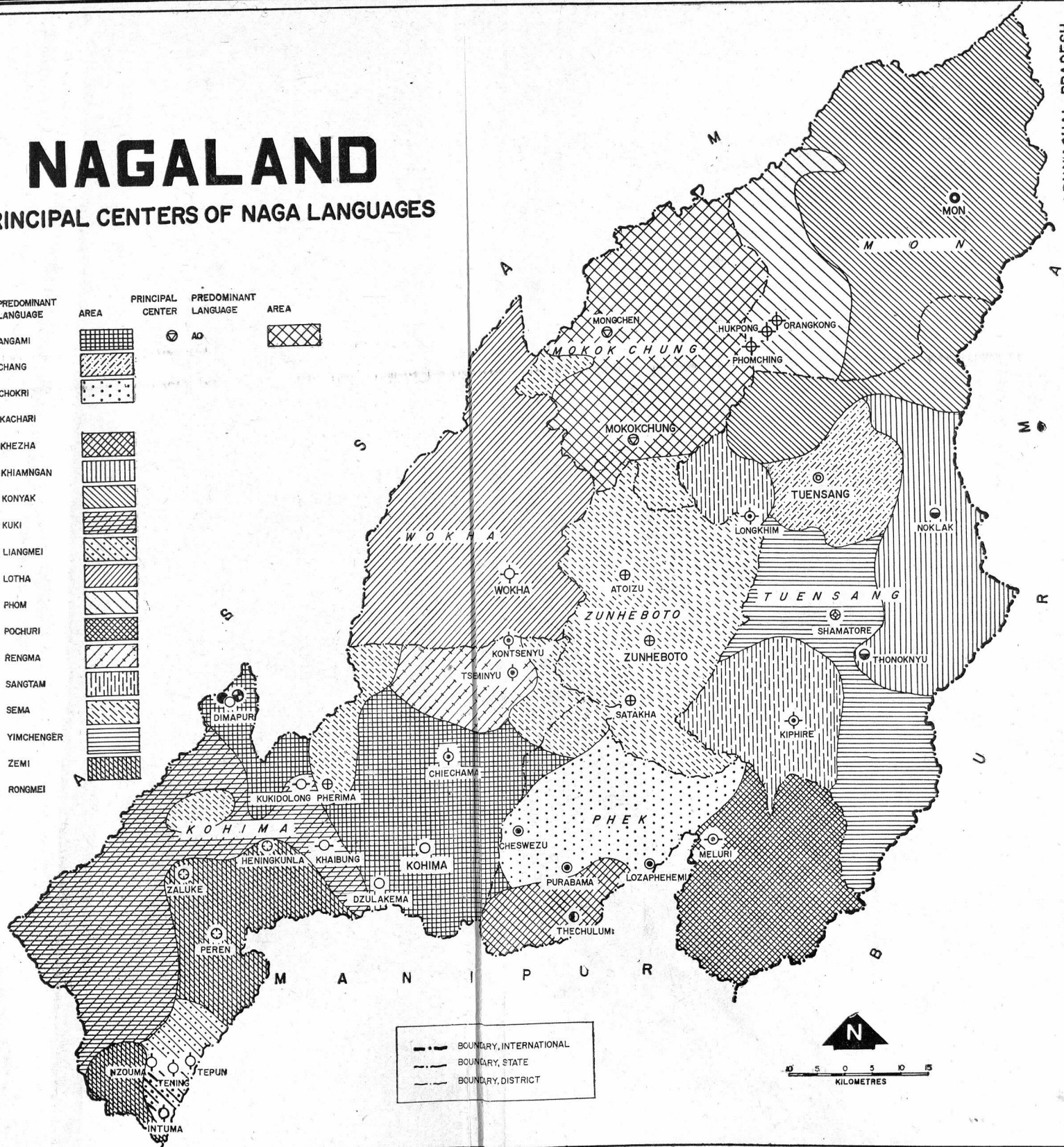


**NAGA PIDGIN: A SOCIOLINGUISTIC STUDY
OF
INTER-LINGUAL COMMUNICATION PATTERN
IN NAGALAND**

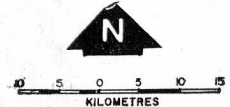
NAGALAND

PRINCIPAL CENTERS OF NAGA LANGUAGES

PRINCIPAL CENTER	PREDOMINANT LANGUAGE	AREA	PRINCIPAL CENTER	PREDOMINANT LANGUAGE	AREA
○	ANGAMI	[Grid pattern]	⊙	AO	[Cross-hatch pattern]
⊙	CHANG	[Diagonal lines /]			
⊙	CHOKRI	[Dotted pattern]			
●	KACHARI	[Diagonal lines \]			
⊙	KHEZHA	[Vertical lines]			
⊙	KHIAMNGAN	[Horizontal lines]			
⊙	KONYAK	[Diagonal lines /]			
○	KUKI	[Diagonal lines \]			
○	LIANGMEI	[Diagonal lines /]			
○	LOTHA	[Diagonal lines \]			
⊙	PHOM	[Diagonal lines /]			
⊙	POCHURI	[Diagonal lines \]			
⊙	RENGMA	[Diagonal lines /]			
⊙	SANGTAM	[Diagonal lines \]			
⊕	SEMA	[Diagonal lines /]			
⊕	YIMCHENGER	[Diagonal lines \]			
⊕	ZEMI	[Diagonal lines /]			
⊕	RONGMEI	[Diagonal lines \]			



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IN NAGALAND**

M. V. SREEDHAR



सत्यमेव जयते

**CENTRAL INSTITUTE OF INDIAN LANGUAGES
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FOREWORD

The Central Institute of Indian Languages was set up on the 17th July, 1969 with a view to assisting and co-ordinating the development of Indian languages. The Institute was charged with the responsibility of serving as a nucleus to bring together all the research and literary out-put from the various linguistic streams to a common head and narrowing the gap between basic research and developmental research in the fields of languages and linguistics in India.

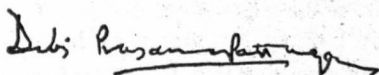
The Institute and its four Regional Language Centres are thus engaged in research and teaching which lead to the publication of a wide-ranging variety of materials. Preparation of materials designed for teaching/learning at different levels and suited to specific needs is one of the major areas of interest of the Institute. Basic research relating to the acquisition of language and study of language in its manifold psycho-social relations constitute another broad range of its interest. The publications will include materials produced by the members of the staff of the Central Institute of Indian Languages and its Regional Language Centres and associated scholars from Universities and Institutions, both Indian and foreign.

