

CHAPTER 5

LANGUAGE ATTITUDE TOWARDS BISU

5.0 Introduction

From Chapter 4, we have seen that the Bisu language is the norm being used in some villages but has been replaced by other languages in other villages. What are the causes leading to language shift away from Bisu? Are there some links between language use and language attitude? What are Bisu people's attitudes towards their ancestral language? This chapter aims to explore answers to such questions.

This research into attitude towards Bisu is an attempt to look at language use patterns of Bisu from a psychological and social point of view. As Baker states, "attitudes are a convenient and efficient way of explaining consistent patterns in behavior" (Baker 1992: 11).

It is important for those working on Bisu to know how Bisu speakers think about their language, so that language development can proceed as smoothly as possible. As Baker stated, "Language engineering can flourish or fail according to the attitudes of the community" (Baker 1992: 21).

Four issues will be discussed in this chapter: attitudes towards Bisu language use and language replacement; general attitudes towards the Bisu language; attitudes towards Bisu speakers; and attitudes towards a potential Bisu literacy program.

Answers of the 96 respondents from the Strong Villages (namely Group A) where Bisu is often used will be compared to the answers of the 48 respondents from the Weak Villages (namely Group B) where Bisu is rarely used (hereafter Group B). The aim of the comparison is to find answers to the hypothesis "There is a link between language use and language attitude: the more Bisu is used, the more positive attitudes are held by its speakers." This hypothesis makes no statements about whether high usage or positive attitudes cause the other, only that they are

correlated. Due to the observational nature of this study, there is no way to determine which is the cause, or if in fact something else (such as economic advantages) causes both.

In addition to the comparison of the two groups, general attitudes towards the Bisu language will be discussed by age and gender to assess differences resulting from these two variables.

5.1 Attitudes towards language use and language displacement

This section consists of questions 49 through 61 (see Questionnaire II in the Appendix). As shown in Table 18, these questions deal with three aspects: attitudes toward the maintenance of Bisu; attitudes towards the use of Bisu; and attitudes towards identity as a Bisu. These will be discussed in the following three sub-sections, respectively.

Section	Purpose	Questions
5.1.1	Attitudes towards the maintenance of Bisu	49, 50, 51, 60
5.1.2	Attitudes towards the use of Bisu	53, 54, 55, 58, 59, 61
5.1.3	Attitudes towards identity as a Bisu	52, 56, 57

Table 18. Questions regarding language use and language displacement

5.1.1 Attitudes towards the maintenance of the Bisu language

Attitudes towards the maintenance of the Bisu language mainly explore the respondents' opinions towards the use of Bisu among the next generation. The respondents were asked which language they wanted their children to speak most frequently and most fluently (namely Q 49 and 50).²² Answers to these two questions show a large difference between Group A and Group B. Most respondents of Group A answered that they wanted their children to speak Bisu

²² To get as much information as possible, Questions 49 and 50 were also applied for those who have no children. They were asked "Later on, when you get married and have children, what language do you want your children to speak most frequently and most fluently?"

most frequently and fluently; nobody answered Lahu. However, for the respondents of Group B, “Lahu” was the answer with the highest percentages for both Q49 and Q50. Those who chose “Bisu” only make up a small percentage, because they said if they spoke Bisu instead of Lahu, they would have difficulties communicating with local people.

It is also interesting to note that some respondents answered “English” although they themselves do not know English at all; this might be influenced by the prestige of English. Answers to Q49 “what language do you hope your children to speak most frequently?” and Q50 “what language do you want to your children to speak most fluently?” are shown in Tables 19 and 20 below.

Q49 Group	Bisu	LWC ²³	Lahu	Bisu and one LWC	Bisu and two LWC	Bisu and Lahu	Others	Total (Non-NA)	NA
Group A	71(74.7%)	9 (9.5%)	0 (0%)	9 (9.5%)	5 (5.3%)	0 (0%)	1(1.1%)	95	1
Group B	11(23.4%)	13(27.6%)	16(34%)	4(10.6%)	2(4.3%)	1(2.1%)	0 (0%)	47	1

Table 19. Languages expected to be spoken most frequently

Q50 Group	Bisu	LWC	Lahu	Bisu and one LWC	Bisu and two LWC	Lahu and one LWC	Others	Total (Non-NA)	NA
Group A	72(75.8%)	13(13.7%)	0 (0%)	7(7.4%)	1(1.1%)	0 (0%)	2(2.1%)	95	1
Group B	4 (8.7%)	9(19.6%)	28(60.9%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	5(10.9%)	0 (0%)	46	2

Table 20. Languages expected to be spoken most fluently

Through the answers to Q49 and Q50, it can be predicted that Bisu is the language expected to be used most frequently and most fluently among the next-generation in Group A, but not in Group B. That is, Group A is favorable to the maintenance of the Bisu language while Group B is unfavorable. This result can be seen

²³ LWC in Tables 19 and 20 refers to Chinese (including Yunnanese and Mandarin), or Thai (including Northern Thai and Central Thai).

through the answers to Question 60 “In 50 years will Bisu people stop using the Bisu language in favor of Lahu, Chinese and other languages?” 48 out of 85 respondents (57%) in Group A felt that Bisu will not be replaced by other languages, while only 1 out of 48 respondents (2%) of Group B think so, as shown in Table 21.

Q60 In 50 years will Bisu stop using the language of Bisu in favor of Lahu, Yunnanese (Norther Thai) or other languages?	Yes	Maybe Yes	Maybe No	No	Total (Non -NA)	NA
Group A	20(23%)	15 (18%)	2 (2%)	48(57%)	85	11
Group B	44(98%)	0(0%)	0 (0%)	1(2%)	45	3

Table 21. A summary of answers to Q60

Answers to Q49, Q50 and Q60 therefore support the hypothesis that the more Bisu is used, the more positive attitudes are towards the use of Bisu. For these questions, the specific attitude measured is attitude towards the maintenance of the Bisu language.

5.1.2 Attitudes towards the use of the Bisu language

Attitudes towards the usage of Bisu are measured through two types of questions: questions regarding the traditional use of the Bisu language; and questions regarding the respondents’ personal experiences of speaking Bisu. The former consists of Q53 “in your opinion, what is the best language?” and Q55 “What language is the best for traditional activities, such as funeral, the spirit world, religious beliefs and so forth?” The latter consists of Q58 “Have you ever been ashamed to be overheard speaking Bisu?”, Q59 “If you speak Bisu in front of people from another village who are not Bisu, will they look down upon you?” and Q61 “If you spoke another language rather than Bisu to old people at home, how would they react?”

Regarding attitudes towards the use of the Bisu language for certain traditional activities, the answers show a large difference between the two groups: more than

half of the respondents of Group A think that Bisu is the best language and nearly ninety percent of them think Bisu is the best language for traditional activities. The majority answers for Group B were “Lahu” or “Yunnanese”. This again is in accordance with the hypothesis: the more the Bisu language is used, the more favorable attitudes the speakers have towards it. Answers to Question 53 and 55 are shown in Tables 22 and 23, respectively.

Q53 Group	Bisu	Lahu	Yunnanese (Northern Thai)	Mandarine (Central Thai)	Bisu and another LWC	Others	All languages are the same	Total (Non- NA)	NA
Group A	69(73%)	0 (0%)	14(15%)	2 (2%)	5 (5%)	2 (2%)	2 (2%)	94	2
Group B	11(24%)	16(36%)	12(27%)	0 (0%)	2(4%)	0 (0%)	4 (8.9%)	45	3

Table 22. A summary of answers to Q53

Q55 Group	Bisu	Lahu	Yunnanese (Northern Thai)	Mandarine (Central Thai)	Bisu and another LWC	Others	Total (Non- NA)	NA
Group A	82(87%)	0(0%)	9 (10%)	1 (1%)	1 (1%)	1(1%)	94	2
Group B	12(26%)	31(66%)	4 (9%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	47	1

Table 23. A summary of answers to Q55

As for the questions regarding experiences of speaking the Bisu language, it is hard to say whether there is a difference between Group A and Group B based on the answers to Questions 58 and 59, because Group B’s poor linguistic proficiency in Bisu made the test almost unfeasible. For example, when asked Q58 “have you ever been ashamed to be overheard speaking Bisu?” Only 20 out of 48 respondents (42%) of Group B gave answers. The rest did not respond because they have never spoken Bisu in their lives, and thus it was hard for them answer such questions. Thus, the hypothesis that attitudes are more positive when usage is greater is not supported by Q53 and Q55. Attitudes towards language replacement is in contrast among Group A and Group B: a large part of respondents from Group A think that the Bisu language will not be replaced by other languages while almost all respondents from Group B think that it will be replaced, as shown in previous Table 21.

