

## CHAPTER 4

### METHODOLOGY

#### 4.0 Introduction

The goal of this research project was to examine ethnolinguistic vitality, language use and language attitudes among the Yong people. Four methods were used to elicit data: questionnaires, informal interviews, observation and word lists. The data collection methods will be discussed first. Then the distribution of the subjects and the limitation of the study will be explained next.

#### 4.1 Data Collection

There are four methods of data collection in this research: questionnaire, interview, observation and word list.

##### 4.1.1. Questionnaire

The majority of the questions used in the questionnaire were adapted from Baker (1992:138-143). The questions were modified as necessary. In the questionnaire, the questions were divided into three parts: linguistic background, language use, and language attitude. To minimize self-defense, or giving socially desirable answers, informants were told in advance that their answers were not right or wrong and that they could express their feelings openly.

##### 4.1.1.1. Part One: Linguistic background

The informants were asked to provide personal information such as name, age, gender, place of residence, mother tongue of informants and their parents' education

and occupation. The answers of these questions were used to examine the influence of social factors on the research questions.

#### 4.1.1.2. Part Two: Language use

This section explored language use within the community and also with people outside the community. The section was designed to discover the choice of language and the domains of language use in the community. Three languages, Kammuang, Standard Thai and Yong, were given for the subjects to choose as the language of communication in each domain.

| Domains       | Interlocutors   | Places   |
|---------------|---|--|
| Family        | Grandparents<br>Parents<br>Children<br>Cousins/ Siblings  | Home   |
| Community     | Village/community leader<br>Children in the village<br>Friends in the village<br>Friends<br>Neighbors | Tong Village, Muang District<br>Rai Village, Pasang District |
| Government    | Teachers<br>Government officers   | School<br>Government office                                  |
| Public places | People at the market<br>People in town  | At the market/ or in the city                                |

Table 12: Domains of language use in the study.

#### 4.1.1.3. Part Three: Language attitude

The first part of the language attitudes section asked subjects “How important or unimportant do you think the Yong language is for people to do the following?” A number of activities were given, such as make friends, listen to the radio, talk to a teacher, etc. Subjects were asked to indicate whether Yong was Very Important, Important, Not very important, or Unimportant.

The next section gave statements such as “*When Northern Thai or Central Thai people are around, are you embarrassed to speak your language?*” Other statements compared people’s attitudes to their dialect, Yong, and other dialects such as Kammuang, and Standard Thai, as to which one was most useful for their personal life, and which one was most popular in the community.

The responses of the subjects to the statements were recorded on a scale as follows:

|                            |   |
|----------------------------|---|
| Strongly Agree             | 5 |
| Agree                      | 4 |
| Neither Agree Nor Disagree | 3 |
| Disagree                   | 2 |
| Strongly Disagree          | 1 |

Baker (1992) separated attitudes into three categories: General, integrative and instrumental attitudes. In this research project, all three categories of attitudes were explored and are discussed separately. General attitudes to Yong were explored by asking subjects reactions to statements such as “The Yong language is unfashionable” or “It is important to be able to speak Yong”. Instrumental attitudes were focused through statements such as “Speaking Yong cannot help people to get a job or a promotion”. Integrative attitudes were focused through statements such as “I would like to be considered as a speaker of Yong”. The text of the questionnaire in English and in Thai can be found in Appendix A.

### **4.1.2. Interviews**

In this research project, the researcher asked the village leader of Rai village, Pasang district, to distribute the questionnaires to his villagers and to gather them back within one week. The researcher also did the same process in Tong village, Muang district, but a problem occurred. At the time that the researcher asked the village leader to distribute the questionnaires there was a local election. The village leader could only help to distribute half of the 24 questionnaires. So the researcher decided to do the other half by asking the villagers who stayed at home to help her. In order to do this, the researcher asked whether the villagers fit the desired age, education and gender targets (See section 4.3). If they were not suitable, the researcher asked them to suggest a suitable person. The villagers not only introduced the researcher to the people but also gave much useful information about Yong people, culture and language.

