is polite, it is clear, it is good to hear their speech', 'the Lisu writing system was invented here', 'it is different from other Lisu speech in the best way', 'everybody understands my Lisu', etc. One subject also answered, 'because my elders taught me so.'

<sup>60</sup> It is also Lisu language.

<sup>61</sup> 100 subjects are not applicable, 2 subjects are unsure, 1 is missed to ask, and 1 gives no response.

**Table 39 Reported attitudes regarding own village dialect**

Is the dialect spoken in this village pure?	Number of subjects
Yes	35.5 (48%)
No	25.5 (34.4%)
I don't know	8 (10.8%)
Unsure	5 (6.8%)
Not applicable	67
Neglected to ask	3
Total	144 (100%)

Out of 144 subjects, 67 subjects whose answers are not applicable for this question, and three subjects who were neglected to ask were not counted. If the subjects answered other places instead of their own village for the most pure spoken Lisu, they were asked the question, 'Is the dialect spoken in this village pure?' Of these subjects, 60% answered 'Yes' and 40% answered 'No'. Of the subjects who answered 'No', 31% were from Khitsagoat of Moegok town, and are the largest group who said that the Lisu speech of their own place is not pure. Khitsagoat (KSG) is a central site of the Southern Lisu dialects in Myanmar. According to author's observations, many Lisu speakers from this site claim that their dialect is not pure because it is mixed with other languages such as Chinese, Burmese, and Shan. Moreover, the other Lisu dialect speakers who have been to this site said the Lisu spoken in this site is not pure.

Table 40 presents the places reported as having the least pure Lisu spoken.

**Table 40 Reported least pure locations<sup>62</sup>**

In your opinion, in what place is the spoken Lisu the least pure?	Number of Subjects
Moegok	10.3
Luikhu	5.5
Khitsagoat	5
Myitkyina	4
China	3
Yulong village, Labieshan village group of Weixi Xing township	3
Aungchangtar quarter of Moegok town	2
Central Lisu	2
Shan state Lisu	2
Shitonghor	2
Northern Lisu	1.8
Nujiang county	1.5
Jiehor	0.5
Myanmar	1
Kaihor	0.5
Phingher	1
Sachew	1
Sidonyang	1
Thailand	1
Yingjiang	1
Huiko	0.5
Lilong	0.5
Villages from Nongcho township	0.5
Kalakwe village group of Kyautmae	0.5
Putao area	0.5
Khaunglanphu	0.5
Waba	0.5
Kholan village of Tak province	0.4
Khakot village of Tak province	0.4
Vankeyot village of Tak province	0.3
China	0.3
Total	54

<sup>62</sup> The subjects gave many names for this question and the answers in this table are the results of grouping the same or similar answers.

The question ‘In your opinion, in what place is spoken Lisu the least pure?’ was not applicable for 90 subjects<sup>63</sup>. The remaining 54 subjects gave many specific places. Of those subjects who gave specific locations, 32% were from Moegok<sup>64</sup> in Myanmar. Southern Lisu from Moegok is reportedly having many loanwords, especially from Chinese, Burmese, and Shan. The Lisu from this site prefer to speak Burmese rather than Lisu. Therefore, Northern and Central Lisu speakers regarded the Lisu speakers from this site as speaking the least pure Lisu. The subjects also reported Northern and Central sites as the least pure Lisu locations, but fewer than for Southern Lisu.

Table 41 presents the reasons for why the subjects said some places are least pure.

**Table 41 The reported reasons for saying why the Lisu in a place is least pure**

Why do you feel this way?	Number of Subjects
Impure	15 (28%)
Don't understand it	13 (24%)
Speak other languages more instead of Lisu	12 (22%)
Different	8 (15%)
Non-Bible Lisu	4 (7%)
Speak our Lisu more	2 (4%)
Total	54 (100%)

Out of 144 subjects, 90 subjects were not applicable for this question. The reported reasons for a dialect to be described as ‘least pure’ included using loanwords, having problem of intelligibility, speakers preferring to speak the LWC rather than Lisu, and using their own dialect instead of Bible Lisu. These reasons mainly apply to the Southern Lisu from Moegok area and to some locations of Northern and Central Lisu. There are some reasons to say that the Southern Lisu dialect from Moegok area is the least pure because the dialect from this area is different from the other Lisu dialects. For example, the dialect from Moegok tends to have extra high tone while the other Lisu dialects have normal tone.