However, it is encouraging to know that, through the answers to Q59, over half of the respondents of both group declared that they would not be looked down by other people if they spoke Bisu in front of them. This suggests that most respondents who speak Bisu feel comfortable or secure to speak their minority language in a majority environment, which is really important for the preservation of that language. If they feel embarrassed, they will try to achieve greater security and less anxiety, which is likely to lead to language shift. On this point, Baker states clearly “Basic inner security is essential for psychological health” (Baker 1992: 100). Answers Q61 “If you spoke another language rather than Bisu to old people at home, how would they react?” provide more evidence to support the results of Q59, most respondents of both groups answered that the old people would be angry or unhappy if they did not speak Bisu to them at home. Therefore the hypothesis concerning usage and attitudes is supported by Q58 and Q59. Answers to Q58 are shown in Table 24.

Q58 Have you ever been ashamed to be overheard speaking Bisu?	Yes	No	Maybe Yes	Maybe No	Total (Non-NA)	NA
Group A	14(15%)	80(85%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	94	2
Group B	4(20%)	16(80%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	20	28

Table 24. A summary of answers to Q58

5.1.3 Attitudes towards identity as Bisu

Three questions (Q52, 56 and 57) are used to measure attitudes towards Bisu ethnicity. These three questions link language with ethnicity. As Shen Xiaolong points out, “Language is the most basic link related to a nation, it is the most typical symbol of the nation’s culture. As long as the nation still exists, ethnic feeling towards that language will not die out.” (2000: 158).²⁴

Through the answers to Q52 and Q56, it is seen that most respondents of the two groups, especially of Group A, are satisfied with their nationality as Bisu, as

²⁴ The citation was translated by the researcher.

shown in Tables 25 and 26. This suggests that more usage coincides with more positive attitudes, thus the hypothesis concerning the relationship between language use and language attitudes is supported.

Q52 Are you willing to be identified as a Bisu or would you prefer to be some other nationality, such as Lahu, Han or Thai?	Yes	No	Indifferent	Total (Non-NA)	NA
Group A	84(91%)	5(5%)	3(3%)	92	4
Group B	31(67%)	14(30%)	1(2%)	46	2

Table 25. A summary of answers to Q52

Q56 Would you like to be remembered as one who speaks Bisu well?	Yes	No	Indifferent	Total (Non-NA)	NA
Group A	84(89%)	4(4%)	6(6%)	94	2
Group B	29(76%)	7(18%)	2(5%)	38	10

Table 26. A summary of answers to Q 56

As for the half open and half closed question Q57 “Suppose you go to Kunming (or Chiangmai) one day and you overhear people speak Bisu, what would be your reaction?” Most respondents of both groups said they would feel happy and proud; they would talk with them and make friends with them. Nobody would treat them as strangers although they do not know each other, which is in accordance with the results drawn from Q52 and Q56 that most respondents of the two groups are satisfied with their ethnic identity as Bisu.

5.1.4 Conclusions

In summary, attitudes towards language maintenance, language use and ethnic identity as Bisu are closely related to language use. The data shows that a predominant number of respondents of Group A are favorable towards the maintenance of the Bisu language, while respondents of Group B show a favorable attitude to Lahu instead of Bisu. In addition, respondents of Group A hold more positive attitudes towards speaking Bisu, and the Bisu language is more typically linked with their national ethnic tradition as Bisu people. This supports

the hypothesis that the more the Bisu language is used, the more positive attitudes are held by its speakers.

5.2 General attitudes towards the Bisu language

This section tests Bisu speakers' general attitudes towards their vernacular language by analyzing the respondents' reactions to twenty-one statements that consist of two categories: statements regarding the Bisu language and statements regarding the importance of speaking Bisu. Each statement will be discussed by village groups, age and gender.

5.2.1 Statements about the Bisu language

The respondents listened to eleven statements about the Bisu language and were asked whether they agreed, disagreed or felt neutral about the statements. They could also indicate "Not applicable" or "No idea". The statements reflected the respondent's general feelings about the Bisu language, such as personal interest in learning Bisu and the preservation of Bisu. In addition, they also reflected the respondents' respect for the Bisu language in terms of its status, value etc. These eleven statements consist of six positive statements and five negative statements, as shown in Table 27.

Positive statements	Negative statements
Q62. I like hearing Bisu.	Q66. Bisu has no place in the modern world.
Q63. Bisu should be taught to all people in this village	Q68. Parents should not teach their children to speak Bisu.
Q64. I like speaking Bisu.	Q69. You are considered a low class person if you speak Bisu
Q65. Bisu is a language worth learning to read and write.	Q70. It is difficult to learn Bisu.
Q67. We need to keep speaking Bisu from one generation to the next one	Q71. I am not willing to spend much time learning read and write Bisu.
Q72. Bisu is a valuable language.	

Table 27. Statements about the Bisu language

5.2.1.1 Answers to the statements by village groups

These statements test the respondents' attitudes towards Bisu from two opposite perspectives. It is assumed that the higher the percentages of "agree" with the positive statements, the more favorable attitudes are shown towards Bisu; on the contrary, the higher the percentages of "agree" with the negative statements, the less favorable attitudes are reflected towards Bisu. Answers to these statements are shown in Table 28.²⁵

²⁵ Numbers in Table 28 represents the number of respondents who chose that answer, and the number in parentheses represents its percentage out of the total number of non-NA responses.

Statements	Group A					Group B				
	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Total	NA	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Total	NA
62. I like hearing Bisu	92(96%)	3(3%)	1(1%)	96	0	42(98%)	0(0%)	1(2%)	43	5
63. Bisu should be taught to all people in this village	92(96%)	3(3%)	1(1%)	96	0	22(52%)	14(33%)	6(14%)	42	6
64. I like speaking Bisu	94(98%)	1(1%)	1(1%)	96	0	36(84%)	1(2%)	6(14%)	43	5
65. Bisu is a language worth learning to read and write	84(91%)	3(3%)	5(5%)	92	4	35(90%)	2(5%)	2(5%)	39	9
67. We need to keep speak Bisu from one generation to next	93(98%)	2(2%)	0(0%)	95	1	28(68%)	4(10%)	9(22%)	41	7
72. Bisu is a valuable language	84(89%)	10(11%)	0(0%)	94	2	17(52%)	11(33%)	5(15%)	33	15
Total	539(95%)	22(4%)	8(1%)	569	7	180(75%)	32(13%)	29(12%)	241	47
66. Bisu has no place in the modern world	21(24%)	28(31%)	40(45%)	89	7	24(65%)	7(19%)	6(16%)	37	11
68. Parent should not teach their children to speak Bisu	5(5%)	0(0%)	89(95%)	94	2	7(17%)	4(10%)	30(73%)	41	7
69. You are considered as a low class person if you speak Bisu	10(11%)	7(7%)	78(82%)	95	1	5(13%)	4(10%)	31(78%)	40	8
70. It is difficult to learn Bisu	10(11%)	7(7%)	78(82%)	95	1	14(55%)	5(30%)	21(15%)	40	8
71. I am not willing to spend much time learning to read and write Bisu	23(26%)	5(6%)	59(68%)	87	9	10(23%)	2(5%)	31(72%)	43	5
Total	69(15%)	47(10%)	344(75%)	460	20	61(39%)	20(13%)	77(49%)	158	15

Table 28. Answers to the statements by group

Based on Table 28, it is seen that there is an observable difference between Group A and Group B. Most respondents of Strong Villages agree with the six positive statements; that is to say, most of them have positive attitudes toward knowing the Bisu language. As for the respondents of Group B, about half of them saw the necessity of teaching Bisu and the value of Bisu language. This can be illustrated by the lower percentages of “agree” to the statements 63, 67 and 72. Answers to the rest of the statements are similar between Group A and Group B. This suggests that Group A’s attitudes towards Bisu are more favorable than Group B.

As for the five negative statements, there is a large difference between Group A and Group B regarding the answers to statement 66 “Bisu has no place in the modern world”: less than one third of the respondents from Group A agree with it, while most respondents of Group B (65%) agree with it. This indicates that respondents from Group A have more positive attitudes towards the status of the Bisu language. This might be related to their Bisu language usage and development at differing levels. The more Bisu is used, the more it is valued by its speakers.

The average percentages for both positive and negative statements in Table 28 also show that respondents of Group A have slightly more positive attitudes towards the Bisu language than those of Group B.

The differences between Group A and Group B are illustrated in Figures 17 and 18.

