

## **Chapter 6**

### **Design of Laomian/Laopin Sociolinguistic Survey**

#### **6.1 Introduction**

Chapter 6 presents the design for a sociolinguistic survey of the Bisoid language varieties known as Laomian and Laopin spoken in the counties of Menghai, Lancang and Menglian in Yunnan Province, China. In July and August 2012 one Laopin village and four Laomian villages were visited during the survey fieldwork trip. The trip was taken by the author and an interpreter.

#### **6.2 Goals of Survey and Research Questions**

There are three main goals of the Laomian/Laopin sociolinguistic survey. Each goal has specific research questions that contribute to answering each respective goal. The goals of this study are to assess the need for vernacular language development, determine which variety should be selected for development and assess the best approach to language development for the Laomian/Laopin.

The main goals and the research questions related to each goal are described in more detail in the following subsections.

##### **6.2.1 Goal 4: Assess the need for language development**

In order to assess the need for vernacular language development among the Laomian/Laopin people in Yunnan Province, the research questions 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3 described below evaluate the potential for Laomian/Laopin speakers in Yunnan Province to use materials developed in LWCs used in the area, i.e., Lahu, Dai<sup>7</sup>, and Chinese. In a similar way, the research questions 4.4 and 4.5 investigate the potential for Laomian/Laopin speakers to use materials developed in Thailand Bisu. The research questions 4.6 and 4.7 examine the potential for Laomian/Laopin speakers to use materials developed in Pyen. While the research question 4.8 determines the sociolinguistic relationship between Laomian/Laopin varieties

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<sup>7</sup> The word 'Dai' using here is an umbrella term for Taic varieties in Yunnan, China. These varieties include Tai Lue which is spoken mainly in Xishuangbanna and Tai Nuea which is spoken more widely but whose central variety is often taken to be Mangshi – see Chantanaroj (2007) for more details.

spoken in Yunnan Province and other Bisoid varieties, the research question 4.9 evaluates the vitality of Laomian/Laopin in Yunnan Province.

**Research Question 4.1:** Do Laomian/Laopin speakers master the spoken form of the LWC (Dai; Lahu; Chinese) adequately?

**Research Question 4.2:** Do Laomian/Laopin speakers master the written form of the LWC (Dai; Lahu; Chinese) adequately?

**Research Question 4.3:** What are the attitudes of Laomian/Laopin speakers toward the LWC (Dai; Lahu; Chinese) both spoken and written?

**Research Question 4.4:** Do Laomian/Laopin speakers adequately comprehend Thailand Bisu?

**Research Question 4.5:** What are the attitudes of Laomian/Laopin speakers to spoken Thailand Bisu?

**Research Question 4.6:** Do Laomian/Laopin speakers adequately comprehend Pyen?

**Research Question 4.7:** What are the attitudes of Laomian/Laopin speakers to spoken Pyen?

**Research Question 4.8:** What are the types, natures and extents of interactions between Laomian/Laopin varieties and between Laomian/Laopin and other Bisoid varieties in China, Myanmar, Thailand and Laos?

**Research Question 4.9:** Does it appear likely that Laomian/Laopin will continue to be spoken by future generation(s)?

### **6.2.2 Goal 5: Determine which variety should be selected for development**

If a need for vernacular language development is found, it is necessary to evaluate the suitability of each Laomian/Laopin variety for development. In order to determine which variety should be selected for development, research question 5.1 evaluates the linguistic relationship between Laomian/Laopin varieties spoken in Yunnan Province. The research questions 5.2 and 5.3 determine the sociolinguistic relationship between Laomian/Laopin varieties spoken in Yunnan Province while the research question 5.4 evaluates the desire of Laomian/Laopin speakers in Yunnan Province for vernacular language development.

**Research Question 5.1:** What is the (approximate) level of intelligibility between Laomian/Laopin varieties spoken in Yunnan Province?

**Research Question 5.2:** How do a Laomian/Laopin people perceive the Laomian/Laopin varieties in China?

**Research Question 5.3:** What are the types, natures and extents of interactions between Laomian/Laopin varieties in Yunnan?

**Research Question 5.4:** Do Laomian/Laopin speakers want a language development program for Laomian/Laopin?

### **6.2.3 Goal 6: Determine the best approach to language development for the Laomian/Laopin**

In order to determine the best approach to language development for Laomian/Laopin in Yunnan Province, it is necessary to evaluate the potential for Thailand Bisu or Pyen materials to be adapted for Laomian/Laopin speakers in Yunnan Province (Research Question 6.1 and 6.2) and to evaluate the best script to use for vernacular literature for Laomian/Laopin speakers in Yunnan Province (Research Question 6.3).