<sup>63</sup> Out of 144 subjects, 70 subjects who answered ‘I don't know’, 8 subjects who answered ‘nowhere’, 4 subjects who gave no response, 2 subjects who answered ‘unsure’, 2 subjects who answered ‘depends’, 1 subject who answered ‘not really different’, 1 subject who answered ‘non-Christian’, 1 subject who answered ‘some other place’, and 1 subject who answered ‘the same’ are not counted.

<sup>64</sup> Khitsagoat (KSG), and Aungchangthar quarter are in Moegok town.

Table 42 shows a tone comparison between Southern Lisu (Moegok variety) with Northern and Central Lisu.

**Table 42 Tone comparison between Southern Lisu (Moegok variety) with Northern Lisu and Central Lisu dialects**

Gloss	Northern Lisu	Central Lisu	Southern Lisu (Moegok variety)
'ant'	[bo <sup>217</sup> lo <sup>33</sup> ]	[bo <sup>217</sup> lo <sup>33</sup> ]	[bo <sup>55</sup> lo <sup>33</sup> ]
'forehead'	[na <sup>33</sup> ga <sup>217</sup> ]	[na <sup>33</sup> ga <sup>217</sup> ]	[na <sup>55</sup> ga <sup>557</sup> ]
'sleep'	[ji <sup>217</sup> mi <sup>33</sup> ]	[ji <sup>217</sup> mi <sup>33</sup> ]	[ji <sup>557</sup> mi <sup>33</sup> ]

According to Table 42, the words 'ant', 'forehead', and 'sleep' in Moegok Lisu variety have extra high tones in the initial syllables. Having many Chinese loanwords and using many Burmese terms may be make the Moegok Lisu variety more distinct from other Lisu dialects.

Moreover, there are many Lisu speakers who believe their own dialect is the best and other dialects are impure. According to the author's observations, some subjects among the Southern Lisu speakers said that the Lisu from China, which means Northern Lisu and Central Lisu are impure because they used many Chinese words.

If the subjects have been to the places where the least pure Lisu is spoken in person or having experiences of contacting with the least pure Lisu speakers, their reported answers tend to have more accuracy than those who have not been and who have no experience. Therefore, the questions like whether the subjects have been to the least pure Lisu spoken place or not are asked to weight the answers of the subjects

After the subjects were asked where is the least pure Lisu dialect spoken, a followed up question was asked to determine if they have been there or not. This helps to access the reliability of their answers.

Table 43 shows whether or not the subjects have been to the places where the least pure Lisu is spoken.

**Table 43 Reported contact with place where the least pure Lisu is spoken**

Have you visited that place?	Number of Subjects
Yes	24 (52%)
No	22 (48%)
Total	46 (100%)

Of 144 subjects, 98 subjects<sup>65</sup> are not counted. Of the remaining 46 subjects, 52% answered ‘Yes’, and 48% answered ‘No’. Of those who answered ‘Yes’, 30% have been to Moegok township. Thus, Moegok township is reported the least pure place comparing with other places.

#### 4.5 Attitudes toward Lisu scripts currently in use

The Lisu people have several scripts in use in the various countries where they live. The Fraser script is widely used in China, Myanmar, Thailand, and India. Additionally, the Northern Lisu script is used in China, Burmese based script in Myanmar, and Modified Fraser script among some educated Lisu.

Table 44 will describe the attitudes of the subjects toward the Lisu scripts currently used.

**Table 44 Attitudes toward Lisu scripts**

Best script	Fraser	Northern Lisu	Modified Fraser	Burmese character based	Don't know	Total
Subjects	102 (71%)	15 (10%)	10 (7%)	10 (7%)	7 (5%)	144 (100%)

When asked the question ‘Which script do you like the best?’ the subjects reported they like Fraser script the most (71%), then the Northern Lisu script (10%), and Modified Fraser script and Burmese character based script the least (7%). During the field work, the author had informal conversations which would seem to indicate that non-Christians prefer the Burmese based script and the younger generation prefers the Modified Fraser script.

<sup>65</sup> Out of 144 subjects, 91 subjects who answered ‘not applicable,’ 4 subjects who gave no response, and 3 subjects who were not asked have not been counted.

