CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter introduces the methods used to measure language use and attitudes, as well as the methods for data collection and data analysis. All these methods contribute to answering the research questions stated in Chapter 1.

3.1 Research questions

The aim of this study is to discover the patterns of Bisu language use and people's attitudes towards the Bisu language so that the vitality of Bisu can be predicted in the foreseeable future. To realize this goal, it is worthwhile to review the research questions given in Chapter 1:

1. How is the Bisu language used among Bisu speakers in China and Thailand? Are there any differences regarding its use among the speakers in China and Thailand? If so, what are the possible factors influencing the differences?

2. Is the use of Bisu influenced by social factors (such as place of residence, age and gender)?

3. How do Bisu speakers think about their vernacular language and their identity as Bisu? Do they value the Bisu language?

4. Are there significant links between language use and language attitudes? If so, what might they be?

To find answers to these research questions, this study used questionnaires and informal observation as the methods to elicit answers from the respondents. As the main tool to collect data, the questionnaires will be introduced in detail in Section 3.2.

3.2 The questionnaires

Half a year prior to this study, the researcher conducted a pilot investigation during a fieldtrip regarding language use and language attitudes among the Bisu speakers in the two Thai Bisu villages of Doi Chompuu and Doi Pui. This small investigation provided the researcher some experiences in dealing with the respondents and some ideas about a suitable questionnaire. Before designing the questionnaire, several books regarding language survey were consulted, especially those related to the survey of language use and language attitudes. Afterwards, the research questions were determined, and then relevant questionnaires were adopted from previous research work carried out by Baker (1992), Hill (1996), Walker (1991), Duan (2004) and Boehm (1997). Some questions were changed or adjusted to be appropriate to the study. In addition, the researcher also designed some questions based on the pilot survey and the research questions. The questions were originally written in English, and then translated into Chinese. Together with the adjustments made after a pilot test in Laopin village, the final Chinese version of the questionnaire was determined; changes made in the Chinese version were added into the English version. Later on, Thai questionnaires were translated based on the English by a native Thai speaker with a good command of English who was studying in the Payap University Linguistics Department. Then, the translated Thai questionnaires were checked by a native Chinese speaker with a good command of Thai, comparing them to the Chinese questionnaires. Finally, the questionnaires were tested with a Thai Bisu university student, to make sure that the questions would be clear for Thai Bisu villagers. Among these three versions, the Chinese Questionnaires were the "standard" version, based on which the other two were adjusted.

Two questionnaires were used in this study: a community profile and an individual profile. The former was for the village head who knows the village well; the latter for the individual respondents. The two questionnaires will be discussed in the following two sub-sections.

3.2.1 Questionnaire I: Community profile

The community profile obtains demographic information regarding the village such as ethnic makeup, linguistic context, geographic location, economic situation, and educational options (see appendix). One of the aims of the community questionnaire is to get a profile of the location in order to enable interpretation of the other data according to its socio-economic background. This profile was orally administered to the village head. Before discussing the demography of the villages being investigated, the reasons why these villages were selected will be explained.

3.2.1.1 Selection of the villages

Six villages are investigated in this study, they are: 勐海县勐遮镇老品大寨 (Laopin Village in Menghai County), 澜沧县竹塘乡竹老缅大寨 (Zhutang Village in Lancang County), 勐连县南雅乡老缅大寨 (Nanya Village in Menglian County), 西勐县力所乡茨米竹 (Cimizhu Village in Ximeng County), Doi Chompuu Village and Doi Pui Village.[7] To make it easier to remember, hereafter these six villages are called Laopin, Zhutang, Nanya, Cimizhu, Doi Chompuu and Doi Pui, respectively. The former four villages are picked from four different counties where Bisu speech communities are found in China. The latter villages are the only Bisu speech communities in Thailand.

