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Language Ecology And Ao Naga Language

Kakali Mukherjee

Former Assistant Registrar General India (language), Government of India &
 Life Member of LSI and DLA

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ABSTRACT

Being located in time and space language evolves and diversifies over time. Accordingly, language is considered as living entity and thereby a social practice within social life making it inseparable from its environment. Language along with its environment follow certain practices in selecting element(s) of sound(s) to combine and multiply words and sentences distinguishing itself with certain specific linguistic traits. This system and behavior frames the basis of Language Ecology or Ecolinguistic system within a particular language being the study of interrelationship of language as living being with and within its environment.

The Ao Naga language, spoken majorly in Mokokchung district of Nagaland State of India, is distinguished with certain kind of environment specific linguistic traits amidst other state specific linguistic communities of Nagaland ,namely, Angami - Chakhesang - Chang - Khiemnungan - Khezha - Konyak- Lotha - Phom - Pochury - Rengma - Sangtam - Sema- Yimchungre - Zeliang - Zemi. The distinction of Ao Naga language in categorized word forms will be presented in details along with its mutual intelligibility with other communities with reference to its treatment in Grierson's Linguistic Survey of India.

1.0 Introduction: Language Ecology as a subject

1.1 Language is a system of communication used in a structured way by one particular community, group, nation or country. It is the vehicle of interchange of social thought, behavior, cultural and all sorts of societal knowledge treasure inside the group or outside the group. Language thus is a social phenomenon as well as code, consisting of multitude of

signs of sounds words and morphemes. Each sign or each word is the association of sound or sounds assigning specific meanings to diverse objects or entity. In other words, language is one symbolically valued entity identifying social, cultural, political and linguistic existence of one community.

1.2 Languages of the world as well as of individual country or region differ from each other geographically causing the speakers of one language to be designated as Speech Community in a given region. Each speech community inhabiting in particular eco system designates the names of the natural items (both living and non-living) derived from the knowledge of bio-diversity or local eco-system. This in-depth knowledge of mutual relationship among ecosystem and given objects covers the names of natural elements, animals, plants, human relationship terms, mystic world, human's different stages of growing up, animal and human body parts along with sense, emotion and perception expressing terms including all actions and experiences.. The extensive classified world of experiences as reflected in the structured system of sound, words, vocabularies, grammars by the speech communities, irrespective of indigenous or traditional, is the output of a prolonged developmental process of adoption to specific eco-environment. The traditional ecological knowledge, thus acquired, by the communities, is transmitted to generation after generation.

1.3 The study of interrelationship of organisms with and within the environment, the speakers live in, frames the basis of Language Ecology. The notion of ecology in Linguistics has evolved to address the matters of social, historical, developmental nature. Einar Haugen (1972) pioneered the theme of describing the relationship among diverse forms of language and the group of people speaks them. He defines language ecology as the “study of interactions between any given language and its environment”.

1.4 Thus, language evolves and diversifies over time being deeply entrenched in human culture which is associated with eco system. The eco environment, amidst which a community live and grow, influences human capacity in producing and uttering sounds and words as per requirement to relate particular sign to particular meaning (Sassure:1916). The sound elements combine selectively in order to form words and sentences specifying one language within a given environment. Linguistic diversity is also established by these variegated elements as language, along with conveying objective thoughts or facts, offers different points of view and ways of constructing social reality in a given environment within which it exists. The classification of animal, plants, flora and fauna, elements of nature , food items and etcetera obviously reflect the environment where people live in. The mutual relationship between ecosystem and its specific living objects, known to the eco

specific community –traditional or indigenous - is so called traditional ecological knowledge which passes from generation to generation (Ramamoorthy : 2020). The traditional knowledge of biological diversity covering the overall knowledge of organisms and their ecosystems is reflected in the forms of vocabularies relating plants and animals, cultural and agricultural practices and rituals primarily and gradually in the form of tribal/folk song and stories, folklores, proverbs in a language of a particular community.