The Naga Pidgin must be viewed in the socio-cultural setting of a tribe-caste continuum, particularly in the sanskritisation, westernisation matrix shaping and reshaping the hierarchical structure of the Indian Society. Nagaland, a small geographical area divided by 23 mutually unintelligible language perforce needs a *lingua franca* when consolidated as one political unit. When the hilly geographical area was politically and economically inhospitable and its development was tied up with the valley with its caste society, literary languages and cultural traditions allied to the hill, there is no wonder that there would develop a love-hate relation between the two areas. This would explain both the

emergence of the pidgin and the reluctance of the hill to accord official recognition to it.

'Nagamese' which is known as 'broken Assamese' is obviously based on Assamese. But as a language of communication used by generations of Naga language speakers, it is in fact a creole reflecting creative innovation and can be considered as language by its own rights without any perjorative implications. The present study is synchronic in nature. A study of Nagamese in time prospective is yet to be undertaken.

It is expected that this study while meeting the demands of scholars, will help the State Government in evolving a rational policy for language use in education, administration and mass media.



Director

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The author toured over Nagaland extensively in the course of the last four years. During his tours and stay in Nagaland, he always received the whole-hearted co-operation of the Nagas at all levels of public life and from all the Naga communities. It is impossible to list everyone of them. He is in fact obliged to all the Nagas for this work for which he expresses his deep gratitude to them. He may, however, mention names of a few persons who spent long hours with this author in explaining the various aspects of the Naga Pidgin, location of the different Naga groups, etc.