When asked why they prefer the Fraser script, the subjects who preferred that script gave the following answers: ‘it is easy to use’, ‘we are able to read the Bible’, ‘we are used to it’, ‘it relates to our identity’, and ‘it is unique’. When asked why they prefer the Modified Fraser script, those subjects gave these answers: ‘it is easy to use’, ‘similar to English’, ‘good for future generations’, and ‘something which we want to learn’. When asked why they prefer the Burmese based script, those subjects answered that it is easy to use, is what they are used to, and many of the Buddhist subjects said it relates to their identity. When asked why they prefer the Northern Lisu script, those subjects answered they prefer it because it is similar to English, easy to use, and similar to the Fraser script.

Table 45 shows self-reporting of Lisu scripts which subjects are interested in being able to use. This information comes from the Group Sociolinguistic Questionnaires.

**Table 45 Reported script that the subjects are interested in using**

Scripts	Fraser	Modified Fraser	Northern Lisu	Burmese character based	Total
Subjects	8.8 (73.7%)	1.5 (12.5%)	1.3 (11%)	0.4 (2.8%)	12 (100%)

When asked the question ‘what kind of script do you think your village is interested in using?’ the subjects reported that they are interested in using Fraser script the most (73.7%), followed by Modified Fraser script (12.5%), then Northern Lisu script (11%), and Burmese character based script the least (2.8%).

When asked why they preferred the Fraser script, they said because it is easy to learn, the Bible language, original script, and relates to their identity. When asked the question why they prefer the Modified Fraser script, they said because it is easy to learn, and relates to their identity. When asked the question why they prefer the Burmese based script, only one group Khitsagoat (KSG) said they are used to it. One group, Sidonyang (SDY) said that Northern Lisu is similar to English.

In this survey, the easiest Lisu script to learn is asked for the purpose of potential vernacular literature development.

Table 46 shows self-reported easiest script to learn.

**Table 46 Reported easiest script to learn**

Easiest script to learn	Fraser	Modified Fraser	Burmese character based	Northern Lisu	Don't know	Total
Subjects	103.5 (71.6%)	10 (7%)	14 (10%)	4.5 (3%)	12 (8.4%)	144 (100%)

When asked the question ‘Which script is easiest to learn?’ 71.6% of the subjects answered the Fraser script, 10% answered the Burmese based script, 7% answered the Modified Fraser script, and 3% answered the Northern Lisu script. Many subject reported that the Fraser script is the easiest to learn because it has been using among Lisu (mostly among Christians) for many decades and it is the only widely used script. The Burmese based script is well known among some Buddhist Lisu from Moegok area in Myanmar. This script is particularly supported by the Lisu Buddhists but not by the Lisu Christians.

In this survey, the Lisu script that the subjects do not like is investigated for the purpose of potential vernacular literature development.

Table 47 shows Lisu scripts the subjects do not like.

**Table 47 Reported do not like script by individual**

Don't like script	No	Yes	Don't know	Total
Subjects	109 (75.6%)	33 (23%)	2 (1.4%)	144 (100%)

When asked the question ‘Are there any scripts that you don't like?’ 23% of the subjects answered ‘Yes’, 75.6% of the subjects answered ‘No’, and two subjects (1.4%) answered ‘I don't know’. If the subjects said that there is a script that they do not like, they were asked the question ‘Which ones? Why don't you like it/them?’ The most common reason for not liking a script was difficulty in learning to read and write in that script. Of the 33 subjects who did not like one of the scripts, 69% answered the Burmese based script, 17% said the Northern Lisu script, 12.5% said the Modified Fraser script, and 1.5% said the Fraser script.

When asked the question ‘Why don't you like the Burmese based script?’ the subjects answered because it cannot represent the Lisu sounds, Burmese characters, very



complicated, difficult to learn, difficult to write, not familiar, don't like it at all, new, not Lisu script, and nobody uses it.

When asked the question 'Why don't you like the Northern Lisu script?' the subjects answered because it cannot represent the real Lisu sounds, is very complicated, difficult to learn, nobody uses it, not familiar, and difficult to write. When asked the question 'Why don't you like the Modified Fraser script?' the subjects answered because it is difficult to learn, nobody uses it, not familiar, and difficult to write. When asked the question 'Why don't you like the Fraser script?' the subjects gave no response.