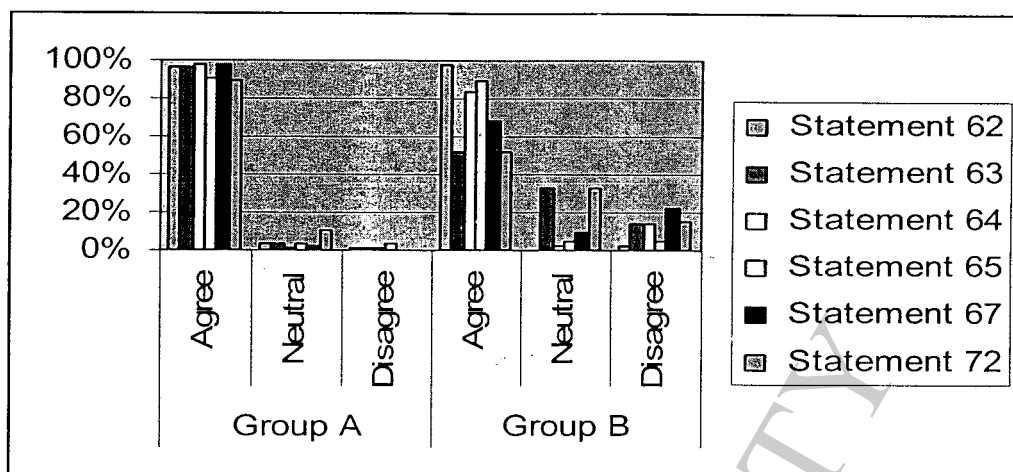


Figure 17. Answers to the positive statements by group

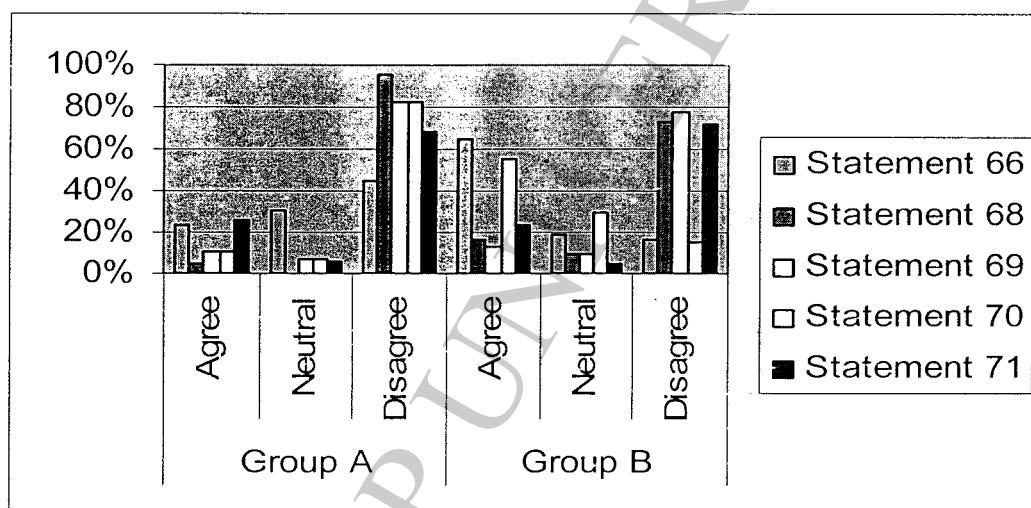


Figure 18. Answers to the negative statements by group

5.2.1.2 Answers to the statements by age

Age plays an important role in the study of language attitudes, since “Attitudes to language tend to change with age” (Baker 1992: 106). Baker (1992) points out that attitudes towards Welsh tend to become less favorable during the teenage

period. This coincides with the hypothesis of this study that the elderly have more positive attitudes towards the Bisu language.

However, answers to the eleven statements do not show large differences resulting from age for either Group A and B (see Tables 29 and 30). That is to say, the respondents' general attitudes toward the Bisu language do not vary with age. For example, most respondents from Group A agree with the positive statements and less than one-third of them agree with the negative statements. Within Group B, the responses to each statement among the three age groups are fairly similar. An exception for both groups is the response to statement 71 "I am not willing to spend much time learning to read and write Bisu". The data shows, for Group A, that most young and middle-aged respondents are willing to spend much time to read and write Bisu while about half of the old respondents are unwilling to so, mostly because they themselves feel "too old to study". By contrast, elderly respondents from Group B show higher percentages (about 30% more respondents from Group B are willing to spend more time learning to read and write Bisu) than the young and middle-aged respondents. This is due to the fact that, for Group B, it is mainly the elderly who have any ability in the Bisu language.

Answers to the statements of Group A and Group B are shown in Tables 29 and 30, respectively.²⁶

²⁶ The percentages of Table 29 and 30 are out of the number of non-NA responses. The number of NA responses is not listed because of the limited space.

Age Statements	15-30				31-50				51-70			
	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Total	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Total	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Total
62	28(88%)	3(9%)	1(3%)	32	32(100%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	32	32(100%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	32
63	29(91%)	2(6%)	1(3%)	32	32(100%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	32	31(97%)	1(3%)	0(0%)	32
64	31(97%)	1(3%)	0(0%)	32	32(100%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	32	31(97%)	0(0%)	1(3%)	32
65	29(94%)	2(6%)	0(0%)	31	28(93%)	0(0%)	2(6%)	30	28(90%)	1(3%)	2(6%)	31
67	30(94%)	2(6%)	0(0%)	32	32(100%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	32	31(100%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	31
72	26(84%)	5(16%)	0(0%)	31	28(93%)	3(10%)	0(0%)	31	30(97%)	2(6%)	0(0%)	32
Total	173(91%)	15(8%)	2(1%)	190	184(97%)	3(2%)	2(1%)	189	183(96%)	4(2%)	3(2%)	190
66	9(29%)	9(29%)	13(42%)	31	6(21%)	10(34%)	13(45%)	29	6(21%)	9(31%)	14(48%)	29
68	1(3%)	0(0%)	30(97%)	31	2(6%)	0(0%)	29(94%)	31	2(6%)	0(0%)	30(94%)	32
69	5(18%)	6(21%)	17(61%)	28	7(23%)	0(0%)	24(77%)	31	3(12%)	5(20%)	17(68%)	25
70	3(9%)	6(19%)	23(72%)	32	4(13%)	0(0%)	28(88%)	32	3(10%)	1(3%)	27(87%)	31
71	6(19%)	1(3%)	24(77%)	31	4(13%)	2(6%)	25(81%)	31	13(52%)	2(8%)	10(40%)	25
Total	24(16%)	22(14%)	107(70%)	153	23(15%)	12(8%)	119(77%)	154	27(19%)	17(20%)	98(69%)	142

Table 29. Group A's answers to the statements by age

Age Statements	15-30				31-50				51-70			
	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Total	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Total	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Total
62	12(92%)	0(0%)	1(8%)	13	15(100%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	15	15(100%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	15
63	4(40%)	4(40%)	2(20%)	10	6(38%)	8(50%)	2(13%)	16	12(75%)	2(13%)	2(13%)	16
64	10(77%)	0(0%)	3(23%)	13	11(73%)	1(7%)	3(20%)	15	15(100%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	15
65	11(92%)	1(8%)	0(0%)	12	10(83%)	0(0%)	2(17%)	12	14(93%)	1(7%)	0(0%)	15
67	8(67%)	1(8%)	3(23%)	12	8(57%)	2(14%)	4(29%)	14	12(75%)	1(7%)	2(13%)	15
72	5(63%)	2(25%)	1(13%)	8	7(58%)	4(33%)	1(8%)	12	5(38%)	5(38%)	3(23%)	13
Total	50(74%)	8(12%)	10(15%)	68	57(68%)	15(18%)	12(14%)	84	73(82%)	9(10%)	7(8%)	89
66	6(60%)	2(20%)	2(20%)	10	9(59%)	2(15%)	2(15%)	13	9(64%)	3(21%)	2(14%)	14
68	3(25%)	1(8%)	8(67%)	12	3(21%)	1(7%)	10(71%)	14	1(7%)	2(13%)	12(75%)	15
69	2(17%)	1(8%)	9(75%)	12	2(14%)	2(14%)	10(71%)	14	1(7%)	1(7%)	12(86%)	14
70	6(50%)	0(0%)	6(50%)	12	3(23%)	3(23%)	7(53%)	13	5(33%)	2(13%)	8(53%)	15
71	4(31%)	1(8%)	8(62%)	13	5(33%)	1(7%)	9(60%)	15	1(7%)	0(0%)	14(93%)	15
Total	34(58%)	18(46%)	33(56%)	59	22(32%)	9(13%)	38(55%)	69	17(23%)	8(11%)	48(66%)	73

Table 30. Group B's answers to the statements by age

5.2.1.3 Answers to the statements by gender

The previous section discusses the relationship between language attitudes and age; Chapter 4 also examines the use of the Bisu language and gender and draws that conclusion that men use Bisu more often than women. This section examines attitudes towards the Bisu language linked with gender.

Similar to the factor of age, gender does not influence the respondents' response to the statements regarding general knowledge about the Bisu language. Table 31 shows that the percentages of "agree", "neutral" and "disagree" for each statement are similar among the male and female respondents for both Group A and Group B. That is to say, no attitudinal difference resulting from gender is observed in this study.