1.5 The Linguistic ecology or Eco linguistics is viewed obviously from the point of view of existing languages in relation to one another as well as to diverse social factors. Einar Haugen who introduced the theme and term of Linguistic Ecology defines it as “the study of interactions between any given language and its environments”. Thus language being considered as one of the living beings, the notion of language ecology undergoes with the issues of language along with societal change, historical development and preservation of languages from endangerment. Thus linguistic ecology is the study of how languages interact with each other and the places they are spoken in along with arguing in favour of preservation of endangered languages treating language as biological species or living being (Haugen: The ecology of language: 1972). Moreover, language is neither isolated factor in society nor mere combination of sounds and words. Language is a social practice keeping it inseparable from its environment which is the instrumental element in the evolution of language as well as selection of forms and characteristics of language. (Calvet:2006). While talking about Great Andamanese people – one of the early entrant communities in India - , Abbi (2020) emphasizes that “The human body is the primary model for expressing concepts of spatial orientation, categories and relations between objects and action and events. The body is divided into seven zones, each designated by an abstract symbol that is attached to nouns, verbs, adjectives, and other grammatical categories to create different meanings..So, for instance, the prefix er- denotes an external body part, whereas e- denotes an internal one.....bungoi “beautiful”.....erbungoi “external beauty”.....ebungoi “internal beauty”.....”.

1.6 Among diverse Indian languages there has been an experience and opportunity to observe the ecological features in the speech of Ao Naga Community of North eastern Indian State of Nagaland. The state came into being as 16th State of Indian Union on 1st December, 1963 curving out from the then Assam state of India. Before we enter into actual subject matter, the location and status of Ao Naga community in Nagaland (supported by facts of Grierson’s LSI and Indian Census) along with linguistic traits of Ao language may be looked into.

2.0 Nagaland and its languages

2.1 Nagaland is one of the 29 states and 7 Union Territories of Indian Republican Union which came into being as 16th State of Indian Union on 1st December, 1963 curving out from the-then Assam state. The Nagaland state is distinguished by its ethnic and linguistic diversity comprised by sixteen main indigenous groups. According to Singh, the Naga population is distributed mainly among sixteen communities like 1. Ao, 2. Angami, 3. Chakhesang, 4. Chang, 5. Chirr, 6. Khiemnungan, 7. Konyak, 8. Lotha, 9. Makwara, 10. Phom, 11. Rengma, 12. Sangtam, 13. Sema, 14. Tikhir, 15. Yimchungre, 16. Zeliang. (Scheduled Tribes : 2001 : 857- 914). These sixteen distinct indigenous communities are the state specific inhabitants of Nagaland state along with other smaller groups. Decennial Language return in Census reveals Ao as occupying the first position numerically among the languages of Nagaland followed by Konyak, Lotha, Angami, Chakru/Chokri, Sangtam, Yimchungre, Chang, Khiemnungan, Rengma, Zeliang , Phom, Khezha, Chakhesang, Sema and others.(Language : Table C – 16 : 2011). Ao, the first populous language at Nagaland, exists with its specific linguistic traits in the environment of Nagaland shared with other above mentioned diverse languages.

3.0 Status of Ao in Nagaland

3.1 As one tribal as well as linguistic community Ao is distinguished by its prominent status in Nagaland state as the originating point of education and enlightenment of the Naga tribes through the introduction and establishment of first Christian Baptist Mission in 1874 (led by Rev.E.W..Clark) in the Mokokchung district of Nagaland, This district is majorly populated by Ao Naga people. The Baptist Mission became the instrument in imparting religious teaching among Ao community since 1880 by which literacy took its own course in Ao speaking territory. Since then, Ao Community had been on a course of literary development among all Naga tribes by producing quality Dictionary, grammatical studies, language primers, a number of translations of Christian religious texts and hymns, along with adopting efforts to promote the Ao language through magazines-bulletins-periodicals (Mahapatra:1989:631-649). [Of course, by 1889 the Ao territory was brought under official control of British Government, the Headquarters being at Kohima - the area of Angami territory.] Further, Ao community was/is significantly important for the trade route passed through the Ao area and for playing the role as intermediaries between traders of the plains and Chang-Khiemnungan-Phom-sangtam-Yimchunger-Konyak traders dealing in local produces (Singh:2001).

3.2 Accordingly, with the advent of literacy and economic development through the religious practices in Christianity (abandoning their traditional religion) the Ao people

distinguished themselves with a high literacy level along with economic prominence. This literacy growth curved towards preferring English in literacy-literary activities along with communication network. Hindi, to some extent, is also preferred next to English. Though there is a preference towards English language, but the adherence of Ao Community towards Ao language remains uninterrupted as evidenced by stable return of Ao speakers' strength in Indian decennial Census. The Five Census Ao Returns can be a support to this fact. The Ao population from 1971 -2011 Census is furnished below along with decadal growth rate for a quick overview.