Among the four villages in China being investigated, Laopin and Cimizhu are the only Bisu villages found in their respective counties. The other two counties, Lancang and Menglian, contain other Bisu villages. The reasons why the villages of Zhutang and Nanya were picked rather than other Bisu villages are: Zhutang is the first pilot Bisu village (also the only one at present) that has received financial

[7] The Bisu villages investigated in Lancang County and Menglian County are both called "Laomian village" by the villagers. To distinguish them from each other in this thesis, these two villages are referred to by the name of the townships where they are located.

support from the local forestry bureau. With the official support, Zhutang has changed a lot within the last two years. Each family has been able to build new houses with modern pigsties and cattle sties. Thus, Zhutang was picked out from the other Bisu villages in Lancang County. The village of Nanya was chosen because of its location. It is isolated from other Bisu villages and surrounded by Lahu people, the dominant local minority group. Thus the investigation of Nanya is like the actual linguistic situation of most Bisu speech communities: an isolated minority language island surrounded by a vast ocean of speakers of other languages. Therefore, the four villages chosen in China are representative of the different kinds of Bisu speech communities in China.

3.2.1.2 Demographic information about the villages

Answers to Questionnaire I show that all the six villages have tap water, electricity, telephones, and road access. Most Bisu speakers own and live on the land, which helps them to maintain their ancestral language in spite of modern Chinese or Thai culture. Some salient information about the six villages being investigated is given in Table 1.

Items / Villages	Total population	Bisu population	Ethnic makeup within the village	Percentage of Bisu population	Languages mainly used within the village	Ethnicity of neighboring villages	Language(s) in the neighboring villages	School in the village	% of people who can read and write Chinese (Thai)
Laopin	250	250	Bisu	100%	Bisu	Han, Tai, Lahu	Chinese Tai, Lahu[8]	No	80%
Zhutang	256	256	Bisu	100%	Bisu	Bisu	Bisu, Lahu, Hani	Primary school	85%
Cimizhu	380	200	Lahu, Bisu Han	53%	Lahu	Wa, Lahu	Wa, Lahu	No	39%
Menglian	370	200	Bisu, Lahu Wa, Han	54%	Lahu; Bisu	Wa, Lahu, Han	Wa, Lahu, Chinese	No	6%
Doi Chompuu	217	190	Bisu, NT	88%	Bisu, NT	NT, Akha	NT	No	50%
Doi Pui	341	311	Bisu, NT, Lahu	65%	Bisu, NT	NT, Lisu, Lahu	Bisu, NT, Lisu, Lahu, Akha	Primary school	80%

Table 1. Demographic information about Bisu communities in China and Thailand[9]

[8] The Tai language in this study refers to the the language spoken among Tai Lue people in China who mainly live in Xishuangbanna prefecture.

[9] The numbers and percentages in Table 1 are the headman's estimate.

3.2.2 Questionnaire II

Questionnaire II consists of two parts: a language use profile and a language attitude profile. Each profile contains both open questions and closed questions. At the beginning of Questionnaire II, 25 questions (Q1 to Q25) were designed to get personal information about the respondent such as age, marital status, occupation, years of school and some linguistic background information like the number of languages s/he speaks, ethnicity of her/his family and so forth.

All together 144 respondents were selected to answer Questionnaire II, 24 in each of the six villages. Of the 24 respondents in each village, 12 were male and 12 were female. 8 of the respondents in each village (4 male, 4 female) were between 15-30 years of age, 8 were between 31-50 years of age and 8 were between 51-70 years of age.

In general, there is not a large difference among the respondents from each village in terms of average education, bilingualism and so forth. The respondents generally are not highly educated, with an average of approximately four-year of education. None of them are monolingual; many speak three or more languages. This is especially true in Laopin Village, where 50% of the respondents are trilingual and 42% are quadralingual. In addition, most respondents have never been out of the local village for more than one year, which provides a foundation for the purity of their Bisu language. Among the six villages, more respondents from Doi Chompuu and Doi Pui have communications with the outside, which can be predicated through the higher percentages of those who have been out of the village for more than one year (see Table 2). Regarding the ethnicity of the respondents, most of them are pure Bisu, that is to say, intermarriage with other groups is not common. Table 2 is a summary of the linguistic backgrounds of the respondents in the six villages.