### **4.1.3. Observation**

In order to do more informal research, the researcher came to participate with the Yong people in their social events and also came to see them at the village, and to talk with them about language, culture and social life. The researcher used Kammuang with them to help them relax and feel comfortable to express their ideas. In addition to talking to people during social events and in the village, the researcher played the role of an outsider to observe the language use of people in real situations. While having conversations with people, the researcher observed the way people in the same ethnic group talked to each other and the way they talked with outsiders. People's behavior may be hidden in face to face conversation with the outsider. An awareness of people's behavior helps to show the real pattern of dialect use of the Yong people in the community.

## 4.2. Distribution of the informants

The 48 informants were categorized by four variables: age, gender, education and place of residence. Each variable was divided as in table 13 below:

| Sex                  | Age                 | Education                     | Birthplace                              |
|----------------------|---------------------|-------------------------------|---|
| 1. Male<br>2. Female | 1. 15-35<br>2. > 35 | 1. 0-6 years<br>2. 7 years up | 1. City dwellers<br>2. Country dwellers |

Table 13: The variables of the subjects under study.

Table 14 shows the number of people for each set of characteristics the researcher included.

| Tong neighborhood (City)   |       |       |         |       |
|----------------------------|-------|-------|---------|-------|
|                            | Males |       | Females |       |
|                            | 15-35 | 35 up | 15-35   | 35 up |
| Lower education            | 3     | 3     | 3       | 3     |
| Higher education           | 3     | 3     | 3       | 3     |
| Rai neighborhood (Village) |       |       |         |       |
|                            | 15-35 | 35 up | 15-35   | 35 up |
| Lower education            | 3     | 3     | 3       | 3     |
| Higher education           | 3     | 3     | 3       | 3     |

Table 14: Number of people who respond to the questionnaires (included 2 neighborhoods).

Before administering the questionnaires, the researcher decided on the location where this research was to take place. In choosing the location, the researcher looked for a community that was located in the city, and a village in the country. According to informal interviews with the Yong people, the researcher found that Tong neighborhood was a strong community of Yong in the city area. This suburban area was only 1,200 meters from the city of Lamphun. The Yong people in this neighborhood had a similar pattern of their social life as the rest of people in town, so this neighborhood was appropriate to be one of the areas under study. The reason for choosing the village in the rural area was that Rai village located in Pasang district

was where the first Yong group resettled after they were taken by King Kavila over two hundred years ago, and the use of Yong dialect in this village is very strong. After choosing these two locations, the researcher went to contact the villages' leaders and ask them to choose the subjects who fit the variables, 24 people per community. The questionnaires were distributed to the subjects with help from the village's leaders.

### **4.3. Pilot Test**

The questionnaire was tested with four subjects first, three males and one female. The researcher went to do the test at Me Thee Wut Thi Korn School. Two teachers and one student here were asked to fill out the questionnaire. Another subject was a former Payap University student. All of them were Yong people who lived in Lamphun province. They varied in age, gender and education. The subjects gave good responses to the questions, but some questions were not clear enough, so the researcher adjusted them in the final version of the questionnaire. For example, at first people who gave their response to the pilot test had difficulty to identify what dialects that they use with their friends because their friends come from different groups such as Yong, Northern Thai or Standard Thai. So the researcher added 'Yong friends' and 'Friends who speak other dialects' under 'Friends' in the table in order to let the subjects know what dialects they use to speak to different groups of friends. The first version of question number 7 was 'In the future, do you think the next generation will speak Yong dialect or not? Why?' One respondent suggested to the researcher that this question was similar to question number 5 'When the children in this village grow up and have their own children, do you think those children will speak Yong? Why?' So the researcher changed this question to 'In the future, do you think that the Yong dialect will die out or will not be spoken? Why?' This question can help the researcher to predict whether the Yong dialect will be maintained in

Lamphun or not and it can help the researcher to discover how the Yong people feel toward the idea of language death in their society.

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