
A SMALL-SCALE SURVEY ON THE TEACHING AND LEARNING OF AO THROUGH NAGAMESE IN THE MULTILINGUAL CONTEXT OF MOKOKCHUNG

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DOI: 10.5958/2249-7137.2025.00026.6

ABSTRACT

This paper investigates the preference for Nagamese as the language of learning and classroom transaction by learners and teachers rather than a common indigenous language in Ao (a Naga tribal language) language classrooms in government primary schools in Mokokchung district of Nagaland. Nagamese is neither a state-recognised language nor a dominant indigenous language. However, in state government schools, where English is the official medium of instruction, non-Ao speaking children as well as teachers prefer Nagamese for classroom transactions. They also prefer to learn the Ao language through Nagamese, despite the fact that Nagamese does not share syntactic and grammatical features with Ao or any other indigenous Naga languages. The use of Nagamese for classroom transactions does not come under the purview of the NEP 2020's Three Language Formula, and is thus a pertinent subject of study within multilingual education.

KEYWORDS: Ao, Multilingual Indigenous, Nagamese, NEP 2020.

1. Introduction: Background of the study

In Nagaland, there is no common indigenous Naga language that can be recognised as the medium of instruction in school. Every tribe has its indigenous language with dialectal variations in several communities and thus, “[c]lassrooms comprise speakers of mutually unintelligible varieties such as Ao, Chang, Sangtam, Sumi, etc.” Walling and Boruah (2024, p.281). The language of instruction in both private and government schools is English. However, in government schools, Nagamese is the language of choice and is used in classroom transactions primarily to bridge mutual-unintelligibility between teacher and learners, and among learners. In Mokokchung, Nagamese is not only the preferred language of classroom communication, it is also the medium of social communication among most learners. Most of these learners come to Mokokchung for education from linguistically and culturally diverse ethnic groups from far off and neighbouring rural areas. These non-Ao speaking children prefer to use Nagamese even when learning Ao in classrooms. This is important, because although AOs are the original

residents of Mokokchung, Ao is still one of the minority languages of India, and faces endangerment.

Ao is one among the seventeen (17) Naga tribal communities which reside in Mokokchung district of northern Nagaland. The term Ao refers to both the tribe and their language. The Ao language has three dialects: Chungli, Mongsen and Changki. Among them, the Chungli dialect is usually used for formal communication and adopts the Roman script. The American Baptist missionaries first introduced the script to the Aos, when they brought modern education to Mokokchung in the early 1870s. Hence, Aos are considered as the pioneers among the Nagas in receiving formal education and are recognised as the most educated community in the state. As per 2011 census, Mokokchung records the highest literacy rate (91.62%) in Nagaland.

In Mokokchung district, Mokokchung Town is the locus of education, economy and public administration. Its municipal area includes 20 government schools comprising 4 primary, 12 middle and 4 high schools. According to the Unified District Information System for Education (UDISE+), 3047 children were enrolled in government schools under the municipal area of Mokokchung in 2022-23.

2. Statement of the Problem

Although the state government in Nagaland has recommended 17 Naga languages to be taught and learned as language subjects in the state school curriculum, not all the languages have yet been included in the curriculum. Classroom languages are determined by where the learners' school is located and the language of the local communities that is more widely used than other tribal languages. In Mokokchung, since the majority of the population are Aos, the government school syllabus includes only Ao as a language subject. However, over the years, people from various neighbouring tribal villages have begun to settle in Mokokchung for educational and other purposes. There are also children from far-flung areas who come to Mokokchung for education as this town is an education hub. For these non-Ao speakers, Nagamese is the preferred mode of communication with the local Ao and among one another. It has also come to be used in the Ao language classrooms for teachers' pedagogy as well as classroom communication. In this paper, we investigate the purposes for which Nagamese is used by teachers and students in the Ao language classroom, and their attitudes towards Nagamese as a preferred language of classroom transaction, especially for non-Ao learners. This is expected to shed light on the ways in which language education policies may be amended to include language practices in multilingual contexts where classrooms do not have a single dominant language of communication.

3. Literature Review and Research Gap

This section provides an overview of the main areas that relate to the use of indigenous languages in Indian classrooms. The main areas discussed include national language policy and mother tongue literacy, Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE), languages in the Nagaland education system and the use of Nagamese.