Census year	Ao population in India	Decadal Growth Rate
1971	75381	
1981	102321	35.74 % (1971-1981)
1991	172449	68.54 % (1981-1991)
2001	261387	51.57 % (1991-2001)
2011	260008	-0.53 % (2001-2011)

The declined Ao population in last two decades is leading towards the trend of reducing of number of speakers along with shifting to other language which is clear indication towards endangerment of Ao linguistic community. Out of 260008 speakers of Ao at India, a number of 231084 speakers are from Nagaland. Rest are from Tripura, Assam, Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh in descending order. Almost the entire Ao community with its variants like Chungli, Mongsen etc. are concentrated in Mokokchung district (the north west district) of Nagaland which is stretched along the hill areas filled by the streams flowing into Dikhu river on the left bank. The Ao speaking territory in Nagaland is bounded by Lotha territory in southwest of Nagaland, Sema territory in south east, and Phom-Chang-Sangtam territory stretched from north to south along its north east boundary.

3.3 This distribution of Ao language in Census is inclusive of the Mother Tongues as published in latest published Census of 2011.

Ao Language (inclusive of)

Ao: Mother Tongue

Chungli: Mother Tongue

Mongsen: Mother Tongue

Others (comprising Mother Tongues below 10000 speakers at India level)

4.0 Ao Naga and linguistic researches including Grierson's Linguistic Survey of India

4.1 The ecological clues regarding dwelling of Ao Community in Nagaland are primarily required to understand the factors of language ecology in Ao language. According to

traditional belief the Ao people might have sprung up from 'Longtrok', which means six stones. Nearby to Longtrok they are known to have founded their first village called Chunglimti where they remained for some period and then crossed Dikhu river by cane bridge leaving some own people behind at Chunglimti. These migrant people came to be identified as Ao (Gazetteer: 1979).

4.2 In Linguistic Survey of India (LSI), conducted during 1894-1927, Sir George Abraham Grierson, has mentioned Ao language as Ao or Hatigorria (along with other names like Ao (general), Chungli or Zungi, Mongsen, Assiringia, Deka Haimong, Dupdoria, Khari, Nowgong Naga. (Grierson:1903: 270-271). as a member of central sub-group of Naga group of Tibeto-Burman Language family. However, Ao variety is found to be the dominant dialect followed by Chungli which is further followed by Mongsen.

4.3 The Ao people migrated to their present dwelling place at Nagaland along with Chungli or Zungi and Mongsen. They were usually called by the Assamese as Dopdoria (who migrated to the present habitat through the Dop Duar) and Hatigorria (who migrated through Hatigor Duar). Both the names meant for Chungli and Mongsen respectively. Accordingly, the Ao are divided into two Ao sub-tribes (Chungli and Mongsen) speaking two different forms of Ao speech. Or, in other words, the Ao language is the umbrella for Chungli or Zungi and Mongsen dialects/variants including Ao. (Grierson : 1903).

4.4 Early notices of the Ao tribe and their form of speech go back to 1849 with the mention of Nowgong Naga (Assamese name for Merangkong village speech-form or a form of Chungli) and Tengse (speech of Tangsa village in Longling circle of Tuensang district- Phom territory) by B.B. Hodgson. In 1851 N. Brown reported on the specimen of Tangsa,Dopdor and Nogaung,Hatigor and Khari which names are after the respective place names equal to present day Ao Yacham village of Longling circle of Tuensang, the area of Jorhat via Hatigarh 6 miles to the east and Alongkima circle of Mokokchung district or Ao Mongen area.

4.5 The main grammatical features presented by Grierson in LSI is based upon the features of Chungli dialect as derived in Rev. E.W. Clark's Grammar (Grierson : LSI- Vol.III, PT-II:255-277 : 1903). Based on this grammar, Grierson has placed Ao as the speech of Central sub-group of Naga languages along with Lotha Tengsa, Thukumi (present Sangtam) and Yachumi(present Yimchungr). Relevant to mention here that Grierson (1903: Vol.III ,PT.-II : 193) has divided the Naga group of languages into five sub-groups like

➔ Western: Represented mainly by Angami, Sema, Rengma and others

- ➔ Central: Represented mainly by Ao, Lotha etc.
- ➔ Eastern: Represented mainly by Konyak and its dialects, Chang etc.
- ➔ Naga-Bodo: Represented mainly by Mikir, Kachcha Naga, Kabui etc.
- ➔ Naga-Kuki: Represented mainly by Mao (Sopvoma), Maram, Maring etc.

4.6 This distinctive grouping of Naga Languages and the position of Ao as one of the Central Naga languages seem out of much dispute. Of course, Robert Shafer has grouped the languages of the Central Naga sub-group of Grierson's scheme of classification and the languages like Tsungli (present Chungli) along with Longla, Mongsen, Khari, Yatsam, Rong (presently Lepcha), under the Eastern Naga Branch of the Burmic Division of Sino-Tibetan family (Shafer, Robert. : Introduction to Sino-Tibetan : Pts 1-3 : 1966-68, Weisbadan). Thus, Shafer came up with his own classification system for languages found in and around Nagaland (departing from Grierson's scheme of classification) which is more or less accepted by subsequent researchers.