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Q	Males of Group A				Females of Group A				Males of Group B				Females of Group B			
	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	T	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	T	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	T	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	T
62	45(94%)	2(4%)	1(2%)	48	46(96%)	1(2%)	1(2%)	48	22(100%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	22	20(95%)	0(0%)	1(5%)	21
63	46(96%)	2(4%)	0(0%)	48	48(100%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	48	12(55%)	5(23%)	5(23%)	22	10(50%)	9(45%)	1(5%)	20
64	48(100%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	48	48(100%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	48	18(86%)	0(0%)	3(14%)	21	18(78%)	1(4%)	4(17%)	23
65	45(98%)	1(2%)	0(0%)	46	40(89%)	2(4%)	3(7%)	45	16(89%)	1(6%)	1(6%)	18	19(90%)	1(5%)	1(5%)	21
67	46(96%)	2(4%)	0(0%)	48	48(100%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	48	15(75%)	1(5%)	4(20%)	20	13(62%)	3(14%)	5(24%)	21
72	41(89%)	5(11%)	0(0%)	46	43(90%)	5(10%)	8(17%)	48	8(50%)	5(31%)	3(19%)	16	9(53%)	6(35%)	2(12%)	17
T	241(95%)	12(5%)	1(0.3%)	254	273(96%)	8(3%)	12(4%)	285	91(77%)	12(10%)	16(14%)	118	89(72%)	20(16%)	14(11%)	123
66	12(27%)	13(30%)	19(43%)	44	9(20%)	15(33%)	21(47%)	45	12(71%)	2(12%)	3(18%)	17	12(60%)	5(25%)	3(15%)	20
68	1(2%)	0(0%)	47(98%)	48	2(4%)	0(0%)	46(96%)	48	5(25%)	2(10%)	13(65%)	20	1(5%)	2(10%)	18(86%)	21
69	8(21%)	6(15%)	25(64%)	39	8(17%)	5(11%)	33(72%)	46	4(21%)	3(16%)	12(63%)	19	1(5%)	1(5%)	20(91%)	22
70	8(16%)	5(10%)	38(75%)	51	8(16%)	2(40%)	4(80%)	50	7(37%)	2(11%)	10(53%)	19	7(33%)	3(14%)	11(52%)	21
71	8(18%)	5(11%)	31(70%)	44	8(22%)	0(0%)	28(78%)	36	4(19%)	2(10%)	15(71%)	21	6(27%)	0(0%)	16(73%)	22
T	54(31%)	46(19%)	177(73%)	243	52(21%)	39(16%)	185(76%)	242	49(43%)	28(25%)	70(62%)	113	44(36%)	28(23%)	85(69%)	123

Table 3.1. Answers to the statements by gender

5.2.2 Attitudes towards speaking Bisu

Baker points out that language attitude research has often looked at two aspects of attitudes: instrumental attitudes and integrative attitudes (Baker 1992). Instrumental attitudes reflect pragmatic, utilitarian motives related to individual desires (such as personal success, basic security and survival) through knowledge of a particular language. Integrative attitudes concern “attachment to, or identification with a group language and their cultural activities” (Baker 1992: 32). In this research, the respondents were asked ten questions of the form, “How important or unimportant do you think Bisu is for people to do....?” with each question referring to a distinct life situation. Half of the ten statements were intended to elicit instrumental attitudes and half to elicit integrative attitudes, as shown in Table 32.

Instrumental Attitude	Integrative Attitude
Q74. To live in this village	Q73. To be accepted in the community
Q76. To have more chances to make money	Q75. To preserve Bisu culture
Q78. To study at school	Q77. To make more friends or know more people
Q80. Go shopping	Q79. To communicate with people of the same age
Q81. To read and write	Q82. Bring up children

Table 32. Instrumental and integrative attitudes to Bisu

In this research, instrumental attitudes towards Bisu involve economic and social considerations. Integrative attitudes involve the respondent’s ethnic identification as a Bisu person and communication among Bisu speakers. They will be discussed in the following two sub-sections.

5.2.2.1 Instrumental attitudes towards speaking Bisu

Surprisingly, most respondents (80%) of Group A think it is important to read and write Bisu although the Bisu in China have never had an orthography. The reason, as explained by one middle-aged lady in Laopin, is that when the children have difficulties in writing and reading Chinese, the parents always explain everything to them in Bisu, thus speaking Bisu is important for reading and writing although

Bisu is not used in the education domain. A summary of Group A's answers to these five statements is shown in Table 33.

Question	Important	Neutral	Unimportant	Total (Non-NA)	NA
74. to live in this village;	96 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	96	0
81. to read and write;	76 (80%)	7 (7%)	12 (13%)	95	1
78. to study at school;	56 (68%)	11(13%)	15 (18%)	82	14
76. to have more chances to make money;	34 (44%)	14(18%)	30 (38%)	78	18
80. to go shopping	13 (14%)	18(20%)	59 (66%)	90	6
Total	275(62%)	50(11%)	116(26%)	441	39

Table 33. Group A's instrumental attitudes towards Bisu

By contrast, most respondents from Group B think Bisu is unimportant; this can be seen in the low percentages of "important" (below 30%) for each statement. Among the five statements, "to live in this village" is considered the most important, and "to read and write" is the least important, with only one respondent answering "important", as shown in Table 34.

Question	Important	Neutral	Unimportant	Total	NA
74. to live in this village;	13 (29%)	3 (7%)	29 (64%)	45	3
76. to have more chances to make money;	5 (11%)	7 (16%)	33 (73%)	45	3
80. to go shopping;	3 (7%)	3 (7%)	39 (87%)	45	3
78. to study at school;	2 (5%)	5 (11%)	37 (84%)	44	4
81. to read and write;	1 (2%)	6(13%)	38 (84%)	45	3
Total	24(11%)	24(11%)	176(79%)	224	16

Table 34. Group B's instrumental attitudes towards Bisu

The answers to these five statements from Group A and Group B suggest that there is a difference between these two groups, the more the Bisu language is used, the more positive instrumental attitudes are held by its speakers, as shown in Figure 19.

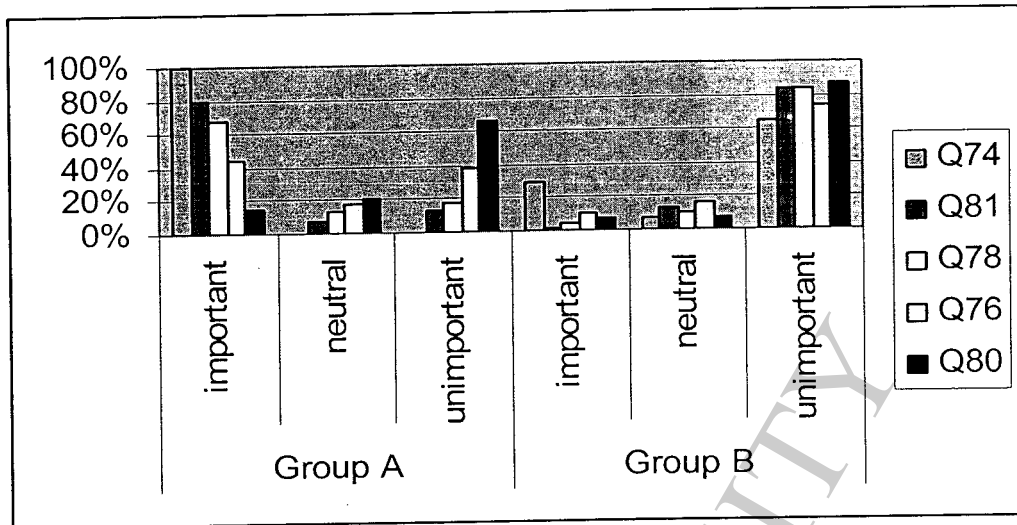


Figure 19. Instrumental attitudes towards Bisu

The above discussion shows that instrumental attitudes towards Bisu differ in the two groups. That is, place of residence is a factor influencing the respondents' instrumental attitudes towards Bisu. In addition, age and gender will also be considered as possible factors that might influence instrumental attitudes.

Table 33 shows that the age influence varies from Group A to Group B. The average percentages of "important" in Group A are similar among the three age groups, but increase gradually from the young to the elderly in Group B. This indicates that age is not a factor influencing their instrumental attitudes towards Bisu for the respondents from Group A; while for the respondents from Group B, the elderly respondents have more positive attitudes towards Bisu than the young respondents. This also can be seen through the bolded average percentages in the "Total" rows in Table 35.