3.1 Indian government Policy Directives on Mother Tongue Literacy Development

The National Curriculum Framework (NCF) 2005 in Section 3.1.1 recommended that children's home language/mother tongue "[s]hould be the medium of learning in school... It is imperative that we honour the child's home language(s)" (p.37). In the same vein, Section 3.1d(iv) of the National Curriculum Framework for Foundational Stage (NCFFS) (2022) stated that a child's

mother tongue/ home language does not only function as a medium of communication but is also associated with a child's personal and socio-cultural identity. The use of learners' mother tongues in education is a focus point in the National Education Policy (NEP) (2020), which stated, in Section 4.1.1 that the medium of instruction in learners' home language/mother tongue/local language/regional language should be implemented "wherever possible" (p. 13) at least till Class 5, and preferably till Class 8 and beyond. This is because "[y]oung children learn and grasp nontrivial concepts more quickly in their home language/mother tongue" (p.13). Section 3.2(a) of the NCFES (2022) recommended that "[t]he primary medium of instruction would optimally be the child's home language/mother tongue/familiar language ... in the Foundational Stage" (p.76). Furthermore, it suggested that in order to validate that "each child has continued proper use of their L1...at the Foundational Stage, it is essential to have Teachers (e.g., from the local community) who not only understand the language but also the local culture and traditions" (ibid). The NCFES (2022), however, acknowledged that even though it is best to use learners' L1 while teaching, very often it is not feasible due to several reasons "[i]ncluding the availability of Teachers who are proficient in the relevant languages." In such scenarios, it suggested that teachers use L1 as a support for "[a] child's transition to the new language, which is the language used for teaching, without losing out on their previous learning; for this the Teachers would have to be supported and encouraged to develop familiarity with the children's language." (p.76).

Although it is understood from the national education frameworks and policies that young children learn better in L1, accommodation of all learners' indigenous languages as the medium of instruction is a challenge for teachers in multilingual contexts such as Mokokchung. The sections below discuss the reasons behind this in more detail. In this connection, it is important to also look at how MTB-MLE is envisaged in the rest of India. The next section summarises multilingual education initiatives in states such as Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Chhattisgarh and Odisha which have implemented MTB-MLE.

3.2 Mother-Tongue-Based Multilingual Education in India (MTB-MLE)

Many schools in India have the potential of achieving early education through learners' mother tongue. Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Chhattisgarh and Odisha are the pioneering states that have adopted specific MTB-MLE programmes from early literacy stages, leading to systematic bridging to the other languages of education. Education in the mother tongue in the states of Andhra Pradesh and Odisha began early in the 2000s. In Andhra Pradesh 8 tribal languages were incorporated in education as medium of instruction while in Odisha MTB-MLE started with 10 tribal languages (Lepcha, 2023). Similarly, in Assam, at present there are 8 languages (Assamese, Boro, Bengali, Hindi, English, Garo, Hmar, Manipuri) adopted as medium of instruction at various grades at school. In addition, 15 languages are taught as language subjects in Assam schools. In Chhattisgarh, some materials on languages like Koya, Batri and Halbi have been developed under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) for implementation in school education. Various non-government organisations (NGOs) like the Amri Karbi Literature Committee etc. have also been promoting MTBMLE in communities (ibid).

However, even MTBMLE, which focuses on providing learners of all language communities an opportunity to begin education in their mother tongues, is unable to account for complex linguistic contexts such as Mokokchung, Nagaland where learners may not have a common indigenous language for classroom transactions. As Tupas (2015) argued, MTBMLE cannot be

applied uniformly in all contexts, even in South Asia due to “inequalities of multilingualism” (p.112). The complexity of language use in Nagaland and its implications on education is discussed in the next section.

3.3 Languages in Nagaland education system

In Nagaland, since classrooms include speakers of diverse Naga indigenous languages, English has been adopted as the medium of instruction in government schools. Additionally, the state government has included 17 Naga languages as language subjects to promote and preserve Nagaland's linguistic and cultural heritage. However, it is a challenge to teach all the 17 local languages either due to shortage/absence of teachers who can speak all the indigenous languages or because of a higher number of teachers from a particular language community as against fewer teachers from other language communities. In Mokokchung, non-Ao learners from other Naga communities use Nagamese (the language of wider communication or LWC) even in Ao language classrooms. The state does offer Alternative English, Hindi or Bengali as a language subject for learners in lieu of Ao. However, since most of the government schools in Mokokchung offer only Alternative English, many learners from minority tribal language communities prefer to study Ao as they have little exposure to English.