Table 48 shows self-reported Lisu scripts the groups do not like.

**Table 48 Reported do not like scripts by group**

Scripts	Burmese character based	Modified Fraser	Northern Lisu	No	Total
Subjects	1.34 (67%)	0.33 (16.5%)	0.33 (16.5%)	10	12

When asked which script they did not like, none of the group mentioned the Fraser script. Only two groups mentioned a script they do not like. One group from Hokho said the Burmese based script and another group from Mankhring referred to the Modified Fraser script, the Burmese character based script and the Northern Lisu script. The site Mankhring was a place where the Fraser script was developed, therefore the people have strong negative attitude to other scripts, except Fraser script. When asked why they do not like these scripts, they said because they cannot write Lisu the way it is spoken by using the new scripts. Before Burmese based script was developed, the non-Christian Lisu asked the Christians to teach them the Fraser script. However, the Lisu Christians did not want to teach non-Lisu Christians and they believe it is part of Christianity since the missionaries developed it. Therefore, non-Christian Lisu people have to develop their own script that is based on Burmese scripts. Over the years, tension between use of Fraser script and the Burmese based script is growing, with Fraser script supported by Christian Lisu and Burmese based script by non-Christian Lisu.

According to author's observation, most of the Lisu leaders have strong opposition to the Modified Fraser script. This was more common among the Central Lisu leaders

who strongly support the Fraser script, since it was mainly based on Central Lisu, and the first Lisu Bible is printed in this script. There were some informal meetings among the Lisu Christian leaders over the use of Modified Fraser script, but the community has not yet accepted it. One of the reasons for developing Modified Fraser script is to make it easier to type; because Fraser script cannot be typed on any computer without installing special fonts. Moreover, there are also problems with using it online. For example, the Fraser script is not available to use for mailing through internet or creating the web because some characters of this script are in both upright and inverted forms (see detail in Appendix C). For the majority of Lisu, typing is not considered a major problem since it is not an essential part of everyday life.

More from the surveyor's observation, the Northern Lisu script and the Modified Fraser script are considered to be non-Lisu scripts; they are like other scripts such as Jingphaw or English. In the same way, the Burmese based script is criticized as Burmese letters spelling Lisu sounds. In general, most Lisu people support the Fraser scripts uniqueness regardless of the difficulty in typing.

## **4.6 Language vitality**

Edwards (1985: 49) states that language vitality is relying on how a language can fulfill the needs of its speakers. As long as a language is important, useful, and meaningful for its speech community, vitality of this language is strong. The vitality of Lisu is measured by the Knowledgeable Insider Sociolinguistic questions 24, 25, and 30, the Group Sociolinguistic question numbers 22, 23, 26, 27, 28, 29 and 30, the Individual Sociolinguistic question numbers 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, and 58.

The following sub-sections present results of the questionnaires regarding language vitality of Lisu.

### **4.6.1 Proficiency of children in the Lisu language**

The proficiency of children in Lisu language is somehow showed the vitality of the Lisu language. This proficiency is tested by using Group Sociolinguistic questions number 26, 27, and 30 as well as the Individual Sociolinguistic questions numbers 35, 36, 37, 38, and 39.

The following table shows children's first language(s).

**Table 49 Reported first language of children<sup>66</sup>**

First language of children	Lisu	Burmese	Total
Hokho	0.5	0.5	1
Mulashide	1	-	1
Yeekhwabe	1	-	1
Labieshan	1	-	1
Mankhring	1	-	1
Dawobya	1	-	1
Shitonghor	1	-	1
Muchunpo	1	-	1
Khitsagoat	1	-	1
Thiwangmie	1	-	1
Sidonyang	1	-	1
Mokhoto	1	-	1
Total	11.5	0.5	12

When asked the question ‘Normally, after a Lisu child is born, what language does s/he speak first?’ all the groups answered Lisu. However, one group from Hokho answered that the national language, Burmese, is spoken in addition to Lisu.

When asked the question ‘Can Lisu children speak another language before they start school?’ nine groups answered ‘No’, and three groups answered ‘Yes’. Table 50 shows the languages children speak before school.