Questions Groups		15-30					31-50				51-70			
		Important	Neutral	Unimportant	Total	Important	Neutral	Unimportant	Total	Important	Neutral	Unimportant	Total	
Group A	74	30(97%)	0(0%)	1(3%)	31	32(100%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	32	31(97%)	0(0%)	1(3%)	32	
	76	17(63%)	5(19%)	5(19%)	27	18(62%)	1(3%)	10(34%)	29	23(74%)	2(6%)	6(19%)	31	
	78	25(86%)	3(10%)	1(3%)	29	31(97%)	1(3%)	0(0%)	32	27(87%)	3(10%)	1(3%)	31	
	80	6(20%)	7(23%)	17(57%)	30	5(16%)	3(9%)	23(72%)	31	2(7%)	8(29%)	18(64%)	28	
	81	19(61%)	6(19%)	6(19%)	31	29(91%)	0(0%)	3(9%)	32	28(88%)	1(3%)	3(9%)	32	
	Total	97(66%)	21(14%)	30(20%)	148	115(73%)	5(3%)	36(23%)	156	111(72%)	14(9%)	29(19%)	154	
Group B	74	0(0%)	2(17%)	11(92%)	13	4(25%)	1(6%)	11(69%)	16	6(38%)	2(13%)	8(50%)	16	
	76	1(8%)	1(8%)	11(85%)	13	5(31%)	0(0%)	11(69%)	16	3(19%)	3(19%)	10(63%)	16	
	78	1(8%)	1(8%)	11(85%)	13	4(25%)	1(6%)	11(69%)	16	7(44%)	0(0%)	9(56%)	16	
	80	0(0%)	0(0%)	13(100%)	13	1(6%)	1(6%)	14(88%)	16	2(13%)	2(13%)	12(75%)	16	
	81	0(0%)	0(0%)	13(100%)	13	0(0%)	0(0%)	16(100%)	16	2(13%)	2(13%)	12(75%)	16	
	Total	2(3%)	4(6%)	59(91%)	65	14(18%)	3(4%)	63(79%)	80	20(25%)	9(11%)	51(64%)	80	

Table 35. Instrumental attitudes by age among Group A and Group B

The relationship between instrumental attitudes and age is illustrated in Figures 20 and 21.

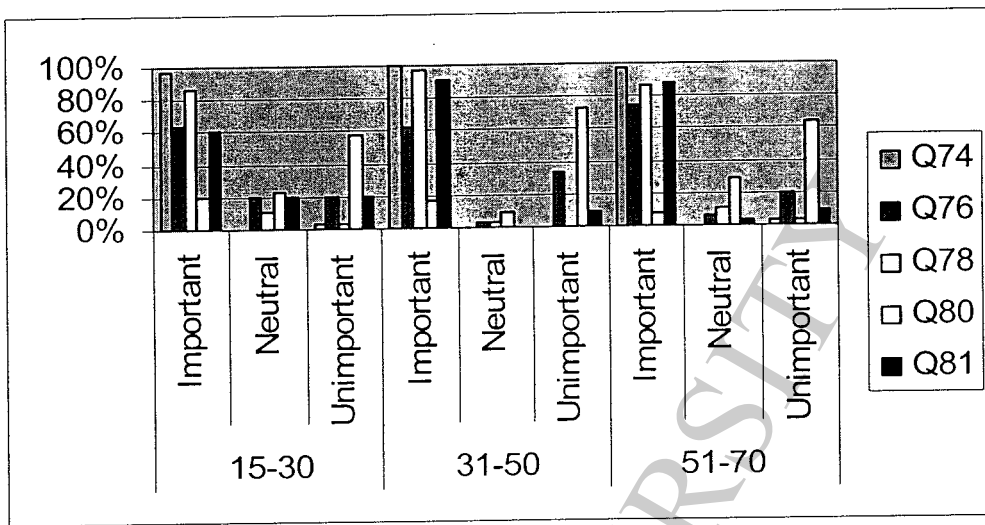


Figure 20. Group A's instrumental attitudes by age

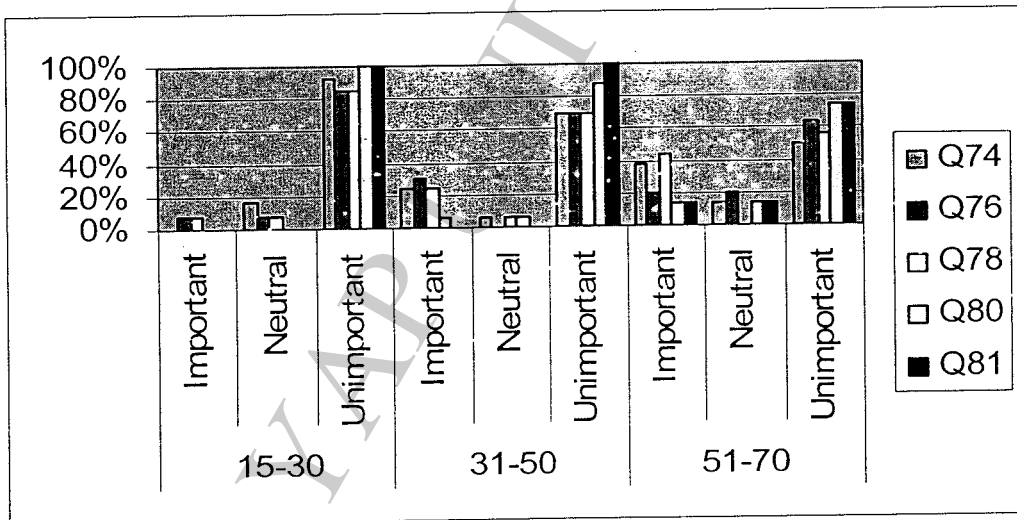


Figure 21. Group B's instrumental attitudes by age

As for the influence of gender, there seem to be no gender differences in the instrumental attitudes of Group A. However, it can be seen that in Group B, the

female respondents show slightly more positive instrumental attitudes than the male respondents, as shown in the “Total” rows in Table 36.

Gender		Male				Female			
		Important	Neutral	Un- important	T	Important	Neutral	Un- important	T
Group A	74	48(100%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	48	48(100%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	48
	80	6(13%)	13(29%)	26(58%)	45	7(16%)	5(11%)	33(73%)	45
	76	22(58%)	5(13%)	11(29%)	38	12(30%)	9(23%)	19(48%)	40
	78	25(63%)	9(23%)	6(15%)	40	31(74%)	2(5%)	9(21%)	42
	81	38(81%)	6(13%)	3(6%)	47	38(79%)	1(2%)	9(19%)	48
	Total	139(64%)	33(15%)	46(21%)	218	136(61%)	17(8%)	70(31%)	223
Group B	74	5(22%)	2(9%)	16(70%)	23	8(36%)	1(5%)	13(59%)	22
	80	1(4%)	2(9%)	20(87%)	23	2(9%)	1(5%)	19(86%)	22
	76	2(9%)	5(22%)	16(70%)	23	3(14%)	2(9%)	17(77%)	22
	78	0(0%)	3(14%)	19(86%)	22	2(9%)	2(9%)	18(82%)	22
	81	0(0%)	3(14%)	20(87%)	23	1(5%)	3(14%)	18(82%)	22
	Total	8(7%)	15(13%)	91(80%)	114	16(15%)	9(8%)	85(77%)	110

Table 36. Instrumental attitudes by gender

The relationship between instrumental attitudes and gender is also shown in Figure 22.

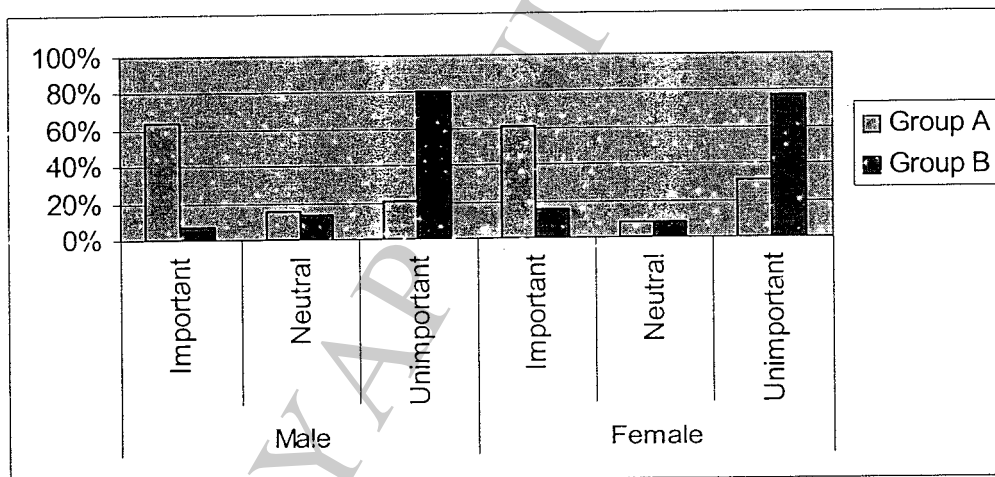


Figure 22. Instrumental attitudes by gender²⁷

²⁷ Figure 22 is based on the “Total” rows of Table 36.