4.7 The contribution by J. Avery in his essay entitled "The Ao Naga Language of Southern Assam" published in Proceedings of the American Oriental Society, Vol.13, 1889 is noteworthy for mention of the name of Ao in there followed by the appearance of the name in 1891 Census and detailed Census of 1901 as well as in Linguistic Survey of India (LSI) by Sir George Abraham Grierson.

4.8 Going further ahead from Grierson and Shafer's studies, Paul K. Benedict (Shafer's collaborator and co-researcher) suggested for putting of Ao and Lotha in Northern Naga sub-type and Angami, Sema, Rengma in southern Naga sub-type of Kuki-Naga Division of Tibeto-Burman languages (Sino-Tibetan : A Conspectus : Oxford University Press : 1972).

4.9 In between Grierson and Shafer's studies there has been a study by J. P. Mills in 1926 based on which Mills placed the Ao Naga tribes of Nagaland as speaking three languages: Chungli, Mongsen, and Changki. According to him, Chungli Ao and Mongsen Ao are spoken in majority of the Ao villages. The speech of each Ao village has its own distinctive characteristics leading to mutual unintelligibility to a good extent. Many villages contain both Chungli and Mongsen speakers.

4.10 Based on the phonological, morphological, lexical and syntactic comparisons of Naga languages G.A. Morrison (1967) also has introduced one sub-group comprised by Ao (Chungli), Ao (Mongsen) and Yacham/Tengsa only who, according to him, come close together at all levels and form a definite sub-group. And other Naga languages like Lotha,

Thukumi (Sangtam) or Yachumi though show resemblance with Ao but in reality they are distinct from Ao on some specific levels and cannot be grouped under the same umbrella of Central Naga Sub-group of Grierson's scheme of classification.

4.11 After Grierson, the studies carried out by Shafer, Benedict, Morrison in last century along with the study of Ao Grammar by K.S.G. Gowda of CIIL Grammar series, Mysore(1975) established the position of Ao in Nagaland with illustrations. Mention may be made about the studies in the subject matter carried out in the present Century also. Among them, the publication entitled "Classifying the Tibeto-Burman languages of North east India" edited by Mark W. Post and Robin Burling (2003) can be mentioned first where the status of Ao language has almost been maintained in the same way as the classification made by Robert Shafer. In 2012, Coupe considers Ao as closer to Angami since the Angami-Pochuri languages appear to be most closely related to Ao as part of a wider Angami-Ao group. Bruhn (2014) uses the term Central Naga to refer to the languages shown below where Ao is appearing with two varieties, namely Chungli Ao and Mongsen Ao. The internal structure of Bruhn's Central Naga group is as follows.

- Central Naga
- Lotha
- Sangtam
- Yimchungre
- Ao
- Chungli Ao
- Mongsen Ao

5.0 The linguistic traits of Ao based on the language specimen of Mokokchung district

5.1 Keeping the above ecological, socio-economic background along with the linguistic classification of Ao Naga community of Nagaland in view, the following sections are dedicated to the language ecology of Ao language out of an opportunity to write one consolidated report of Ao language (out of data and transcriptions of four social variables of Urban Male and Female of above 50 years of age and Urban Male and Female of below 50 years of age) based on the data collected from Mokokchung district (the major concentrated area of Ao as per Census return) under the ongoing project of the Government of India (Ministry of Home Affairs) – Mother Tongue Survey of India-. This is worth mentioning here that, due to predicted territorial limitation Grierson's study could not be conducted there in the last century. And the grammar furnished by Grierson in LSI- Vol.III, Pt.- II, pp.255-277 is derived from the grammar of Chungli dialect by Rev. E.W. Clark (Grierson : 1903). The

linguistic traits derived in course of preparing consolidated Ao grammar may be placed below at rapid glance.