<sup>66</sup> ‘LS’ represents ‘Lisu’, and ‘BM’ represents ‘Burmese’.

**Table 50 Languages children speak before school**

Languages children speak before school	Burmese	Chinese	Not applicable
Dawobya	-	-	1
Hokho	-	-	1
Khitsagoat	1	-	-
Labieshan	-	-	1
Mankhring	-	-	1
Mokhoto	-	-	1
Muchunpo	-	1	-
Mulashide	-	-	1
Shitonghor	-	1	-
Sidonyang	-	-	1
Thiwangmie	-	-	1
Yeekhwabe	-	-	1
Total	1	2	9

When asked the question ‘What languages do they speak before school?’ one group from Khitsagoat answered Burmese and one group each from Muchunpo and Shitonghor answered Chinese. Only three out of twelve groups answered that children in their location can speak other languages (national languages) before school. It is usual that children speak the national languages before school in Khitsagoat and Shitonghor because they are the central sites; but one of the three sites, Muchunpo in China, is a peripheral site; therefore, it is unusual that children at this site speak the national language before beginning school. This could be that the children learn Chinese from the bilingual parents before they go to school. However, there is no school in this village. The other possible reason is due to the national language speakers who often come to the Bible school of the village for teaching purposes.

Use of vernacular language among the children is also a crucial factor to maintain the language. If the children of a language is not using own language, the language has less chance to survive. In contrast, if the children of this particular language use own language, the vitality of this language is strong.

Use of vernacular language among the children is also a crucial factor to maintain the language. If the children are not using the mother tongue, the language has low vitality. In contrast, if the children are using the mother tongue, the language has high vitality.

Table 51 shows languages that the next generation of children are expected to speak.

**Table 51 Attitude on the use of Lisu among the next generations**

When the children of your village grow up, do you think the Lisu children they give birth to might speak the Lisu language?	What do you think about that: Is it good or bad?	Groups
Yes	good	9.5 (79%)
No	not good	1.5 (13%)
No	neutral	1 (8%)
Total	-	12 (100%)

When asked the question ‘When the children of your village grow up, do you think the Lisu children they give birth to might speak the Lisu language?’ 79% of the groups answered ‘Yes’, and 13% (Yikuaibi, Khitsagoat, and Sidonyang)<sup>67</sup> answered ‘No’. When asked ‘What do you think about that: is it good or bad?’, 79% of the groups who answered ‘Yes’ said it is good, and of the groups who answered ‘No’, 13% said it is not good; 8% said ‘it doesn’t matter’.

In order to maintain a language, the role of children as well as the parents are important. Children primarily learn languages from their parents. If the parents teach the vernacular language to their children, the language will be preserved by the next generation. In contrast, if the parents do not teach the vernacular language, the language may not survive. The following table presents the languages that Lisu parents teach to their children as well as Lisu language use by children in different

<sup>67</sup> These three sites are all from central areas and each site has strong exposure to national languages or regional languages.

domains.

**Table 52 Languages the parents teach to children and Lisu use by the children**

	Teach other languages		Lisu use by the children		
	Yes	No	play	at home	parents
China	15.5 (34%)	30.5 (66%)	45 (96%)	40 (95%)	47.5 (99%)
Myanmar	24 (35%)	45 (65%)	62.5 (87%)	44.5 (89%)	71 (99%)
Thailand	11 (46%)	13 (54%)	13.8 (58%)	18.9 (82%)	22.8 (95%)

The greatest number of subjects from Thailand reported that Lisu parents teach other languages to their children (46%), followed by the subjects from Myanmar (35%), and then China (34%).

Since more parents from Thailand are teaching other languages to their children than the parents from China and Myanmar, Lisu proficiency of children from Thailand is tending to shift to other languages, probably the languages of wider communication. Moreover, Lisu use by children from Thailand in the same domains is less than that of China and Myanmar. Therefore, there is potential for language shift in Thailand.

The following subsection presents language attitudes.

#### 4.6.2 Language attitudes

In this sub-section, language attitudes of the subjects were studied by asking whether or not the next generation will speak Lisu. Table 53 presents self-reported answers for whether the next Lisu generation will speak Lisu.