Items / Villages	Avcrage Education	Number (%)out of village*	Number of languages the respondents speak					Ethnicity of the respondents	
			1	2	3	4	5	Pure Bisu	Mixed Bisu
Laopin	4.4 years	3 (12.5%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	12 (50%)	10 (42%)	2 (8%)	24 (100%)	0 (0%)
Zhutang	3.2 years	3 (12.5%)	0 (0%)	8 (33%)	15 (63%)	1 (4%)	0 (0%)	24 (100%)	0 (0%)
Cimizhu	3.7 years	1 (4.2%)	0 (0%)	22(92%)	2 (8%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	19 (79%)	5 (21%)
Nanya	4.0 years	2 (8.3%)	0 (0%)	7 (29%)	13 (54%)	2 (8%)	2 (8%)	21(87.5%)	3 (12.5%)
Doi Chompuu	5.4 years	9 (39.1%)	0 (0%)	19(79%)	5 (21%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	23(95.8%)	1 (4.2%)
Doi Pui	4.6 years	7 (29.2%)	0 (0%)	14(58%)	10 (42%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	22 (92%)	2 (8%)

Table 2. Linguistic background of the 24 respondents in each village

Note: "Number (%) out of village*" means the number (percentage) of respondents who have been out of the village for more than one year.

3.2.2.1 Language use profile

The language use profile aims to test how Bisu is used among the respondents. It consists of two parts: personal language and general language. The focus is on personal language that provides answers to the usage of Bisu in various situations.

The personal language use profile includes 4 questions (Q26 to 29) regarding personal proficiency in Bisu and 14 questions (Q30 to 43) regarding the use of Bisu. Personal proficiency in Bisu was mostly tested in terms of the language the respondent learned first and used best. Each respondent was asked to give an answer to the language s/he learned first, spoke best, and the one s/he uses to think. Finally, Q29 "Is it easier to think in Bisu than in Chinese (Thai)?" was asked to compare their Bisu proficiency with the LWC.[10] These four questions provide a foundation for the following Bisu usage questions.

The use of Bisu was tested by asking the respondents how often they used Bisu in 14 situations (Q30 to Q43). They were told to choose one answer on the scale of "often", "sometimes", "rarely" or "never". Those who had no idea or did not answer were considered as "NA" (Not Applicable). Responses of "NA" were excluded from the data analysis in Chapters 4 and 5. The 14 situations involve the respondent's communications with family members, friends, Bisu people, and strangers; and the communication settings involve the family, religious places, fields, outside school, at school and the market. These communications in different settings aim to explore how Bisu is used in different domains such as the home domain, the religious domain, the education domain and the commercial domain.

Boehm points out that "choices people make in regard to language use reflect trends toward either language maintenance or language shift" (Boehm 1997: 64). In this study, it is assumed that the use of Bisu in the home domain is related to

[10] Hereafter Thai is put into parentheses to distinguish the respondents from Thai Bisu villages.

the maintenance of the vernacular language more than the other domains. Thus, the percentages of "often" use Bisu in the home domain are considered as an important indicator of language preservation. In this study, a specific cut off (60%) was set up to help measure the vitality of the Bisu languge: if the percentages of "often" use Bisu are above 60%, this indicates high Bisu language vitality; if they are below 60%, this suggests language shift or replacement. Thus, the vitality of Bisu is mainly predicted based on the often-use percentages in the home domain. The patterns of Bisu use are shown by the choices people make in the 14 situations.