5.2 The Ao Naga language is distinguished by its following traits.

5.2.1 Phonological

- Seven vowels : i, e, U, ə, a, o, u
- Twenty two consonants : p,ph,b, t,th,d, c, ʃ,k,kh,g,m, n, ŋ, r, s,z,S,h, l,w,j
- Six diphthongs : (with -i and -u)
- Two tones : High and Low
- Syllabic structure : V VV VC CV CVV CVC CVCV

5.2.2 Morphological

Words are both Monomorphemic and Derived

• Monomorphemic Words

/mi/ 'fire'
 /ita/ 'moon'
 /uʃə/ 'bird'
 /təna/ 'cat'

• Derived Words

/milək/ 'flame' </mi-/ 'fire' +/lək/ 'flame'(flame of fire)
 /ciuʃə/ 'crane' </ci-/prefix(indicating specific species) +/ uʃə/ 'bird'
 /məciuʃə/ 'cuckoo' </mə-/prefix for female species +/ci-/infix (indicating specific species) +/uʃə/ 'bird'
 /saŋsaŋar/ 'dancer' </saŋsaŋ/ '(to)dance' +/ar/nominal suffix/nominaliser
 /kantana/ 'singer' </kanta/ '(to) sing +/ar/nominal suffix/nominaliser
 /kumicəppa/ 'barber' < /ku-/ 'hair' + /-micəppa/ < nominal suffix /mi cAp/ 'to cut'.

• Distinct Reduplicated Words

/cece/ 'stream'
 /səŋsəŋ/ 'dry ginger'
 /rara/ 'war'
 /mumu/ 'greedy'
 /kiki/ 'houses'

• Distinct Diminutives

/əncano/ 'chick' (/cano/indicating smaller version of/əntetə/ 'hen,cock')

/nasicano/ 'calf' (/ -cano/indicating small item of/nasitətcə/ 'cow')

Thus,/-cano/is the diminutive marker when added as suffix to the syncopated form of original word.

- **Two Numbers and Two Genders and Three Personal Pronouns without verbal agreement**

/ni cə məlor/

(1SG-NOM) (water-ACC) (boil-FNT)

'I boil water'

/unoki cə məlor/

(1PL-NOM) (water-ACC) (boil-FNT)

'We boil water'

/pa cə məlor/

(3SG-NOM) (water-ACC) (boil-FNT)

'He boils water'

/pərnoki cə məlor/

(3PL-NOM) (water-ACC) (boil-FNT)

'They boil water'

/na cə məlor/

(2PL-NOM) (water-ACC) (boil-FNT)

'You boil water'

[In the above examples/nɪ/~ /unoki/(first person singular~ plural)

/na/~/(second person singular~ plural)

/pa/~ /pərnoki/(third person singular~ plural)

are not found varying in finite verbal form with the change in number and person.]

- Seven Cases
- Adjectival forms are mostly with the prefix (t-)
- Decimal numerical system
- Tense-Aspect has no png wise different conjugation
- Non-finite verbs with suffix/- ba/,/- cə/which also act as nominaliser.

/lai saka aka ba saŋcaŋ ʃim/

(3SG.fm) (fall-Prtcpl.) (fruit-ACC) (collect-PST.FNT)

'She collected fallen fruits'

/pa pəʃar i nəsi ka əlicə əo/

(3SG-NOM) (market-LOC) (cow-ACC) (one-DEF.ART) (buy-nonFNT) (go-PST-FNT)

'He went to the market to buy a cow'

5.2.3 Syntactical

Ao is one SOV language.

/ni uʃə ci əŋor/

(1SG-SUB.) (bird-OBJ) (see-FNT)

'I see the bird'

5.2.4 Lexical

Unique lexical characteristics of Ao is remarkably distinguished by its words with prefixing /t-/ majorly followed by other phonemes like /u-/, /ə-/, /k-/, /l-/, /m-/, /c-/, /s-/ etc.. This prefixation of /t-/ and other phonemes by accommodating vowel suitably in the syllable is found in forming nouns, verb, adjectives and other grammatical categories to create different meanings like adjectival forms /tazəŋ/ 'good', /tamazəŋ/ 'bad', /təsaŋra/ 'clever', /tərok/ 'deep', /tai/ 'wet', /takəŋ/ 'dry'. etc. and all other words related with animal, body parts and also kinship terms of address and relations.

■ Nouns

/tomoko/ 'cold' ; /təmaŋ/ 'darkness' ; /tenem/ 'hill' ; /təkoŋtənəm/ 'mountain'
; /tətzək/ 'heat' ; /təna/ 'cat' ; /təmbezəŋ/ 'claw' ; /tezəŋ/ 'feather' ;
/tezə/ 'horn' ; /tesəp/ 'nest' ; /tepen/ 'tail' ; /təsikʰəŋ/ 'wing',
/təməŋ/ 'body' ; /teret/ 'bone' ; /təku/ 'chest' ; /tenək/ 'eye' ;
/tenaŋəŋ/ 'ear' ; /tətcək/ 'face' ; /təməjoŋ/ 'finger' ; /tukula/ 'head' ;
/tətcəŋ/ 'leg' ; /tabopuk/ 'lung' ; /takəm/ 'life' ; /təsəbat/ 'death' ;
/tanur/ 'child' ; /tətcər/ 'female' ; /tupor/ 'male' ; /təkəpəjobər/ 'prostitute' and so on.