5.2.2.2 Integrative attitudes towards speaking Bisu

As in the case of instrumental attitudes, answers to the statements explaining integrative attitudes towards Bisu also show differences between Group A and Group B. Most respondents from Group A attached importance to the five statements. It is encouraging that almost all respondents from Group A saw the importance of the Bisu language in the bringing up children, being accepted in the community and preserving Bisu culture. Speaking Bisu is also considered important for communicating with people of the same age, just as one middle-aged respondent commented that the Bisu language is especially important when people fall in love; if he had been unable to speak Bisu, there would have been no means for him to marry such a genial and prudent Bisu wife! This suggests that most respondents have a firm attachment to their Bisu group and cultural activities, as shown in Table 37.

Question	Important	Neutral	Unimportant	Total	NA
82. to bring up children	93(99%)	0(0%)	1(1%)	94	2
73. to be accepted in the community	93 (98%)	1 (1%)	1(1%)	95	1
75. to keep Bisu culture	93 (97%)	2(2%)	1(1%)	96	0
79. to communicate with people of the same age	83(90%)	7(8%)	2(2%)	92	4
77. to make more friends or know more people	56(62%)	9(10%)	25(28%)	90	6
Total	418(90%)	19(4%)	30(6%)	467	13

Table 37. Integrative attitudes of Group A

Table 37 shows that a preponderance of respondents from Group A saw the importance of speaking Bisu. Among those who answered “important”, there is no difference resulting from age. That is to say, Group A’s integrative attitudes towards Bisu are not related to age. While for Group B, the elderly people value the importance of speaking Bisu more than the younger people, which is demonstrated by the gradually increasing percentages of “important” among the three age groups (bolded in the “Total” row in Table 38). Integrative attitudes by age among Group A and Group B are shown in Table 38.

Questions Groups	15-30				31-50				51-70			
	Important	Neutral	Un- important	T	Important	Neutral	Un- important	T	Important	Neutral	Un- important	T
73	30(97%)	0(0%)	1(3%)	31	32(100%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	32	31(97%)	0(0%)	1(3%)	32
75	30(94%)	2(6%)	0(0%)	32	30(94%)	2(6%)	0(0%)	32	32(100%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	32
79	25(86%)	3(10%)	1(3%)	29	31(97%)	1(3%)	0(0%)	32	27(87%)	3(10%)	1(3%)	31
77	17(63%)	5(19%)	5(19%)	27	18(62%)	1(3%)	10(34%)	29	23(74%)	2(6%)	6(19%)	31
82	29(97%)	1(3%)	0(0%)	30	32(100%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	32	31(97%)	1(3%)	0(0%)	32
Total	131(88%)	11(7%)	7(5%)	149	143(91%)	4(3%)	10(6%)	157	144(91%)	6(4%)	8(5%)	158
73	0(0%)	2(15%)	11(85%)	13	4(25%)	1(6%)	11(69%)	16	6(38%)	2(13%)	8(50%)	16
75	3(23%)	2(15%)	8(62%)	13	4(25%)	1(6%)	11(69%)	16	8(50%)	1(6%)	7(44%)	16
79	1(8%)	1(8%)	11(85%)	13	4(25%)	1(6%)	11(69%)	16	7(44%)	0(0%)	9(56%)	16
77	1(8%)	1(8%)	11(85%)	13	5(31%)	0(0%)	11(69%)	16	3(19%)	3(19%)	10(63%)	16
82	1(8%)	0(0%)	12(92%)	13	4(25%)	2(13%)	10(63%)	16	5(31%)	2(13%)	9(56%)	16
Total	6(9%)	6(9%)	53(82%)	65	21(26%)	5(6%)	54(68%)	80	29(36%)	8(10%)	43(54%)	80

Table 38. Integrative attitudes by age

Compared with Group A, respondents from Group B attached less importance to each of the statements. Even the highest percentages of “important” for Q73 only reach 45 % (as shown in Table 39). Most respondents from Group B did not think speaking Bisu is important to the five life situations. However, compared with instrumental attitudes (see Table 34), respondents from Group B show more positive integrative attitudes towards Bisu. This indicates that Bisu is more typically linked with group identification or attachment rather than personal success. Group B’s answers to the integrative attitude questions are shown in Table 39.

Question	Important	Neutral	Unimportant	Total (Non-NA)	NA
75. to preserve Bisu culture;	15(43%)	4(9%)	26(58%)	45	3
79. to communicate with people of the same age;	12(27%)	2(4%)	31(69%)	45	3
73. to be accepted in the community;	21(45%)	5(11%)	21(45%)	47	1
82. to bring children;	10(22%)	4(9%)	31(69%)	45	3
77. to make more friends or know more people;	9(20%)	4(9%)	32(71%)	45	3
Total	67(30%)	19(8%)	141(62%)	227	13

Table 39. Integrative attitudes of Group B

For those of Group B who answered “important”, a large number of them are elderly respondents, and the percentages of “important” increase with age. That is to say, integrative attitudes towards Bisu change with age within Group B; the elderly tend to have more positive attitudes than the young.

That Group A has more positive integrative attitudes towards Bisu than Group B can also be observed in Figure 23.

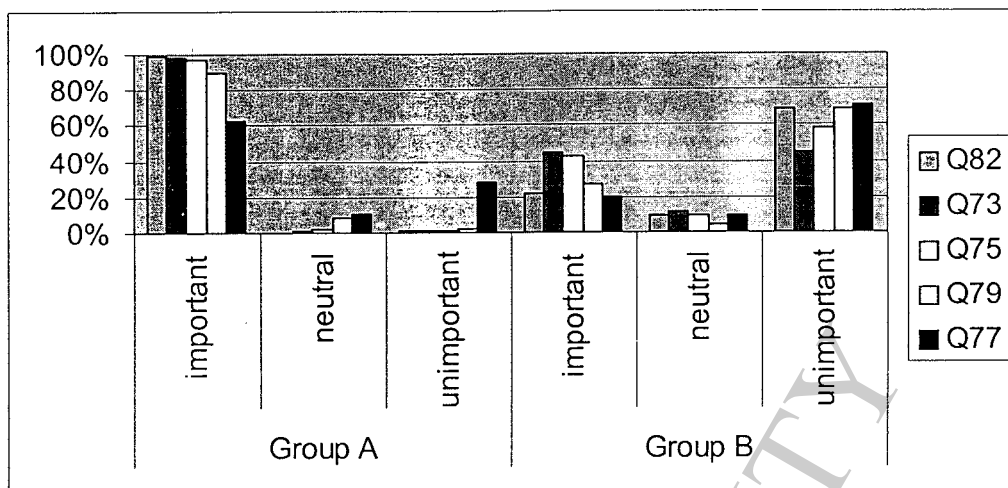


Figure 23. Integrative attitudes by groups

As for the influence of gender, the data shows that it does not influence Group A's integrative attitudes towards Bisu. But for Group B, women show slightly positive attitudes than men, as seen in the "Total" rows of Table 40.

		Males				Females			
		Important	Neutral	Unimportant	T	Important	Neutral	Unimportant	T
Group A	73	46(100%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	46	47(15%)	0(0%)	1(2%)	48
	75	48(100%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	48	45(94%)	2(4%)	1(2%)	48
	77	26(59%)	6(14%)	12(27%)	44	30(65%)	3(7%)	13(28%)	46
	79	39(87%)	5(11%)	1(2%)	45	44(94%)	2(4%)	1(2%)	47
	82	45(96%)	2(4%)	0(0%)	47	47(100%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	47
Total		204(89%)	13(6%)	13(6%)	230	213(90%)	7(3%)	16(7%)	236
Group B	73	4(17%)	2(9%)	17(74%)	23	17(71%)	3(13%)	4(17%)	24
	75	7(30%)	2(9%)	14(61%)	23	8(36%)	2(9%)	12(55%)	22
	77	4(17%)	2(9%)	17(74%)	23	5(23%)	2(9%)	15(68%)	22
	79	5(22%)	2(9%)	16(70%)	23	7(32%)	0(0%)	15(68%)	22
	82	5(22%)	2(9%)	16(70%)	23	5(23%)	2(9%)	15(68%)	22
Total		25(22%)	10(9%)	80(70%)	115	42(38%)	9(8%)	61(54%)	112