**Research Question 6.1:** Can Thailand Bisu materials be adapted for use by Laomian/Laopin speakers in Yunnan Province?

**Research Question 6.2:** Can materials for use by Laomian/Laopin speakers in Yunnan Province be adapted from Pyen materials or even jointly developed with Pyen?

**Research Question 6.3:** What are the attitudes of Laomian/Laopin speakers to the possible scripts (Lahu; Pinyin)?

To answer the above research questions, this study used various survey instruments to gather information from the respondents. These instruments are described in Section 6.3.

## **6.3 Instruments**

The survey instruments used in this study are described in the following subsections. Since the instruments are broadly the same as those used for the Pyen survey described in section 4.3, only brief descriptions are given here. Section 6.3.1 describes the Individual Sociolinguistic Questionnaire (ISLQ) while the

Knowledgeable Insider Questionnaire (KIQ) is presented in Section 6.3.3. The Dialect Mapping Tool (DMT) and Observation Question List (OQL) are described in Sections 6.3.4 and 6.3.5 respectively. The Myanmar Tibeto-Burman 462-item Wordlist (WL) is described in Section 6.3.6.

### **6.3.1 Individual Sociolinguistic Questionnaire (ISLQ)**

In each village, 12 subjects were selected (as described in Section 6.5.2) and investigated using the Individual Sociolinguistic Questionnaire (ISLQ). This questionnaire is given in Appendix B.

### **6.3.2 Literacy Proficiency Test**

A Literacy Proficiency Test was used to provide objective evidence of the proficiency in reading and writing of those subjects who claimed to be literate in a particular script. Subjects were asked to read a short text aloud and the survey team rated their reading for speed, number of mistakes and confidence. Speed was rated as Fast, Medium, or Slow. The number of mistakes observed were recorded in the following categories: Every sentence, Mistakes in 1-3 words, or No Mistakes. Confidence was rated on a Yes/No scale. Similarly for the writing proficiency test, subjects were asked to write their names, and the survey team rated their writing for speed, number of mistakes and confidence. The number of mistakes observed when they were writing their names were recorded in the following categories: mistakes in 1-3 words or characters, or No mistakes. Confidence was rated on a Yes/No scale. Background research led to texts being prepared in Lahu, Tai Lue, Chinese (Mandarin) in Chinese script and Chinese (Mandarin) in Pinyin script. The texts are given in Appendix I.

### **6.3.3 Knowledgeable Insider Questionnaire (KIQ)**

In each village, village leaders or elders who know about the language and social situation were interviewed using the Knowledgeable Insider Questionnaire (KIQ). This questionnaire is given in Appendix C.

### **6.3.4 Dialect Mapping Tool (DMT)**

In each village, a group of people who know about other Bisoid villages were interviewed using the Dialect Mapping Tool (DMT). The steps of how to use the DMT are given in Appendix E.

### **6.3.5 Observation Question List (OQL)**

Every day the survey team members took time to work through the Observation Question List (OQL). They noted answers for what they had observed that day. The list of questions is given in Appendix F.

### **6.3.6 Myanmar Tibeto-Burman 462-item Wordlist**

The Myanmar Tibeto-Burman 462-item wordlist used for this survey is shown in Appendix A, and its development is given in Section 4.3.6. The wordlist items are given in Lahu, Chinese and English.

### **6.3.7 Recorded Text Tests (RTTs)**

The Pyen RTT story and the Thailand Bisu RTT story were used for this survey. Section 4.3.7 describes the development of the two RTT stories. A description of the RTT methodology, a 3-question Practice story, screening questions, RTT questions and post-RTT questions are given in Appendix G.

## **6.4 Site Selection**

Four Laomian villages and one Laopin village were visited in this survey. The sites for this survey were selected from the Laomian/Laopin villages in the counties of Lancang, Menglian and Menghai, Yunnan Province, China. The survey sites were chosen by the following general principles:

- size – large villages are preferred
- homogeneity – villages that are not ethnically mixed will be preferred
- vitality – villages labelled as ‘strong’ by Ji Hongli (2005:45-46) were preferred because the villages labelled as ‘weak’ showed much evidence of language shift to Lahu.
- connectedness – Van Phin village in Mengzhe has connections with the Pyen villages in Myanmar.
- village included in previous research – some villages included in previous research by Ji Hongli (2005) and Xu Shixuan (2002) are included but some villages from which no data has been reported are also included.

The reasons why survey sites were chosen are listed in Table 40.