■ Verbs

/əwucə/, /əwocə/ 'to go' ; /ərocə/, /əwucə/ 'to come'
/əcizə/, /əkicə/ 'to eat' ; /əcəmcə/ 'to drink'
/ələncə/ 'to tie hair' ; /əsəmcə/ 'to wear clothings'

■ Adjectives

/tazəŋ/ 'good' /tamazəŋ/ 'bad',
/tai/ 'wet', /takəŋ/ 'dry'.
/təsaŋra/ 'clever' /tərok/ 'deep' etc.

6.0 Ecological Perspective of Ao language features

The linguistic features as derived from the Data of Ao speech, the following are the factors which identify Ao language as one unique biological as well as ecological species of Nagaland.

6.1 Out of seven realized vowels/i, e, U, ə, a, o, u/the frequency of vowels/-ə/and/-u/are observed mostly as prefix in word forms. the words with/-u/mainly comprise kinship and family terms. Examples thus being:

/uzəla/ 'mother' ;/upala/ 'father' ;/upula/ 'father's father' / 'mother's father'
/uku/ 'son-in-law's father' ;/unə/ 'son-in-law's mother' / 'mother-in-law'
/uti/ 'husband's sister's husband' ;/uku/ 'mother's brother'
/ucila/ 'mother's mother' / 'father's mother' and so on.

6.2 Similarly, out of Twenty two consonants/p,ph,b,t,th,d,c,ʈ,k,kh,g,m,n,ŋ,r, s,z,S,h, l,w,j/the frequency in use of/t-/as prefixed to word forms mostly. The sound element/t-/in formation of words is followed by/k-/./c-/./m-/./l-/.

/t-/in the words related with nature, mankind, body parts, animals, bird, housing, sense , perception , emotion etc.

/tomoko/,/təmkuŋ/ 'cold' ;/təmaŋ/,/təməŋ/ 'darkness'
/tenem/,/tenəm/ 'hill' ;/tenəmtəm/ 'mountain'
/tətək/ 'heat' ;
/tanor/ 'child' ;/təpor/,/təbo/ 'male'
/tətcir/,/tətcə/,/təcər/ 'female'
/tiŋaŋlubaniso/,/teŋlubanisoŋ/ 'eunuch'
/təkəpəjəbər/ 'prostitute'
/tuti/,/tudi/ 'peacock' ;/təna/ 'cat' ;/taŋci/ 'leech'
/tezə/,/tejə/ 'horn' ;/tesəp/,/təsəp/ 'nest'
/tepen/,/təpən/ 'tail' ;/təbuk/,/terbuk/ 'belly'
/toŋdoŋ/ 'back of body' ;/tesikhaŋ/ 'wing'
/takənəliba/,/təgəməlubə/ 'alive' ;/takəm/ 'life'
/təməŋ/ 'body' ;/tekəcə/,/təgəcə/ 'ankle'
/te 'bone' ;/tukula/,/tugulək/ 'head'
/təku/,/tuku/ 'chest' ;/tənək/,/tenək/ 'eye'
/təkəm/,/tekəm/ 'chin' ;/temokuk/,/təməkuk/ 'knee'
/təkthəŋ/,/təktəŋ/ 'room' ;/tuŋsi/,/toŋsi/ 'pillar'

[/təgələmtəktəŋ/,/təkələm təkthaŋ/ 'worship room' which is the combination of two units and both the units are formed with /t-/in prefixing position /təgələm-/ ,/təkələm-/ 'worship' and /- təkəŋ/, /-təkthəŋ/ 'room'. Of course, /ki/ is the word for indicating the object 'house' , but the above words and others related words with housing are found with /t-/in the prefixal position.]

/tatcoŋpa/,/təŋatəpa/ 'bitter' ;/tamak/,/tacək/ 'hot'/tasən/,/təsən/ 'sour'
;/təmərəm/,/tumrəm/ 'red'/temesəŋ/,/təməsəŋ/ 'white' ;/tamak/,/tamək/
'green'/teneniŋa/,/teniŋa/ 'yellow' ;/tentəŋ/,/tendaŋ/ 'taste'/təronəm/ 'scent (odour)'
;/taoci/,/taozi/ 'mercy'/təsi/,/taisi/ 'strength' ;/tasiməit/,/taisimait/ 'weakness'
/tepəla/,/təbəla/ 'happiness' ;/tecəsi/,/tecaisi/ 'sorrow'

/ə-/in the words expressing natural item which are perceived without direct touch like

/ənəŋ/ 'sky' ;/əne/ 'sun' ;/ənəuləpət/ 'cloud' ;/əzuŋcə/ 'dust' ;/əjoŋ/ 'river'
;/əwacəŋ/ 'lake' ;/əjoŋlo/ 'stream' and so on.