Table 40. Integrative attitudes by gender

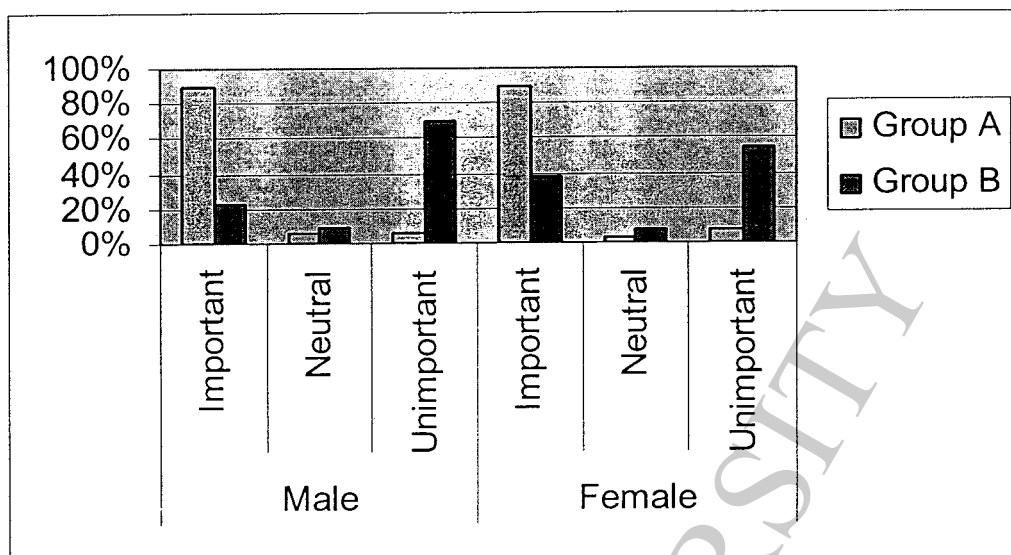


Figure 24. Integrative attitudes by gender

In summary, attitudes towards Bisu vary from Group A to Group B. Respondents from Group A value the Bisu language more in terms of general knowledge about Bisu, as well as instrumental and integrative attitudes towards Bisu language. Answers to these questions support the hypothesis that the more Bisu is used, the more positive attitudes are held by its speakers.

Age and gender do not show any effect on responses to statements about the Bisu language (see Section 5.2.1). Also, the data indicates that, for Group A, attitudes towards Bisu do not seem to vary with age or by gender. For Group B, however, the elderly tend to have more positive attitudes towards speaking Bisu than the young and women tend to have more positive attitudes than men. In Group A, almost everyone uses Bisu and feels positively about it. In Group B, where language shift is occurring, differences in attitudes towards speaking Bisu are observed between age groups and gender.

5.3 Attitudes towards Bisu speakers

Attitudes towards a language can also be reflected through a study of attitude towards the speakers. As Fasold comments “attitudes towards languages are often the reflection of attitudes towards members of various ethnic groups” (Fasold 1984: 148). In his 1992 study, Baker also mentions the importance of inner security rooted in the ethnic language speakers. That is, if people feel insecurity or embarrassment when speaking their minority language, this may lead them to change their attitudes to that language and shift to other languages with more security (Baker 1992: 100).

As a Bisu speaker, how does s/he feel about other Bisu speakers? Do Bisu speakers have a common ethnic consciousness among themselves? This section will help to answer such questions.

Four closed questions together with four open questions are applied to measure attitudes toward Bisu speakers. This involves attitudes towards a Bisu speaker in a common trade setting (Q83), attitudes towards a Bisu person who has lost the proficiency in the Bisu language (Q85), attitudes towards those who have a good command of the Bisu language (Q87), and attitudes towards monolingual Bisu speakers (Q88).

Q83 provides a setting to compare the respondent’s attitudes towards a Bisu speaker with a Han or Thai speaker.²⁸ The language of the speaker is set as the sole variable while other variables are under control, the respondents are asked to give the answer they prefer from four alternatives. The results show that, for both Groups A and B, the percentages of choosing “Bisu speaker” are the highest compared with the percentages of the other three alternatives. The reasons include, as they explained in the following open question, “A Bisu speaker is my relative.” “He is more familiar to me.” “We are from the same group; he is one

²⁸ “Han” was applied to the investigation in China and Thai to Thailand. Both Han and Thai are the majority ethnic groups compared with all the other groups in these two countries.

member among us.” “We have the same family blood.” “He is an insider to me.” This indicates that the identity as a Bisu is still rooted in their minds although some of them have lost the Bisu language. The second highest percentages fall on the answer of “either one”, mostly because the respondents think that business is business, so it does not matter whom they sell to. Only a tiny percentage of respondents favor a Han (Thai) speaker. The answers to Question 83 show no important difference between Group A and Group B, as shown in Table 41.

Q83 Suppose one day you go to the market to sell chickens, if two people offer the same price at the same time, one speaks Bisu, another speaks Chinese (Thai), to whom would you sell the chicken?		
	Group A	Group B
Bisu speaker	55 (57%)	23 (50%)
Chinese (Thai) speaker	3 (3%)	4 (8%)
either one	37 (39%)	21 (44%)
neither one	1 (1%)	0 (0%)
Total	96	48

Table 41. Favorable attitudes towards Bisu speakers in marketing

In contrast to Q83, the open Q85 attempts to tap people’s attitude to Bisu speakers from an opposite point of view. The respondents were asked to give their ideas freely as to those Bisu people who totally stop using the Bisu language or those who cannot speak Bisu at all. Among the 96 respondents of Group A, only 2 respondents (2.1%) think it is good for them not to speak Bisu, the vast majority holds negative attitudes towards them, and some of their comments follow:

“They forget who they are, they forget their ancestors”, “I look down upon them” “They should not forget their own language,” “they are 二气鬼, I do not like them.”²⁹(Respondents from Menghai)

“They are Laomian people, they should speak Laomian hua.” “It is not right for them; they should speak their own language.” (Respondents from Lancang village)

²⁹ “二气鬼” is from the Yunnan dialect; it tends to contain negative meanings such as wildly arrogant, stupid and the like.

“They forget their own language.” “I feel sorry for them.” “They lose their opportunity to be a Bisu.” “I don’t like them.” (Respondents from Doi Chompuu)

“I don’t feel comfortable with them.” “They are proud.” “They forget who they are.” “They are disguising, I hate them.” (Respondents from Doi Pui)

As for respondents from Group B, about half of them “feel sorry for themselves” because they cannot speak their own language, some people even feel a shame for themselves. Some think “it is normal for Bisu speakers not to speak Bisu, because we speak Lahu in the village.” In word, although they have more or less lost their proficiency in Bisu, they themselves still expect that Bisu people should speak the Bisu language.

After Q85, Q87 is used to explore the respondents’ attitude to Bisu speakers by comparing two Bisu speakers with levels of different proficiency in Bisu. The respondents were asked to choose one answer out of four in response to the question “In your village, are people who speak Bisu very well more respected than those who do not?” The results show that most respondents respect those who speak Bisu well more, the only difference between Group A and B is that more respondents of Group A gave a definite “No” answer. This may be because most respondents of Group A speak Bisu well, so it is hard for them to say that they will respect people more just because they speak Bisu very well. As for Group B, those who can speak Bisu well are only a few and they mostly are elderly people. Since “respect the elderly” has been considered as one of the Chinese nation’s traditional virtues, it is natural that more respondents from Group B avoid choosing the definite “No” answer. Answers to Q87 are shown in Table 42.

Q87 In your village, are people who speak Bisu very well more respected than those who do not speak Bisu?		
	Group A	Group B
Yes	69(73%)	37(79%)
Maybe Yes	2(2%)	0(0%)
Maybe no	0(0%)	8(17%)
No	23 (24%)	2(4%)
Total (Non-NA)	94	47
NA	2	1

Table 42. Attitudes towards two kinds of Bisu speakers

Given that Bisu in most Bisu speech communities is passed from the elderly generation to the young, Question 88 specifies people's attitudes to elderly Bisu speakers by asking the closed question "Do you think those who only speak Bisu are old thinking?" People's attitude to the old directly influences their motives towards and interest in learning the language. Question 88 elicits their attitudes to monolingual Bisu speakers by the hypothesis "they are old thinking", the more favorable answers, the less positive attitude to Bisu speakers.

Answers show that just a few (13%) respondents answered "yes" to this question. The vast majority of respondents (81%) do not think they are "old thinking" persons; they made the following comments:

"They are also smart." "Laopin hua belongs to our own group; we should not link it with old-thinking persons." "Laopin hua also can make them act according to circumstances" "some people are indeed old thinking, but it has nothing to do with speaking the Bisu language." (Respondents from Menghai)

"The Bisu language is our traditional language, it is not right to link a persons's personality with the Bisu language." "It is a habit to speak Laomian hua in our village." (Respondents from Lancang)

"The Bisu language is of value." "We should learn Bisu." (Respondents from Ximeng)

“We are also Laomian people, we should not evaluate the old like this,” “Bisu speakers are also clever.” “That they speak the Bisu language does not mean that they do not follow the times.” (Respondents from Menglian)

“We should not forget that Bisu could always be used.” “Our language is not old thinking.” “Bisu language is not related to old thinking persons.” “Being a monolingual Bisu is by no means to be out of date.” (Respondents from Doi Chompuu)

“Bisu is our original language.” “The Bisu language has been used for a long time, we can not say an old Bisu monolingual is old thinking.” “Bisu is an old language that can always be used.” “Being an old thinking persons has nothing to do with speaking Bisu.” (Respondents from Doi Pui)

For those who think speaking only Bisu represents “old thinking, their reasons mainly include that Bisu is a local language, the old should also learn other languages, for otherwise, they could be cheated. This involves a bilingual issue, which is beyond the scope of this study.