**Table 53 The Lisu use of next generation**

	No	Yes	Don't know	Total
Subjects	13 (9%)	126 (87.5%)	5 (3.5%)	144 (100%)

When asked the question 'When the children of your village grow up, do you think the Lisu children they give birth to might speak the Lisu language?' 5 (3.5%)

subjects did not know, 126 (87.5%) subjects answered 'Yes', and 13 (9%) subjects answered 'No.' Of the 13 subjects who said 'No', 12 subjects (92%) were Southern Lisu speakers<sup>68</sup>. In each location, the vast majority answered 'Yes'. Thus, reported use of Lisu among the next generation of the Southern Lisu is less than that of the Northern or Central Lisu. According to author's observations, the younger generation from Southern Lisu sites prefers to speak the language of wider communication than Lisu. It is particularly true among three out of four Southern Lisu sites: Khitsagoat (KSG), Sidonyang (SDY), and Hongkhong (MKT). Khitsagoat is a central site, most of the younger generation does not speak Lisu, and Northern Thai is spoken more frequently than Lisu among the younger generation in two sites from Thailand, Sidonyang (SDY) and Hongkhong (MKT).

The 13 subjects who answered 'No' were asked the question 'How do you feel about that, good or not good?' 11 of these subjects answered 'not good'. Thus, language attitudes toward Lisu are positive even among those answered that the next generation will not speak Lisu in their location.

#### **4.6.3 Ethno-linguistic make up of the villages**

The number of speakers of a language is one of the factors involve in maintaining the language. If the number of speakers of a language is small, this language has less chance to survive unless the speakers of this language are the crucial members of the community. In contrast, if a language is spoken by all or majority of the community, the vitality of this language is stronger. This sub-section will examine which other ethno-linguistic groups live with the Lisu and the size of their population in the Lisu villages, in terms of number of houses.

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<sup>68</sup> Specifically, 6 were from Sidonyang, 4 from Khitsagoat, 1 from Mokhoto, and 1 from Thiwangmie.

Table 54 shows the language groups which live in the survey sites.

**Table 54 Ethno-linguistic make-up of the survey sites<sup>69</sup>**

Sites People	HKH	MLSD	YKB	LBS	MKH	DWB	STH	MCP	KSG	TWM	SDY	MKT
Lisu	82	240	100	100	193	100	64	33	150	100	134	136
Gorakhar	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	70	-	-	-
Burmese	2	-	-	-	5	-	-	-	50	-	-	-
Akha	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	49	-
Khamti Shan	36	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Rawang	1	30	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Chinese	11	-	-	-	-	-	3	1	-	-	-	2
Shan	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	10	-	-	2
Jingphaw	-	-	-	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Karen	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

When the leaders were asked how many houses of each ethnic group were in their villages, in all villages Lisu are the largest group. There is no other ethnic group but Lisu alone is found in the villages Yeekhwabe, Labieshan, Dawobya, and Thiwangmie<sup>70</sup>. Since these sites are mono-ethnic, Lisu use tends to be strong in these sites. The leaders also reported non-Lisu groups living in some villages, such as in HKH with 36 houses of Khamti Shan and 11 houses of Chinese; MLSD with 30 houses of Rawang; KSG with 70 houses of Gorakhar, 50 houses of Burmese, and 10 houses of Shan; and SDY with 49 houses of Akha. There are also some groups such as Jingphaw and Karen in these villages, but not in significant numbers. Since Lisu is the majority of the village's population at the survey sites, the ethno-linguistic make up contributes positively to language vitality.

<sup>69</sup> 'HKH' represents 'Hokho', 'MLSD' is 'Mulashide', 'YKB' is 'Yikuaibi', 'LBS' is 'Labieshan', 'MKH' is 'Mankhring', 'DWB' is 'Dawobya', 'STH' is 'Shitonghor', 'MCP' is 'Muchunpo', 'KSG' is 'Khitsagoat', 'TWM' is 'Thiawangmie', 'SDY' is 'Sidonyang', and 'MKT' is 'Hongkhong'.

<sup>70</sup> This data is based on the reported answers from the village leaders. In practical, there might be some intermarriage going on in those sites (may be very few percentage) but the village leaders reported that there is no other ethnic group in those sites.



#### 4.6.4 Reported language shift

This sub-section presents results from asking village leaders the question, 'Are there Lisu people in this village who cannot speak Lisu at all?' If the number of people who cannot speak Lisu are many, the language may be shifting. In contrast, if the number of people who cannot speak Lisu is not many, the language shows no shift.