**Table 40 Names of Survey Sites and Reasons for their Inclusion**

Village Name	Township	County	Reason Selected
Donzhu Laomianzhai	Zhutang	Lancang	Showed strong vitality in Ji's research; pure Laomian
Van Kawn Laomianzhai	Laba	Lancang	No previous data
Fubang Laomianzhai	Fubang	Lancang	No previous data
Fu'aj Laomianzhai	Fuyan	Menglian	In Menglian county; no previous data from this village
Van Phin	Mengzhe	Menghai	Only village in county; connections with Pyen villages; pure Laopin; already met one individual from here

## 6.5 Subject Selection

This section presents the criteria for subject selection and the plan for contacting potential subjects.

### 6.5.1 Wordlist LRP selection

The surveyors contacted village leaders and asked them to invite at least 2 speakers who satisfied the following criteria.

1. Each LRP should be a mother-tongue speaker of the Laomian or Laopin.
2. Both parents of each LRP were mother-tongue speakers of Laomian or Laopin.
3. Each LRP should have lived in the village all or most of their life.
4. At least one LRP should be a man who is 45 years old or above.
5. The LRP who is recorded should have a full set of teeth and speak clearly.

The wordlists were compared with wordlists already recorded from Thailand Bisu and Pyen in Myanmar. The representativeness of the LRP was enhanced by having more than one speaker present when the words were first elicited so that if there was any disagreement on the Laomian/Laopin word for a particular item, the issue can be discussed. A group of 3-4 native speakers were involved in the elicitation of the wordlist. However, only one speaker was chosen to record the wordlist in each village.

### 6.5.2 Individual Sociolinguistic Questionnaire subject selection

The ISLQ subjects were chosen according to the following three criteria. If they did not meet all three criteria, then they were not part of the target population, and thus, will not be tested.

1. The subject is from a Laomian/Laopin village. This is defined as growing up in a Laomian/Laopin village, living in a Laomian/Laopin village at present, and, if they have lived outside the village, their time elsewhere is not over 20% of their life.
2. The subject speaks the mother tongue either first or best.
3. The subject has at least one parent who is a mother-tongue speaker of the variety and that parent spoke the variety with him/her when he/she was a child.

12 subjects for the ISLQ were selected from each village. Three subjects were chosen from each of four strata defined by age and gender. Children under 15 were not chosen as subjects. The sampling design is laid out in Table 15 and Table 41.

Table 41 Sample Size by Age and Gender

		Age Group		Total
		15-39	40+	
Gender	Female	3	3	6
	Male	3	3	6
Total		6	6	12

As presented in Table 15, a non-random sampling is used in order to generalize the results beyond the sample. Under the assumption of homogeneity within strata, the sample can be taken to be representative within age and gender category (Nahhas 2007:36).

## 6.6 Summary of Data Collected on Laomian/Laopin Sociolinguistic Survey

A summary of the data collected from the Laomian/Laopin survey is presented in Table 42.



**Table 42 Summary of data collected on Laomian/Laopin sociolinguistic survey**

No.	Name of Village	Data Collected
1	Fubang	KIQ
2	Donzhu	KIQ; ISLQ (x12); WL; OQL; DMT
3	Van Kawn	KIQ; ISLQ (x12); WL; OQL; DMT
4	Fu'aj	KIQ; ISLQ (x12); WL; OQL; DMT
5	Van Phin	ISLQ (x12); OQL; DMT

Note that the Van Phin KIQ and WL were collected during the first Pyen survey trip to Namt Theun. When the survey team visited Fubang village they were told that people there gave up speaking Laomian four generations ago. For this reason the only data collected in Fubang was from a village leader using the KIQ.

## **6.7 Methods of Analysis**

Methods of analysis are presented in this section and criteria for interpreting the information are provided. More detailed explanation of the methods was already given in Sections 4.7.1 and 4.7.2.

The Myanmar Tibeto-Burman 462-item wordlists were entered into Excel and double-checked using the recordings. Then a selection of 107 core items were compared using the methodology described in Appendix A and Section 4.7.1.

Frequency tables were used to summarize the results from the questionnaires. The results were then interpreted qualitatively with respect to the research questions. Results that will support the need for language development in Laomian/Laopin are: low proficiency in and/or negative attitudes towards LWCs, low intelligibility of and/or negative attitudes towards Thailand Bisu and Pyen, high Laomian/Laopin language vitality. Results that would support a particular speech variety being chosen as the one for development are, high intelligibility by most other varieties, accompanied by non-negative attitudes towards that variety by speakers of other varieties. If a particular variety is associated with greater prestige, either of the people or the village, that variety should be considered for development. Results that would indicate a potential approach for a language development program include general and leadership interest in language development, potential for adaptation from Thailand Bisu and/or Pyen, attitudes of Laomian/Laopin to possible scripts.

The following chapter describes the analysis of Laomian/Laopin data.