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PART 1

GENERAL SOCIOLINGUISTIC INFORMATION

INTRODUCTION

ADEQUATE ATTENTION has as not been given by Indian linguists to the Pidgin and Creole languages. The linguistic significance of Pidgins and Creoles was recognized at the beginning of this century, notably by Schuchardt (1909), Jespersen (1932) and Herikevit (1936). However, they did not make any distinction between pidgins and creoles. These languages were first distinguished by Bloomfield (1933 : 472-4). Reinecke (1935 : xii, xvi) also distinguished them but called them marginal languages. Commenting on the term 'marginal language' Hymes (1971 : 3) claims "that they were marginal also in the attitude towards them on the part of those who speak one of the languages from which they derive and in terms of our knowledge about them, but these languages are of central importance to our understanding of language and central to the lives of some millions of people". Many consider the Pidgins as marginal languages because of its origin, viz., make shift adaptation and reduction in structure and use. Because of the indifferent attitude of the linguists in general, the study of these languages was limited to the collection of vocabularies and some texts. This too was not done for the purpose of linguistic analysis as evidenced from the fact that instead of being phonetically or phonemically transcribed, they were transliterated in the source language of the Pidgin/Creole. For instance, Goodman (1964) presents his French Creole data in this manner. The credit for organizing and reviewing the earlier literature on Pidgins and Creoles of the world goes to Reinecke (1937). A thoroughly revised and updated version of this work is being prepared by him¹.

1. In a personal communication to this writer.

The first detailed descriptive study of a Pidgin language was that of Hall (1948).

Etymologically the word Pidgin is derived from the English word 'business'. David de Camp claims that the expressions like 'That is my pigeon' (*i.e.*, that is my private affair) are still common in Sino-English. He further states that the word in this sense was first applied to the Chinese Pidgin and later to any language of similar type.

The origin of Pidgin is a controversial one. The two main theories of origin of the Pidgin are (1) Polygenetic theory propounded by Hall (1942) and others and the monogenetic theory propounded by Whinnom (1968) and others. The polygenetic theory claims that each Pidgin and creole is the result of a separate process of development. That is, each pidgin or creole is genetically related to the corresponding source language from which it diverged under specific sociolinguistic situation. According to this theory, each Pidgin and Creole began as a sort of 'baby talk' used by masters, plantation owners and merchants to communicate with their servants, slaves and customers. The speakers deliberately simplified the source language by eliminating or minimizing grammatical inflections by reducing the number of phonological, morphological and syntactical oppositions, and by limiting the vocabulary. Bloomfield (1933 : 472-5) who fully developed this 'baby talk' theory considers the process of Pidginization, a process of recursive series of imitations, *i.e.*, the speakers of the standard language would imitate the natives' imperfect imitations of the standard form, thus reinforcing the imperfect imitations of the natives. The 'baby talk' hypothesis broke down owing to the typological similarities shared by a number of Pidgins. It was also refuted, because the records dating back to 18th cen. in Jamaica was found to contain reports mentioning the white planters and their families learning the Creole from the slaves and not *vice versa*. Hall (1962), claims that the Pidgin normally owes its origin to relatively casual, short-term contact between groups which do not have a common language in between 'A new Pidgin is likely to arise', Hall further claims, 'whenever, guide meets tourists, employer meets employee or shop keeper meets customer, if they do not have a language in common'. Whinnom (1968) disputes this claim by stating that the tourists and his guide are not the persons likely to use a Pidgin at all. He further claims that the type of language known as Pidgins are not spoken by foreigners nor even by the dominant speakers of the standard language, but by the natives in subordinate position who do not share

a common language among themselves. According to him an essential condition for a Pidgin is the meeting ground of two or more mutually unintelligible linguistic groups of which one of them must be a dominant alien, the one which supplies most of the vocabulary. Whinnom emphatically states that "no simple bilingual situation ever gives rise to a Pidgin. In a simple two language contact context (in which there is not total swamping of one community):

- (a) there cannot be any really effective withdrawal of the target language and the substrate people will continue to improve their performance in it;
- (b) a second degree secondary hybrid dialect is not actually employed as a medium of communication from superstrate to substrate and
- (c) even when such a dialect existed, it is very difficult to see how it could have stabilized the first degree hybrid dialect which it mimics at the low level of intelligibility to superstrate speakers characteristic of Pidgins or for that matter how it could have stabilized the dialect at all."