3.4 Role of Nagamese in Naga society

Ngamese began as a pidgin or a language of trade and commerce with the neighbouring state Assam but is today widely used as the medium of communication among the different Naga communities themselves for various social and economic purposes such as inter-tribal social gatherings and events, municipal announcements, business etc. Coupe (2022) described Nagamese as an “Assamese-based creoloid” that is extensively spoken among “speakers of mutually unintelligible languages” (p.13). Nagamese can thus be termed as a link language or a lingua franca. This language has a large influence of Assamese, with some lexical and syntactic features of Hindi and Bengali.

Ngamese is also spoken by non-Nagas such as the Marwaris, Nepalis, Biharis etc. who have settled in Nagaland for commercial and other purposes. This language has also begun to be popularly used in mass and social media. Several news channels in Nagamese have been recently launched. Various entertainment ventures such as films and music have also been produced in Nagamese. In fact, Nagamese has become prevalent not only in casual settings but even in formal settings such as education and administration (Aye, 2016).

Ngamese has now begun to be used as a first language among the younger generation born to inter-tribal married couples in Nagaland. Even children born to parents from one tribe but brought up in multilingual environments have begun to adopt Nagamese as their first language. From a linguistic perspective, Nagamese has now progressed from being used as an LWC to becoming a preferred home language of a new generation of Naga children.

These societal changes reflect corresponding developments in the school classroom. Nagamese is increasingly becoming the preferred language of classroom transactions as it is able to address issues of mutual unintelligibility. In many classrooms, it is the only language that connects both teachers to students and students from different tribes or language backgrounds.

Not much research on the use of Nagamese in education and language teaching in Nagaland was found during the literature review, nor did the researcher find any substantial work on multilingual Indian classrooms in Nagaland. This suggests that mother tongue based multilingual

education in Nagaland has to be implemented through a deeper understanding of the contextual realities governing language learning in Nagaland.

4. Research Questions

The research questions that have guided this study are:

- What are some of the factors that mediate the use of Nagamese in the teaching and learning of Ao in primary classrooms at Mokokchung government schools?
- Do the teachers face any challenges in teaching Ao through Nagamese? If yes, what are the challenges and how do they tackle them?
- What are the beliefs and attitudes of teachers towards the use of Nagamese in the teaching - learning process of Ao in multilingual classrooms?
- What are the purposes of using Nagamese in the teaching and learning of Ao?

5. Objectives of the study

In this study, the researcher aimed to investigate Ao language classrooms in Mokokchung to better understand the use of Nagamese as a mediating classroom language. Through the study, the researcher aimed to:

- Ascertain the factors that determine the use of Nagamese at the primary level in the teaching-learning process of Ao in government schools in Mokokchung, Nagaland.
- Investigate whether Ao language teachers encounter any pedagogical challenges while teaching Ao and the kinds of strategies they implement in overcoming them.
- Understand teachers' opinions and attitudes towards the use of intermediary language- Nagamese, in the teaching and learning of Ao among multilingual learners.
- Study the objectives of using Nagamese in Ao language classroom transactions.

6. Methodology of the study

In this small-scale study, data was collected from teachers and learners of Ao in primary classes (between Classes 1 and 5) in government schools within the Mokokchung municipal area. 12 schools were selected to explore the use of Nagamese in the teaching and learning of Ao. The target group of this study comprised 59 learners from various communities between classes 1 and 5 and 12 Ao subject teachers (N=71). The data was collected through two instruments - a questionnaire for teachers and learners and classroom observation. The questionnaires were administered to one Ao subject teacher in each school while questionnaires to their learners were administered on the basis of the class composition i.e., one learner from each community. Classroom observations were carried out to substantiate the responses of the teachers and learners on classroom pedagogical practices. The duration of the observations was between 30 to 45 minutes depending on the school timetable.

The data was analysed through a mixed methods approach. The demographic information was quantified while classroom observation findings were analysed through thematic analysis. The sections below discuss the findings in detail.

7. Results and Findings

This section discusses the findings from the questionnaire responses of the Ao subject teachers and their learners and from the thematic classroom observations of the researchers.