Following the personal language use questions, another five questions were used to elicit information regarding the general language use of Bisu. These questions consist of two open questions and three closed questions. The two open questions deal with respondents' free opinions about the use of Bisu among the young people and intermarriage. Question 46 asked about those who do not use Bisu in the villages being investigated, followed by an open question to elicit the reasons why they do not use Bisu. These two questions were designed as an aid to discuss the usage of Bisu in the six villages.

The last question in the language use profile section deals with the use of the Bisu language in the government domain. The respondents were asked what language they spoke with the government officials. The aim of this question is, first of all, to see whether Bisu is used in the government domain; secondly, answers to this question are a mirror to reflect the local LWC around the village being investigated. However, in Chapter 4, answers to this question have been combined with those regarding the usage of Bisu in different situations.

In summary, the language use profile mainly measures the patterns of Bisu use. It attempts to predict the vitality of the Bisu language through its use in various situations. Language use in the home domain is the primary indicator of language vitality as measured by the language use profile.

3.2.2.2 Language attitude profile

The language attitude profile was administered after the language use profile. It is a continuant to help predict the language vitality of Bisu in the foreseeable future. It consists of four parts: attitudes towards language use and language displacement, general attitudes towards the Bisu language, attitudes towards Bisu speakers, and attitudes towards a possible Bisu literacy program.

Attitudes towards language use and language displacement are measured through Questions 49 to 61, which mainly measure the respondents' attitudes towards the continuing use of Bisu among the next generation, and attitudes towards speaking Bisu. The aim of these questions is to demonstrate the respondents' attitudes towards the maintenance of the Bisu languge.

Questions regarding general attitudes towards the Bisu language are from Q62 to 82, measuring the respondents' general feelings about the Bisu language, such as its value and status, their personal interest in learning Bisu, etc. This part consists of eleven statements about the Bisu language and ten regarding the importance of Bisu. The latter ten statements are mainly adopted from Baker (1992), where instrumental and integrative attitudes were discussed. Respondents were asked about their agreement with these statements, with possible answers of "agree", "neutral", "disagree" or "no idea".

The questions about attitudes towards Bisu speakers measure the respondents' opinion about other Bisu speakers in order to see whether the respondents consider the Bisu language as an indicator of their identity. This is measured through Q83 to 89 in which the respondents' attitudes towards different Bisu speakers are elicited: a person who speaks Bisu versus one who does not (Q82), a Bisu who totally stops using Bisu (Q86) versus one who speaks Bisu very well (Q88); In order to get more information, an open question was added following each closed question.

Questions 90 through 104 focus on Bisu literacy and test whether Bisu speakers have an interest in developing reading and writing skills in Bisu. The respondents were asked whether they would like to have a Bisu literacy program carried out in their village; if someone came to teach how to read and write Bisu in their village, whether they would attend; and whether they would like to have newspapers in Bisu. In addition, a similarly-priced book written in Bisu and Chinese (Thai) is taken as a reference to see whether they would like to buy a Bisu book or not. For those who have children, the same questions were asked by adding "Would you let your children go to the literacy class" or "Would you buy the book for your children?" in order to get more information.

In addition to the use of Questionnaires, informal observation was used throughout the investigation to minimize the bias of the mal-responses, namely, a bad response to a question. For example, for Question 28 "which language do you use when you think?" some respondents in China answered "Mandarin". Later on, the researcher noticed their Mandarin actually was poor; it would be impossible for them to think in Mandarin. Then the researcher went to talk to them without questionnaires, with topics like, "Suppose you arrange for people to cut the sugar cane tomorrow, you have to think through a lot of problems, such as who is going to drive the tractor, when you will let them begin to cut and so on. When you think through such kinds of problems, which language do you think in?" By doing so, it was found that all those who had earlier answered "Mandarin" actually use Bisu to think. This happened in every village in China. Without informal observation, such a bias could not have been avoided in the data collection.

3.3 Data collection

Both Questionnaires I and II were orally administered throughout the investigation. Before answering the questionnaire, the respondents were told that there were no right or wrong answers, and that their names would not be written down to make sure they would answer the questions as honestly as possible. This

section will introduce how the data was collected in the six villages and the methods that were used during the data collection.