Of course, /ə-/is found as prefixed to the nouns related with biological entity like

/ənəpəwi/ 'fog' ;/əmu/ 'fish' ;/əzə/ 'dog' etc.

Leaving aside noun forms of words /ə-/is also prefixed to innumerable verb stems like the following:

/əwucə/,/əwocə/ 'to go' ;/ərocə/,/əwucə/ 'to come'
/əcizə/,/əkicə/ 'to eat' ;/əcəmcə/ 'to drink'
/ələncə/ 'to tie hair' ;/əsəmcə/ 'to wear clothings'
/əthəncə/,/ədəncə/ 'to sing' ;/əkucə/ 'to blow flute'
/əsucə/ 'to boil' ;/əmacə/ 'to stir'
/əjisicə/ 'to stir while cooking' ;/əricə/ 'to sew'
/əlicə/ 'to dwell' ;/əjucə/ 'to keep'
/əsicə/,/əsəcə/ 'to die' ;/əməncə/,/əməncə/ 'to sit'
/əsəmcə/,/əsumcə/ 'to run' ;/ənisoŋləkcə/ 'to rest'

And so on.

The phonemes like /k-/ ,/l-/ ,/m-/ ,/c-/ are also found in good frequency in formation of words pertaining to biological entity belonging to different grammatical categories.

/k-/as prefix to the initial syllable of words like:

/kinə/ 'baby' ;/kimla/ 'bride' ;/kimsəŋ/ 'bridegroom'

/kinəoca/ 'wife' ;/kinonpu/ 'husband' ;/kinəŋər/ ' relatives'/kipon/ 'family'
and so on.

/l-/as prefixed to the words indicating living as well as non living beings

/la/ 'bat' ;/latlu/ 'cockroach'

/lisi/ 'mud ' ;/lon/ 'stone'

/ləndən/,/lisəm/ 'sand' ;/lanuwa/ 'childhood' etc.

/m-/as prefixed to the words indicating living as well as non living beings

/mopuŋ/ 'air' 'window' ;/metsu/ 'salt'

/metemir/ 'friend' ;/məŋə/ 'fly'

/mətəperozə/ 'insect' ;/molosuŋza/ 'lion'

And so on.

/c-/as prefixed to the mystic and nature, music related words

/cəŋrəm/ 'God' ;/coŋmok/ 'thunder' ;/cisəm/ 'wave'/cəŋ/ 'rice'

/caŋ/ 'buffalo' ;/cemci/ 'flute' ;/ciloisi/ 'drama' and so on.

/k-/ ,/l-/ ,/m-/ ,/s-/ ,/c-/as prefixed to the initial syllable of the words belonging to grammatical category of verb:

/kiləpcə/ 'to bend stick' ;/kiəsəzə/ 'to build a house'

/khusəkcə/ 'to break a stick' ;/khələmcə/ 'to worship'

/mesəcə/ 'to feed' ;/məcicə/ 'to knit'

/məṛəkcə/ 'to clean' ;/merəkcə/ 'to throw'

/miphəŋcə/ 'to cover' ;/mitsəcə/ 'to kick'

/labokcə/ 'to open' ;/loktokcə/ 'to pull out tooth'

/surucə/ 'to cook' ;/situkcə/ 'to wash'

/səmləkcə/ 'to take off clothing' ;/səpucə/ 'to fear'

/cəkcə/ 'to fall down' ;/cəmpicə/ 'to speak' etc.

[/-cə/occurs as verb infinitive marker in the above verbal forms]

While the phonemes/ə, u , t , k , l , m s/are found frequently as prefix accommodating suitable vowel after it for syllabic formation in the word forms, the phonemes like/- ə/,/- u/ among vowels and/-r/,/-ŋ/among the consonants are found as suffix in the word final position of various word forms. The examples being

/- ə/as suffix

/ənə/ 'sisteter's son' ;/sinə/ 'butterfly' ;/unə/ 'mother-in-law',

/əzə/ 'dog' ;/incə/ 'egg' ;/uʃə/ 'bird'

/-r/as suffix

/khor/ 'horse' ;/nəsir/ 'deer' ;/təpor/ 'male'

/tanor/ 'child' ;/əmicər/ 'widow' ;/təcər/ 'woman'

/coŋər/ 'fair (male/female)' ;/coŋcəkər/ 'cripple (male/female)'

/r-/is found also in the words related with professional or occupational nouns like

/kuməce pər/ 'barber' ;/roŋəniʃər/ 'boatman' ;/misimecər/ 'beggar' etc.