7.1 Findings from the questionnaire

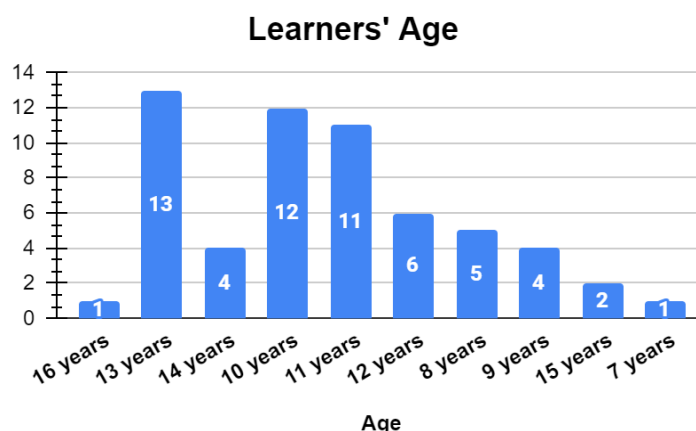
In this section we discuss the demographic profile of the study participants (teachers and learners), information on their classroom language use, and teachers' beliefs and attitudes. The tables below list the names of the schools where the study was conducted, the classes observed and the number of teachers and learners to whom the questionnaires were administered. 59 learners from 12 Ao-language classrooms were selected to participate in the questionnaire. The number of male students was 34 against 25 female students. Out of the 12 Ao subject teacher respondents, 8 were female and 4 were male. The minimum teaching experience of the teachers ranged between 11 to 15 years. The highest education qualification of the teachers was graduate whereas the lowest was senior secondary or 12th Class Pass. Most of the Ao subject teachers had D.El.Ed. Ed (Diploma in Elementary Education) as their additional qualification while others had B. Ed (Bachelor of Education), CPTE (Continuing Professional Teacher Education) and PSTE (Pre-Service Teacher Education).

TABLE 7.1 DEMOGRAPHIC DATA OF QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONDENTS

| Sl. No | Name of the school | Class | No. of teacher respondents | Gender break up of teacher respondents | | No. of learner respondents | Gender break up of learner respondents | | Ao subject Teachers Age | Years of teaching experience | Educational Qualifications |
|--------|--------------------|---------|----------------------------|--|--------|----------------------------|--|--------|-------------------------|---|---------------------------------|
| | | | | Male | Female | | Male | Female | | | |
| 1 | GHS Sumi | Class 1 | 1 | | F | 5 | 3 | 2 | 31-50 years | 15 years & above = 10 teachers 11 to 15 years = 2 teachers | Graduate (7) |
| 2 | GMS Senkalembara | Class 2 | 1 | M | | 8 | 5 | 3 | | | 12 th Class Pass (5) |
| 3 | GMS Marepkong | Class 3 | 1 | | F | 3 | 2 | 1 | | | D.El.Ed.(3) |
| 4 | GPS Mongsenba | Class 3 | 1 | | F | 3 | 1 | 2 | | | B. Ed (2) |
| 5 | GMS Pongentola | Class 3 | 1 | M | | 4 | 2 | 2 | | | CPTE (1) |
| 6 | GMS Artang | Class 3 | 1 | M | | 7 | 4 | 3 | | | PSTE (1) |
| 7 | GPS Kichutip | Class 4 | 1 | | F | 2 | 1 | 1 | | | |

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|-------|----------------------|---------|----|---|---|----|----|----|--|--|--|
| 8 | GMS Kumlong | Class 4 | 1 | | F | 5 | 2 | 3 | | | |
| 9 | GMS Tongdents üiyong | Class 4 | 1 | M | | 6 | 3 | 3 | | | |
| 10 | GPS Lijaba Lijen | Class 5 | 1 | | F | 4 | 3 | 1 | | | |
| 11 | GMS Mokokchu ng Town | Class 5 | 1 | | F | 5 | 4 | 1 | | | |
| 12 | GMS A&B Sector | Class 5 | 1 | | F | 7 | 4 | 3 | | | |
| Total | | | 12 | 3 | 8 | 59 | 34 | 25 | | | |

Fig 7.1 Learners' age profiles from questionnaire responses



7.1.1 Learners language backgrounds in Ao language classroom

The teachers and learners' responses on indigenous languages spoken by learners in Ao language classrooms showed that the classrooms were richly multilingual. As many as 8 non-Ao Naga languages and 4 non-Naga languages were represented in the classes. According to the respondents, the highest number of non-Ao Naga children in the Ao language classroom belonged to Konyak and Khiamniungan tribes. Nepali children were the majority group among non-Naga language speaking communities. The full list of languages is given below:

1. **Non-Ao Naga indigenous languages spoken by learners:** Konyak, Khiamniungan, Chang, Sangtam, Phom, Yimkhiung, Lotha and Sumi/Sema
2. **Non-Naga languages spoken by learners:** Nepali, Hindi, Manipuri and Bhojpuri

7.1.2 Languages used for classroom transaction

This section briefly discusses the languages used by learners in the Ao language classroom with their peers and teachers. Table 7.1.2 shows the demographic break-up of the responses.

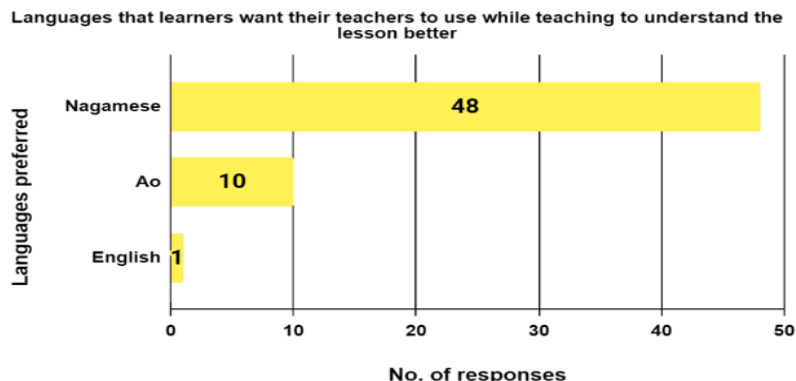
Language used with Peers: According to 9 teachers (75%) and 44 (74.5%) learners, learners spoke with their peers most frequently in Nagamese. Two main reasons were cited for this:

- a) Many of these children neither spoke nor understood their friends' languages since everyone spoke a different indigenous language.
- b) Every learner could communicate with their peers in Nagamese in the classroom.

Language used with teachers: The majority of the teachers and learners (61) reported that Nagamese was the preferred language used by children from non-Ao communities with teachers. Additionally, 48 out of 59 learners in the questionnaire preferred Nagamese as the language of teachers' classroom instruction.

Table 7.1.2 Language used with peers and teachers in Ao language classroom

| Language used with peers in Ao language classroom | | | Language used with teachers in Ao language classroom | | |
|---|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|--|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Languages used by learners with peers | No. of responses (teachers) | No. of responses (learners) | Languages used by learners with teachers | No. of responses (teachers) | No. of responses (learners) |
| Ngamese | 9 | 44 | Ngamese | 9 | 52 |
| Ngamese and Ao | 2 | 6 | | | |
| Ao, Nagamese and English | 1 | 0 | Ngamese & Ao | 3 | 2 |
| Ngamese and Burmese | 0 | 2 | | | |
| Ngamese and Chang | 0 | 1 | Ao | 0 | 4 |
| Ngamese and Phom | 0 | 1 | | | |
| Ngamese and Hindi | 0 | 1 | English | 0 | 1 |
| Ngamese and Sema | 0 | 1 | | | |
| Ao | 0 | 1 | | 12 | 59 |
| English | 0 | 1 | | | |

Fig. 7.1.2 Languages preferred by students to learn Ao

7.1.3 Reasons for the use of Nagamese to teach/learn Ao

In the government schools of Mokokchung town in Nagaland, majority of the learners are from different non-Ao ethnic and linguistic minority groups who come to Mokokchung for education and speak mutually unintelligible languages. They are unable to follow teachers' instructions or the learning materials (textbooks etc.) in Ao. According to 10 out of 12 teachers (83%), Nagamese acts as an intermediary language while transacting Ao text contents. Two teachers, however, mentioned that they preferred to use Ao in the classroom because they are unable to find equivalent word meanings or vocabulary in Nagamese.

The table below lists the challenges in using Ao that necessitate the use of Nagamese, and the strategies used in teaching Ao.