The leaders from all 12 villages, answered there are no Lisu people who cannot speak Lisu at all. Thus, all of the Lisu people in the sites where the survey took place can speak Lisu. The language proficiency of speakers of a language can indirectly indicate the vitality of that language. In other words, if there are many speakers who cannot speak the vernacular language, the vitality of this language is not strong. However, there is no Lisu who cannot speak Lisu in all the surveyed sites. This means the vitality of Lisu language is strong.

Table 55 shows reported proficiency in Lisu according to central and peripheral sites.

**Table 55 Reported proficiency in Lisu by site**

Proficiency by site	Yes	No	Total
Central	3	3	6
Peripheral	0	6	6
Total	3	9	12

Since three out of the six leaders from central sites said that there are Lisu people who cannot speak Lisu very well, and none of the six Lisu leaders from peripheral sites said that there are Lisu people who cannot speak Lisu very well, there may be some sort of shift starting among the Lisu in the central sites. This is particularly true among the younger generation since they have more exposure to the language of wider communication than the older generation. According to observations of the author, almost all younger generation and most of the older generation from Khitsagoat (KSG), the central site of Southern Lisu dialect in Myanmar speak Burmese than Lisu. Most of the older generation are bilingual while the younger generation are monolingual in Burmese in this site. Moreover, needs for using the language of wider communication may create a shift among the Lisu speakers of central sites (see more detail about the KSG Lisu variety in Section 4.4).

When the leaders were asked whether there are Lisu people in this village who cannot speak Lisu at all or not, they all answered 'No'. Thus, all the people in the villages appear to be able to speak Lisu.

#### **4.6.5 Attitudes toward reading and writing in Lisu**

Attitudes of speakers of a language to its writing and reading also plays a major role for vitality of the language. If the speakers of a language are less positive about being able to read and write in their language, the vitality of this language is not strong. Thus, in order to test the vitality of Lisu, the subjects were asked the questions related with their reading and writing.

When asked the question 'Is there any benefit in being able to read and write Lisu?' nearly everybody (99.3%), with the exception of two subjects, answered that there are benefits to being able to read and write in Lisu. The perceived benefits include reinforcing identity, religious benefits, literacy, and improved communications. The motivation of Lisu speakers toward Lisu reading and writing is relatively strong. Therefore, the language vitality in terms of reading and writing in Lisu is positive.

#### **4.7 Summary**

The results of the sociolinguistics questionnaires presented above showed that the younger generation speak the language of wider communication better than the older generation (see Section 4.1.1). The bilingual ability of subjects from the countries of China, Myanmar, and Thailand is good and subjects from central sites have greater bilingual capabilities than those from peripheral sites. The Central Lisu speakers have greater bilingual ability than Southern or Northern Lisu speakers. Since Northern Lisu is one of the languages of wider communication in China and Myanmar, Northern Lisu speakers have the least bilingual ability among the three Lisu dialects. By country, Myanmar reported the highest bilingual ability, then Thailand, and China the least.

Both in the home domain and outside the home domain, Lisu is most strongly used in China, followed by Myanmar and then Thailand. However, China reported the highest positive attitudes toward the language of wider communication, followed by Thailand and then Myanmar.

No single place is agreed upon as the most pure, but more than half of the subjects

said their own community. This was particularly true among Northern and Central sites, and less common among Southern sites. In other words, all Lisu have positive attitudes toward their own dialects.

As for the Lisu scripts, the Fraser script is reported to be the most favored script by a majority of the subjects. Out of many possible reasons, it could be because this script is the first script for the Lisu and it has been using for more than eight decades. The Lisu Christians use it the most because the Lisu Bible and hymns are transcribed in this script.

There may be some shift beginning among the Lisu in central sites. Many subjects reported that Lisu from Moegok township in Myanmar (where Southern Lisu is spoken) is the least pure. Subjects from Thailand reported the lowest use of Lisu by children, while China reported the highest, then Myanmar. Therefore, there may be a potential language shift of Lisu in Thailand. Since all sites where the survey took place in Thailand are Southern Lisu speaking areas, the reported use of Lisu among the next generation of Southern Lisu is lower than of Northern and Central Lisu.