CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY
3.0 At the outset, it has been made clear that the aim of this research coincides with descriptive research. As we know, the main goals of linguistic research are: to explore, to describe and to explain. In particular, the descriptive study also tries to study and answer questions: who, what, when and how. This type of research work describes linguistic structure of language, language system, linguistic situation and linguistic event, etc. of a particular language. In this endeavor, the researcher observes, studies and describes what he/she found. In this case, collecting data on scientific basis for descriptive studies, with care and deliberation, remains the vital issue for any researcher. This research, in particular, keeps the guidelines and general framework of descriptive study in mind and tries to describe Phom language accordingly. This effort also justifies the theoretical goals of the research.

Broadly speaking, there are several methods of conducting a scientific research in linguistics. For our purpose, we have adopted field study method. As we know, this method involves direct study of field situations. Anvita Abbi (2001) rightly says:

In modern days, language research can be oriented either empirically or non-empirically, based on the interest of the scientist. Empirically oriented research in linguistics is commonly known as ‘field research’ or ‘field-work’. The branch of linguistics that deals with the knowledge of field research or fieldwork is known as ‘field-linguistics’.
This method has, in fact, broken down the traditional method of conducting research in limited space. It has been established that there are six phases under which research is carried out:

3.1 Steps:

1. Specifying the topic to be studied
2. Framing research design
3. Planning of a sample
4. Collection of data
5. Analysis of data
6. Bringing out final conclusion

(Figure xi)
These steps have been followed. The topic of this research is clear and direct. The research design is descriptive.

The first move was to collect data from primary sources. However, secondary sources were not completely neglected. Collection of primary data was one of the major goals of this research. It goes without saying that the two main sources of primary data collection are: interview and observation. The secondary data were collected through a variety of sources. But, they are obviously limited, as not enough work is available in this language.

3.2 Methods for data collection:

The fieldwork period was divided into two parts: (1) the collection of data, and (2) the observation of the data. The collection and observation of the data sometimes went together.

Both the Qualitative and Quantitative methods were employed for the data collection. There is very limited work done on the language except Robbins Burling who has worked out on the phonological aspect of the language (cf. 4.1). The descriptive study of a language requires a detailed view of the language. It needs an immense amount of the qualitative and quantitative data to be collected.

Anvita Abbi's (2001) model has also been taken into consideration. Attempt has also been made to adopt her model as a reference point. The pattern and design
suggested by Central Institute of Indian languages for conducting descriptive study has also been used.

Apart from the self-made word list and sentence-list, the word-list and the sentence-list of Central Institute of Indian languages for fieldwork were used for the collection of data.

For the collection of data Interviews were conducted with the speakers. Meetings were also arranged. Efforts were made to know their expectations. The response was positive. They were frank in their opinions. They were very optimistic. These sessions were very useful, as they became the active participants.
3.3 Informants:

The data were collected from seven informants of different age groups and professions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Imdong Phom</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Chairman of Phom literature committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Among Phom</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>A Bible translator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.Henshet Phom</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Vice-Principal of Yingli college</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angmaü Phom</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>A student of degree, Arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shatung Phom</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>A student of degree, Arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nyuchem Phom</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>A student of degree, Arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheklen Phom</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>A student of degree, Arts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table (x)

3.4 Criteria for choosing the informants:

- An informant should possess these qualities:
- An informant should have clear pronunciation
- He should be patient
- He should not be away from his native place for a long time
- He should understand the contact language (if there is no interpreter that means in case of bi-lingual).
The data were collected from these informants in the field in 2006-2007. The data once collected were cross checked. The informants from different age groups and from different professions were of much use.

3.5 Cross checking and validation of data:

There are three criteria for evaluating the research: reliability, validity and sensitivity. Reliability refers to ability of an instrument to produce consistent or same result. In this regard, the cross checking of the data is very important.

Sreedhar (1974) rightly says:

One draw back in the data collection is the adoption of the informant elicitation method, which has the risk of presenting hyper corrected forms.

The data were collected from the speakers of common dialect, which is understood by all the speakers of the language. This was done to avoid the discussion on the dialectal variation.

They were interviewed and recorded. Recording was done for a closer study and it was also needed for the spectrographic study of the sounds.

3.6 Instrument:

Recorder:

A good quality tape-recorder was used for the recording of the sounds. There were some instances when the recording was not clear because of noise. It is very difficult to get the ideal condition when the recording could be done.
It is evident that one should be able to recognize the sounds easily. As quoted by Anvita Abbi (2001) "my teacher, Prof. Charles Hockett, while teaching us 'Field Methods' course used to say that 'the best equipment that one has to take to the field is your pair of ears'.

While checking the sounds for machine evidence, it was found that there were creaky vowels but they were not found with other speakers when counter checked. The voice of that particular informant led us to this assumption.

3.7 Observation:

Observation implied the use of eyes rather than of ears and the voice. It was also a process of watching the concrete situation of language being used by native speakers. Observation is always a planned methodical watching.

Observation is the method where the researcher and informant both become participant as researcher also involves himself in observing the situation and tries to assimilate to some extent with the informants.

The people were very optimistic, knowing that someone from the other community is engaging herself in doing research on their language. People were very helpful and throughout the research period, all the possible supports were given from the community.

When the data were collected in presence of more than two informants, they consulted each other and some times deviated with one another leading to a
situation where they also learned what they did not know before. This was among the young speakers of the language. This made them more curious about their mother tongue.

The informants were very interested to know those IPA symbols, which was used for transcribing the data. Some times, they were also explained the different sounds, place and manner of articulation and also minimal pairs.

3.8 Interviews:

Interviews were conducted with the informants for the collection of data. No specific questionnaire was prepared. There were oral interviews, which were reported and recorded. The data were collected by elicitation through word and sentence lists. Apart from collection of data, some informal interviews were conducted with other speakers of the language like, C. Amop Noklang, Director, North East Integrated Program. Ms. A. Asangla Phom, Project Co-Ordinator, PBCA (Phom Baptist Church Association). Mr. Paushen Phom (retired Rev.).

These interviews were helpful to know about the socio-cultural life of the people and also the different settings of the society.