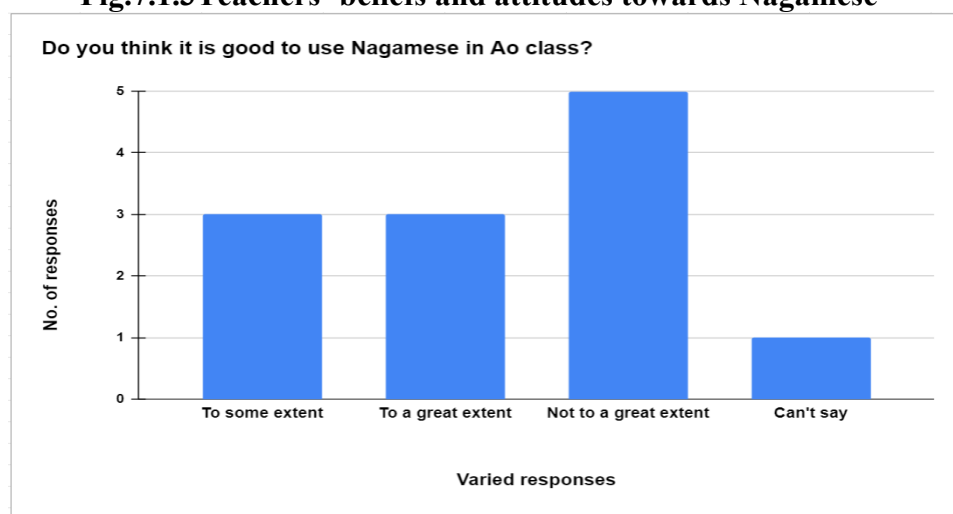
Table 7.1.3 Factors necessitating the use of Nagamese in Ao language classroom transactions

| Challenges of teaching Ao to multilingual tribal children | Preference for use of Nagamese | Ways of tackling the challenges |
|---|--|---|
| 1. Most learners belong to different non-Ao speaking tribal communities, do not understand Ao and remain unresponsive 2. Ao teachers' everyday language in both social and home domains was not Nagamese | 1. Presence of learners from mutually unintelligible non-Ao and non-Naga languages | 1. Providing meanings of Ao words in Nagamese 2. Translating and explaining the text content in Nagamese 3. Glossing, giving and illustrations 4. Mixing Nagamese and English while translating, explaining etc. 5. Using gestures and body movement while transacting the lesson 6. Using pictures from books |

7.1.4 Beliefs and attitudes of teachers towards using Nagamese to teach Ao

Although 92% of the teachers mentioned challenges in using Ao and their preference for Nagamese to transact Ao lessons, their beliefs about using Ao in the teach-learning process contradicted their practices. For example, five teachers felt that Nagamese should not be used for content transactions. They believed that Ao should be taught and learned through the language itself as it would make “learning Ao easier” (Teacher C) and “to make them understand” (Teacher F). Teacher J felt that “Ao can be easily understood with more clarity if supplement(sic) with teaching aids.” When asked what kind of supplementary materials in Nagamese should be provided to teach Ao, teachers mentioned charts, flashcards, pictures, and models. Thus, it can be observed from the data that most of the teachers faced a moral dilemma between their belief that a language is best taught through the language itself, and the linguistic and pedagogical challenges which force them to use Nagamese as a classroom language and also as a source of supplementary materials to teach Ao.

Fig.7.1.3 Teachers’ beliefs and attitudes towards Nagamese



7.2 Findings from classroom observation

Classroom observation was conducted to investigate in what ways Nagamese is used by Ao-language teachers in multilingual classrooms, and to determine the reasons for which both learners and teachers prefer to use Nagamese rather than Ao (the target language) or English (the official medium of instruction). In the sections below, findings of the study are coded and categorised thematically, with illustrations of the points as elicited from the data. The section also discusses other classroom practices that relate to and inform the language practices in the multilingual classrooms that were the site of the study. It was found that the observation data corroborated the questionnaire responses.