Thus, respondents have positive attitudes towards Bisu speakers in spite of their different value systems. Answers to Question 88 show no important difference between Group A and Group B, as shown Table 43.

Q88 Do you think those who only speak Bisu are “old thinking”?		
	Group A	Group B
Yes, they are.	11(13 %)	5 (14%)
Maybe Yes	3(3%)	2(5%)
Maybe no	3(3%)	0(0%)
No, they are not.	71(81%)	30(81%)
Total (Non-NA)	88	37
NA	8	11

Table 43. Favorable attitudes towards monolingual
Bisu speakers in marketing

5.4 Attitudes towards a possible Bisu literacy program

This section explores people's attitudes towards a potential Bisu literacy program (see Q90 to Q104). It mainly explores whether Bisu speakers have the interest to develop their written language or not. This will directly influence Bisu language development. As Fishman states, "Minority language maintenance increasingly requires literacy, because only via literacy can most modern primary reward systems become operative" (Fishman 1980: 169).

Given that Bisu literacy programs have been carried out in the two Thai Bisu villages, while Bisu literature has not been produced in China, attitudes towards Bisu literature will be discussed by three groups of villages: China strong villages (the villages of Laopin and Zhutang), China weak villages (the villages of Cimizhu and Nanya) and Thai villages (the villages of Doi Chompuu and Doi Pui). Answers to the closed questions regarding attitudes towards Bisu literacy are presented in Table 44.³⁰

³⁰ In order to get more information, questions related to the respondent's children are also applied to those who are unmarried or have no children; the explanation pattern "Later on, when you have children, will you?" was added before eliciting the answer.

Question	China Strong Villages						China Weak Villages						Thai Villages					
	Yes	Maybe Yes	Maybe No	No	Total (Non-NA)	NA	Yes	Maybe Yes	Maybe No	No	Total (Non-NA)	NA	Yes	Maybe Yes	Maybe No	No	Total (Non-NA)	NA
90	48(94%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	48	0	45(94%)	0(0%)	1(2%)	2(4%)	48	0	38(79%)	6(13%)	2(4%)	2(4%)	48	0
91	45(94%)	1(2%)	2(4%)	0(0%)	48	0	42(88%)	0(0%)	1(2%)	4(9%)	47	1	30(63%)	4(8%)	2(4%)	12(25%)	48	0
92	48(100%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	48	0	40(87%)	0(0%)	2(4%)	4(9%)	46	2	41(87%)	2(4%)	1(2%)	3(6%)	47	1
94	47(98%)	0(0%)	1(2%)	0(0%)	48	0	37(79%)	1(2%)	3(6%)	6(13%)	47	0	22(46%)	6(13%)	9(19%)	11(23%)	48	0
96	43(90%)	1(2%)	2(4%)	2(4%)	48	0	37(79%)	0(0%)	1(2%)	8(17%)	46	2	28(58%)	8(17%)	4(8%)	8(17%)	48	0
98	46(94%)	0(0%)	1(2%)	1(2%)	48	0	36(84%)	2(5%)	0(0%)	5(12%)	43	5	36(75%)	9(19%)	1(2%)	2(4%)	48	0
100	35(73%)	1(2%)	2(4%)	10(21%)	48	0	32(70%)	2(4%)	0(0%)	12(26%)	46	2	36(75%)	8(17%)	2(4%)	2(4%)	48	0
102	42(88%)	0(0%)	1(2%)	5(10%)	48	0	37(77%)	0(0%)	2(4%)	2(4%)	48	7	34(72%)	7(15%)	0(0%)	6(13%)	47	1
104	48(100%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	48	0	33(85%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	6(15%)	39	9	39(89%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	5(11%)	44	4

Table 44. Attitudes towards a possible Bisu literacy program

The results show that most people of all the Bisu villages would like to have a Bisu literacy program no matter whether Bisu is often used or not. For example, 88% of respondents of China weak villages expressed their strong wish to have Bisu literacy program carried out in their village although they have lost Bisu to a great degree. When the researcher asked them Q91 “If someone was going to teach you how to read and write Bisu in your village, would you go?” 94% of the respondents from China strong villages declared they would attend a Bisu literacy program as long as it was available. Some people even declared they would be willing to sacrifice their farming time if there was a conflict between learning Bisu and farming the fields. According to the answers, China strong villages show the strongest desire to develop Bisu literacy programs, followed by the China weak villages, finally the two Thai villages. The places that already have literacy programs have the lowest percentages of “yes”, this may be because the respondents in China do really know what is involved the literacy program. Those in Thailand do realize the commitment involved and are slightly less willing. Answers to Question 92 “Would you like you children go?” also show similar results.

Question 94 aims to predict the respondents’ attitudes to Bisu literacy as well as the sum of money they would be willing to invest to learn Bisu by adding the assumption “if a month-long Bisu literacy course costs you a day’s living cost or a day’s wage”. Answers to this question show almost everyone (98%) in China strong villages would go, the reasons are, as they stated, they do not want to lose their ancestral language, they want to keep it and let more people use it. The percentages of “yes” in China weak and Thai villages are 79% and 46%, respectively. For those who answered “no”, most of them are old people. Their reasons are mostly “I am too old to learn.” Only one respondent at the age of 20 of China weak villages declared she preferred Chinese and did not want to spend time and energy on Bisu. A few people in Thai villages answered they did not have time or money.

Questions 96 through 103 deals with the attitude towards buying Bisu books. It is measured by setting the price and comparing with a Chinese or Thai book with the same price. Four closed questions, namely Q96 “If a book of Bisu folktale costs 10 Yuan (50 Baht), would you buy it?”, Q98 “Would you buy it for your children?”, Q100 “If a book of Chinese folktale costs 10 Yuan (50 Baht), will you buy it?” and Q102 “Will you buy it for your children?”, along with separate “why” questions are applied in the investigation. The answers to Q96 and Q100 turn out that 20% more respondents in China strong and weak villages prefer to buy the Bisu book, while in the Thai villages, 17% more respondents preferred to buy the Thai version than the Bisu one.

Questions 98 and 102 explore attitudes towards buying the book for the next generation. Answers to these two questions show similar results as to Q96 and Q100: more respondents in China villages prefer to buy the Bisu version for their children while more respondents in Thai villages prefer to buy the Thai version. In addition, the answers show that, among the respondents in China, more people were willing to buy the book for their children than those who were willing to buy the book for themselves. This is related to Chinese culture, because Chinese parents always firmly believe that it is good to take every chance to let their children learn more, so that the children will have a better life. As the Chinese saying goes “the father wishes his son to be a dragon”.³¹

Question 104 “Do you think we should have newspapers in Bisu?” tests the respondents’ attitudes towards having a Bisu newspaper. Answers show that all respondents in China strong villages and most respondents in the other villages have positive attitudes towards newspapers written in Bisu. Those who answered “no” did so because they do not have the habit of reading any newspaper. This

³¹ “Dragon” always has positive connotations in Chinese culture; here it means an outstanding person among the peers. This saying expresses the desire that the parents strongly wish their children have a good life.

indicates newspapers or other reading materials could be considered in a future Bisu literacy program.

In summary, most respondents show positive attitudes towards a potential Bisu literacy program although some of them do not use Bisu. Respondents in China strong villages show the strongest desire to have Bisu literacy among all the Bisu villages being investigated.

5.5 Summary

This section explores people's attitudes towards the Bisu language from four perspectives: attitude towards language use and language displacement; general attitudes towards Bisu; attitudes towards Bisu speakers and attitudes towards a possible Bisu literacy program. Each perspective is discussed with respect to place residence, Group A and Group B. In addition, the variables of age and gender are also taken into account when discussing general attitudes towards Bisu. The discussion of each section provides evidence for or against the hypothesis that the more Bisu is used, the more positive attitudes are held by its speakers.

Attitudes towards language use and displacement show differences among the respondents of Group A and Group B. Most respondents of Group A want Bisu to be used in the next generation; their attitudes towards the maintenance of Bisu language are favorable. In contrast, most respondents from Group B have negative attitudes towards the maintenance of Bisu, which indicates language shift. This supports the hypothesis.

General attitudes towards the Bisu language vary from Group A to Group B. Most respondents from Group A have positive attitudes towards the Bisu language, compared with a small part of respondents from Group B. Answers to general attitudes also show that age and gender are factors influencing the respondent's attitudes in Group B: the elderly and women have more positive attitudes towards Bisu. The discussion of general attitudes supports the hypothesis that the more Bisu is used, the more positive attitudes are held by its speakers.

The data also shows that most respondents in all the villages have positive attitudes towards a Bisu literacy program, especially the respondents from the China strong villages.

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