3.3.1 The procedure of data collection

The data was mainly collected by an orally administered questionnaire. It was first collected in the four Bisu villages in China, then in the two Thai Bisu villages.

For the data collection in China, the researcher personally went to each village alone and explained the survey to the villagers. There were always many kind people willing to help and there was no problem for the researcher to find a host Bisu family to stay with until the end of the survey in that village. Living with a Bisu family not only gave the researcher chances to observe how Bisu was used in their daily life, but also to know their culture and customs. After settling down, the researcher walked around the village to get a general idea about that village, including geographical location, economic situation and so on. Then a qualified language helper was chosen from the villagers. Normally, the language helper was good at both Chinese and their local vernacular language. With her/his help, the researcher found the qualified respondents by age and gender (see section 3.3.2). The questionnaire was then read in Yunnanese to the respondents, and the answers were written down in Chinese. For those who could not understand, what the researcher said was translated into another language they were familiar with like Bisu or Lahu. Each questionnaire took about half an hour to finish and the open questions were taped at the same time. It took about four or five days to finish the survey in each of the Bisu villages in China.

The data collection in the two Thai Bisu villages was mostly carried out by a research team which consisted of the researcher, four Bisu language helpers, and the same native speaker of Thai who helped to translate the Thai questionnaires. To assure that the questions that were asked in Thailand were the same as those asked in China, with the help of Dr. Kirk Person, a meeting was arranged to paraphrase the two questionnaires, especially each single question of

questionnaire II, for the research team. Both Questionnaries I and II were read in in Kammuang (Northern Thai) to the Thai Bisu respondents. The answers were first written down in Thai and then translated into English. Since the researcher did not understand Thai, she taped, observed and helped the research team during the elicitation sessions.

3.3.2 Quota sampling

In general, random sampling is the best method for selecting subjects. However, this method requires a sampling frame (a list of all subjects in each village). Due to the difficulty of getting a sampling frame, quota sampling was used as the method for selecting subjects in the six villages, as follows.[11]

Since language use and language attitudes are known to differ in populations by age and gender, these variables were used to define subgroups. In each village, 24 subjects were selected, 4 in each age by gender subgroup, as shown in Table 3.

Age / Villages	15-30		31-50		51-70		
	Male	**Female**	**Male**	**Female**	**Male**	**Female**	**Total**
Laopin	4	4	4	4	4	4	**24**
Zhutang	4	4	4	4	4	4	**24**
Cimizhu	4	4	4	4	4	4	**24**
Nanya	4	4	4	4	4	4	**24**
Doi Chompuu	4	4	4	4	4	4	**24**
Doi Pui	4	4	4	4	4	4	**24**
Total	**24**	**24**	**24**	**24**	**24**	**24**	**144**

Table 3. Sampling size by location, age and gender

Although language use and attitudes often vary with education, education was not used as a quota criterion due to its correlation with age in the Bisu communities. In each village, the 24 respondents were interviewed under the assumption that most of the within-village variation in language use and language attitudes could be explained by age and gender differences. Thus, the responses of the 24 subjects

[11] The objective of quota sampling is to contact a numerical quota of persons with specific characristics (Black 1999: 124).

in a village selected by quota sampling can be taken as representative of the village as a whole.[12]

3.4 Data analysis

All the data was put into Microsoft Excel soon after being collected. Descriptive statistics were used to interpret the data. Both qualitative and quantitative analyses were used in the data analysis. Tables and bar charts illustrating the evidence were used to answer the research questions.

Statistical tests to check the significance of differences between locations, age groups and genders were not used because the results as shown in the tables and charts show such clear differences between groups that statistical tests would only serve to confirm the obvious.

[12] An additional assumption is that the village consists of one-sixth of its population in each of the six age by gender quota categories.