7.2.1 Purposes of using Nagamese in Ao class

Ao teachers were found to use Nagamese in classrooms for two main reasons:

(i) Content Transaction

The Ao language teachers used Nagamese as a bridge to transact the text content for three main purposes:

a. **Comprehension check:**

Since most of the learners were non-Ao speakers, teachers used comprehension questions to check background knowledge. For example, while taking a class on farming one Ao-language teacher asked the learners:

“*Yipru tu janinanajani?*”

[Do you know what a *storm* is?]

b. **Content explanation:**

The Ao subject teachers mostly explained the content in Nagamese. They read aloud the text either in sentences or paragraphs and explained/paraphrased/ translated the content in Nagamese. E.g., one teacher read aloud the chapter title and explained it in Nagamese:

“*Moi khan aji lobolilaga tu khetiarumousamlaga ase*”

[The lesson we are going to take today is about farming and climate]

c. **Explaining word meanings:**

Ao was a new language for most of the learners, so teachers provided meanings for unfamiliar words in Nagamese. E.g.,

“*Oshimane kotha*”

“*Sükua tu kapra ki kua ase*”

[*Oshi* means language]

[*Sü* means clothes]

d. **Taking feedback:**

During the lesson transactions teachers used Nagamese to take feedback from learners

“*Moi kua tu honi nanahoni?*”

“*Kapra dulhake ki koi?*”

[Do you hear what I’m saying?]

[What do you say for washing clothes?]

(ii) **Instructions**

Ngamese was used for both classroom instruction relating to the content and classroom management. The teachers instructed learners mostly in Nagamese while organising classwork and homework. For example, teachers provided direction to the learners while negotiating lessons, including which page to open and which lines to look at.

“*Sob manu lesson 5 kulipi*”

“*Notun page kulipi*”

[All of you open lesson 5]

[Turn to a new page]

7.2.2 Translanguaging strategies

The study also revealed that teachers used other languages and verbal strategies during classroom transactions. They used *translanguaging* strategies which allowed students to draw upon all their other languages while communicating in Nagamese. *Translanguaging* refers to “the deployment of a speaker’s full linguistic repertoire without regard for watchful adherence to the socially and politically defined boundaries of named (and usually national and state)

languages” (Otheguy, García and Reid, 2015, p.283). In other words, translanguaging allows students to use cognitive strategies from their known languages to comprehend new concepts by visualising, substituting words from one language in a text with another, discussing a classroom task in a familiar language but presenting it in the target classroom etc.

Data from survey and class observation showed that teachers used a mix of languages (Nagamese + Ao + English) for lesson explanation, translation, giving word meanings, checking learners’ comprehension, demonstration, etc. While some teachers illustrated meanings from the Ao content through gestures to help in developing learners’ comprehension, some used pictures. Table 7.2 shows a list of translanguaging strategies used by the teachers, who were all Ao speakers:

Table 7.2.1 Teachers’ translanguaging strategies

| Using different languages | Using pictures | Using gestures |
|---|--|--|
| 1. Nagamese e.g. <i>“sukhamati”</i> <i>“Aru amakandhan tu kimanlampapani tu lahiitu dak tu rakhibu”</i> 0. English e.g. <i>“Okay, look here”</i> <i>“Number two”</i> 0. Ao e.g. <i>“Asenoktemangyatelemsaaiika lir”</i> 0. Nagamese + English e.g. <i>“Most important kaam tu khetikura tu ase koi ase”</i> | Drawing pictures on the blackboard, using pictures from book | Hands and body movement, nodding the head etc. |

9. Conclusion and future scope of the research area

This study was conducted to examine the use of Nagamese as a medium of communication in the teaching and learning of Ao. The study found that Nagamese was used more than the target language in the development of learners’ competence in Ao. It also revealed significant use of other languages in the teachers’ pedagogy. Although most of the teachers agreed that it is better to use only Ao in the Ao-language class, they admitted that using Nagamese (and a mix of other languages) became inevitable since many students do not speak Ao and there is also mutual unintelligibility.

Mokokchung government schools demonstrate an intricate multilingual context where Nagamese and other languages are used regularly in teaching and learning of Ao. This issue requires special attention in formulating language policy and curriculum for education in Nagaland. With no official mandate to use Nagamese in classroom transactions, teachers are reluctant to admit to using it. It is difficult to ascertain to what extent Nagamese will have a bearing on the learning of Ao in Mokokchung classrooms unless more research is conducted.

This study concludes with the following thoughts:

- Development of pedagogical materials in Nagamese for Ao content transaction may be a useful resource for Ao language teachers in Mokokchung government schools
- Whether including Nagamese as a language in primary education may help learners of mutually unintelligible languages
- It may be necessary to revisit national education policies on children's right to education in their home language keeping in mind languages like Nagamese

As such, more research into the language strategies used in Ao primary classrooms would be required to address the complex and contested issues of endangerment of Ao if Nagamese continues to be used as a preferred mode of classroom transactions in multilingual classrooms.

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