/-ŋ/as suffix

/kipoŋ/ 'family' ;/mopuŋ/ 'air' 'wind' ;/cəŋ/ 'rice' ;

/caŋ/ 'buffalo' ;/nisoŋ/ 'man(young/old)' ;

/səŋ/ 'wood' ;/əʃoŋ/ 'river' ;/loŋ/ 'rock'

And so on.

The foregone discussion on the selection of particular sound element in forming words of Ao Naga has a relationship with the environment where the Ao people live in since linguistic ecology focuses as to how languages, as biological species or living being, interact with each other and the places they are spoken in. The association of certain type of sound element particularly in initial and final position of Ao word(s) for indicating specific object is completely environmental validated by the data of neighbouring as well as mutually intelligible Angami language. For comparison, the comparative features of Ao and Angami as appeared in Grierson (LSI - Vol. III, PT.II, pp.- 265-270: 1903) may be cited here.

Ao	Angami	Gloss
/tako/	/teken/	'nine'
/metsu/	/metsə/	'salt'
/mi/	/mi/	'fire'
/ki/	/ki/	'house'
/aŋu/	/ŋu/	'(to) see'
/əci/	/ci/	'(to) eat'
/menu/	/nu/	'(to) laugh'
/ayir/	/alima/	'girl'
/tebor/	/tepfoma/	'male'
/temeter/	/kesima/	'wise man'
/takar/	/kenima/	'rich man'

From the above comparative data the position of syllabic combination with prefix/a-/,/ə-/,/t-/,/k-/,/m-//c-/and the position of/-r/as suffix to form words in Ao

becomes clear with comparative feature of almost similar sound for prefix and/-ma/as suffix in Angami. Broadly the ecological factors in selecting sound and words relating specific object and action can be categorized in the following ways:

- I. Mankind, sex, human relationship related words are found mainly beginning/ə-/ ,/u-/ ,/t-/ ,/k-/ ,/l-/ ,/c-/ frequently.
- II. Living being like animal , bird, snake etc. related words are found beginning with /t-/ ,/m-/ ,/l-/ ,/u-/ ,/c-/ ,/p-/ ,/n-/ ,/s-/ ,/h-/ (in word like/hokun/ 'vulture').
- III. Body and body parts related words are mostly realized as beginning with/t-/ followed scantily by/p-/ ,/ə-/ ,/n-/ ,/k-/ ,/m-/ ,/s-/
- IV. Diseases and health condition related words are realized as beginning predominantly with/ə-/ followed scantily by the words with/m-/ ,/n-/ ,/s-/ ,/t-/ ,/c-/ ,/k-/ ,
- V. Words expressing cardinal, ordinal, fractional numerals are occurring with/a-/ ,/t-/ ,/m-/ in the word initial position.
- VI. Words related with quality and quantity are found with/t-/ in initial position of words specifying the internal and external quality of the attributing object.
- VII. Words related with sense, emotion, perception etc. also are mostly found with/t-/ in word initial position.
- VIII. Words with occupational or professional nouns are realized with/r-/ in word final position mostly. This includes the kinship term of human species as well as certain animal species with speedy movement.
- IX. Sensory natural object as well as some animate objects are realized in the words ending with/-ŋ/
- X. The words ending with/-ə/ also indicates animate object and the terms of human relationship.
- XI. Male names are identified with suffix/-bo/or/-ma/ which is/-la/ in case of Female names.

The further exhaustive list and supporting data could not be furnished here for space constraint.

7.0 Conclusion

With the ongoing rapid globalization and evidenced migration, hybridity, marginalization of weaker communities in the hands of dominant language(s) the languages may face poverty as well as endangerment by shrinkage in usage of diverse language registers. The diversity within the language along with ecological features may be under threat where language ecological study would play important role towards maintaining the stability and

exclusiveness of the languages including the unique Ao Naga language of Nagaland. The rich and exclusiveness of linguistic properties with all varieties makes Ao as one distinct and prominent language in Nagaland with its eco linguistic features highlighted above. This uniqueness of Ao language requires to be preserved before it quickly goes out of use by shrinkage of diversity.

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