Whinnom also points out that a Pidgin once formed may play a part in the formation of other Pidgins. This has happened in the case of Naga Pidgin also. Commenting on the socio-historical background of the Carribean Pidgins, Mintz (1971 : 493) claims that "they were produced under peculiar historical circumstances, which includes repopulation of the empty lands by more than two different groups, one of them, smaller and socially dominant, while others socially subordinate, speaking more than two languages. And in the absence of any established linguistic continuum including both Pidgin and the native language of the dominant group, the subordinate group cannot maintain its original languages either because of the numbers of the speakers of any one of its language speakers are insufficient or because social conditions militate against such perpetuation or for both reasons. However, what is important to note is that the historical circumstances that gave birth to the Pidgins and creolized languages were far more drastic and destructive of continuity of tradition in language than were those that gave impetus to change in the modern analytic Romance vernaculars or in the early modern English". Whinnom's prerequisites for the birth of a Pidgin and Mintz's sociocultural background of the Carribean Pidgin find a close parallel.

The Naga Pidgin of the Nagaland also was born in similar situations as the ones mentioned by Mintz and the Naga Pidgin fulfils all the prerequisites of Whinnom to claim the title of a Pidgin¹. However, it is not a pidgin derivative of a European language and that disproves the monogenetic theory of the origin of the Pidgins as propounded by Whinnom, *et al.* In fact, the Pidgins and Creoles which were clearly developed without any Portuguese influence are contrary to the monogenetic theory. The other weak points of this theory are a very sketchy historical documentation and the status of the far Eastern Pidgin English which lacks features shared by other Pidgins and Creoles. The source language in the case of Naga Pidgin is the Assamese. This Pidgin was known earlier as Naga-Assamese and now popularly called Nagamese. However, the designation Naga Pidgin has been preferred in this study.

The discussions on the African Pidgins in the early days were centered on the hypothesis that the Pidgins represented a blind grouping of minds too primitive for expression in modes of speech beyond their capabilities. These views on Pidgins have completely changed now and there is a greater appreciation of them and their place in inter-lingual communication and in convergence processes.

According to Hymes, Pidginization is associated with simplification in outer form and Creolization with complication in outer form. Samarin (1971 : 126) considers any consistent reduction of the functioning of a language both in its grammar and in its use as a process of Pidginization. For him, however, the memory loss of one's language, field work jargons, argots and the restricted codes (Bernstein) are of interest, as they are instances of Pidginization.² Samarin is in agreement with other scholars that Pidgins are not mere combination of two or more languages nor is the least common denominator of the two, but

-
1. For details see Part I, Chapter 4.
 2. Since a multilingual context is a prerequisite for the birth of a true Pidgin, one wonders how the two-way oppositional terms 'restricted code' and 'elaborated code' could ever be considered as the beginning of the process of Pidginization, particularly because the 'restricted code' is the native speech of its users, who, in addition, may or may not have an 'elaborated code'.

they reflect the creative adaptation and innovation of its speakers. Mintz (1971 : 494) feels similarly and comments that 'Pidgin and Creole languages may be in some way testament to the remarkable psychic and intellectual resiliency of mankind'. The Pidgins according to Hymes is a result of such a process that has achieved autonomy as a norm.

The Pidgins, according to Hymes 'demonstrate the inter-dependence of language and society. Their studies open up new possibilities for integration of linguistic and social research'. While referring to the scope of sociolinguistics, Hymes (1971 : 5) states that "some have defined sociolinguistics as a study of linguistic diversity or variation. This definition fits much of the current field, and certainly Pidgins and Creoles challenge our ability to deal with the linguistic diversity, to discover its systematic basis from the stand point of social life". He continues that "I would predict that the future of sociolinguistics lies in a still more widely defined concern, namely, explanation of the origin, maintenance, change and loss of specific means of speech. The concern would be with the structure of the variation not for its own sake, but as part of human adaptation. Equally important would be the study of the emergence and adaptations of the phenomena variously identified as code-repertoires, registers, speech styles and the like. In all these respects, Pidgin and Creole languages are of special importance, since their very existence poses the question of the relation of means of speech to social needs. Any theory of linguistic varieties, genres and semantic features as adaptive means must deal with the reduction that leads to the one (Pidgins) and the expansion that leads to the other (Creoles)." The study of Pidginization by requiring one to study the simplification of a language may lead to the recognition of a sociolinguistic universal.

Procedure of Analysis :

In all, four field trips were made to Nagaland between 1970 and 1973. The data were collected in three instalments. At first the data for a description of the pidgin were collected from Angami and Sema speakers at Dimapur. Noticing the variation of the Pidgin, a sample vocabulary list of 500 words, nominal and pronominal paradigms and a few phrases were selected from out of the original word and sentence list for the collection of data from different Naga communities. However, in the second instalment of data collection, the data could be collected from only ten Naga communities including the Sema and Angamis. After the data were processed, the last trip was made from January to April 1973 at which time the sentence list was expanded to

cover all possible types of inflectional features and word-order. The same sentences and the sentence patterns were elicited at different places for checking the consistency of the pattern with each informant, representing a speech community. The total count of the sentences collected in the final trip amounted to 750. And each sentence pattern occurred 6-7 times in the elicitation sheet at different places. In the case of structural synonyms where only one or the other of the forms was given during the elicitation, a clarification was sought from the informant as to the occurrence of the other synonymous forms. For instance, only the simple past tense form was given sometimes to indicate the simple past tense, past perfect and the present perfect, and in some other instances three different forms were given. A check up clarified the situation in that though there are three distinct forms for the simple past, past perfect and present perfect, the simple past tense form could also be used for the past and present perfect aspects. The analysis presented in this monograph covers the Naga Pidgin of 18 Naga communities.¹

For the analysis of the data, basically the Bloomfieldian approach was followed. But this did not prevent the present author from adopting other approaches also. For instance, though the grammatical classes were set up on the basis of the inflectional characteristics found with each word, the functional basis is also taken into consideration, *e.g.*, a noun+the locative case is considered an adverb, since it always occurs in an adverbial slot. The description of the Naga Pidgin could not be compared with the Assamese, the source language, as description of Assamese was not available to this writer.

One draw back in the data collection is the adoption of the informant elicitation method, which has the risk of presenting hyper corrected forms. Samarin (1967 : 19) in a similar study used the corpus which was selected from the tape recorded natural conversation/description of an accident etc. According to him "the reason for not using informant was that we wanted this grammar to be as representative of the whole sango speaking area as possible. We wanted to be sure that we had enough data to catch each variation which might be correlated with the first language of the speakers, with age, sex, and social evolution." But he continues "comparing the phonetic forms of

1. The grammatical forms could not be had from Khamgan community and the verbal paradigms from the Kacharies.

phonologically 'key' words in the discourse of any one speaker or between speakers would have been so immense a task that we never undertook it". Even if this immense task was undertaken, it would have been extremely difficult to identify the speakers of the conversation from the tapes. The informant elicitation method adopted in the study of Naga pidgin has the advantage of correlating the speech variation at all levels of the pidgin, with the different Naga communities. The probability of getting unnatural utterances or direct translations were minimized by rechecking each pattern a number of times in different contexts of elicitation.

A major hurdle in collecting data on the Naga Pidgin is the ambivalent attitude of the Nagas with reference to the Pidgin.s Though they fully realize that the Naga Pidgin is the *defacto lingua franca* in Nagaland, in the presence of strangers, the educated persons even refuse to admit the knowledge of this language. For instance, in 1970, when this writer was seeking information about the Naga Pidgin from a lecturer (a Naga) at the Dimapur College, Dimapur, he was told that the lecturer did not know the Naga Pidgin and that very few Nagas spoke it. But just as this writer was conversing with the Naga lecturer, a Naga belonging to another speech community came on the scene and started talking with this lecturer in the Naga Pidgin and the lecturer responded in the same language. Their conversation in the Naga Pidgin lasted for about 5 minutes.

Another hurdle is the common belief of the speakers that only the written languages have a grammar and since the Naga Pidgin is not a written language, it has no grammar. Therefore when sentences like, *he is eating meat, he was eating meat*, etc., were given for eliciting the Pidgin equivalent, informant after informant claimed that these sentences form part of the grammar and that the Pidgin has no grammar. Hence, they did not give the forms. However, when these very sentences were given for elicitation out of context, the Pidgin equivalents were obtained consistently.

This study was undertaken with a view to finding out the inter-lingual communication pattern in a multilingual state with 23 communities using mutually unintelligible verbal codes. This is the only state in the country which has adopted English as the sole official language of the state and the sole medium of instruction from VI, standard onwards. Yet for all practical purposes, Naga Pidgin is used almost in all social contexts of oral communication.

It is hoped that this study would be useful in understanding the communication process and will aid language planning and policies for language use at various levels in the State.