

Chapter 6

Conclusion

Leinong Naga is one of the Tibeto-Burman languages. As it has not been scholarly studied before, this study was carried out to describe the phonology of Leinong Naga. The study was done based on a 1,500-word wordlist elicited from four different native Leinong Naga male speakers. It is expected that the outcome of this study will help to understand the phonology of Leinong Naga and lead to an orthography development. As result it will promote a mother tongue literacy program among the Leinong Naga people. Moreover, it is hoped that this study will also serve as a stepping stone for future linguists who will be interested in doing further study of the language. The following section is the summary of the findings of this study and suggestions for further research.

6.1 The findings of the study

Naga people are found living in two different neighboring countries of Myanmar and of northeastern India. Originally they migrated somewhere from Mongolia, then Tibet, the upper reaches of the Huang-Ho or the Yellow river of China, and China. From this center, the Naga followed the early movement of the early tribes of Indo-China towards the South. Though the term '*naga*' originated from other than the people themselves, now it has become as a uniting factor bringing the people from the two countries under the umbrella call 'Naga'. There are many theories about this term, but this study proposed that it originated from Jingpoh³⁹ and means 'folk with split or slit ear'.

The Naga entered northern Myanmar through what is called Kachin State, and made their first settlement in Katha district. In the course of time they also moved along the Chindwin valleys and scattered throughout Manipur, Assam and even eastern Bangladesh. From these locations, some Naga later returned to Myanmar, though many of them remained in Nagaland of northeastern India.

³⁹ Also called 'Kachin' by outsiders and other scholars.

From these locations, some Naga later returned to Myanmar, though many of them remained in Nagaland of northeastern India. In Myanmar the Naga are mainly contributed in five different townships, namely: Nanyung, Lahe, Layshi, Khamti, and Homalin, Khamti district of northwestern Myanmar. There are about 250,000 Naga in Myanmar and they are grouped into four different groupings according to geographical locations, namely; Heimi Naga, Htangan Naga, Somra Naga, and Son Naga. Leinong Naga is a variety of the Htangan Naga groups found in Lahe township with the population of about 15,000. Their linguistic affiliation, according to Bradley (1997) comes under Konyak Naga of Northern Naga. The name 'Leinong' means 'a person or people who work hard' or 'folk who inhabit in the plain area'. The Leinong Naga is widely spoken by other varieties in the township.

As far as the previous research work on Leinong Naga is concerned, though there is some ongoing survey work, but language study has been very limited.

The findings of this study show that in Leinong Naga there are 21 consonants, 6 monophthongs, 8 diphthongs and 4 contrastive tones. The consonants are organized into groups of stops, nasals, fricatives, affricate and approximant. As with most of the Tibeto-Burman languages, Leinong Naga follows the pattern that all the consonants occur word initially. The unreleased word final stops: [p̚, t̚, k̚] another common feature of Tibeto-Burman languages, was also found. Unusually, a close-mid unrounded vowel /e/ was observed to have very limited occurrence in the collected data.

Syllable structure of Leinong Naga has an obligatory syllable type of V^T , and an optional second vowel after the obligatory vowel V (V^T), preceded by an optional initial consonant and followed by an optional final consonant (C) V (V) (C) T . There are six possible word structures in Leinong Naga, namely: monosyllable, disyllable, trisyllable, quadrisyllable, five-syllable, and six-syllable. Open syllables and closed syllables were observed. The open syllables can be filled by either monophthongs or diphthongs. The coda position can be taken by unaspirated stops: /p, t, k/ or nasals /m, n, ŋ/.

The result of tone analysis in Leinong Naga shows that there are four contrastive tones in the language, namely: /high, mid, low, stopped/. The high tone /53/ demonstrates an extra high falling, while stopped tone /44/ is realized as being high level tone having a shorter sonorous complex that is less steep in its tonal contour than other tones. The mid /33/, and low /21/ tones show no significant features. These four tones have no limitations of occurrence with both initial consonants and

vowels, but only the stopped tone /44/ occurs in syllables ending with the stop consonants /p, t, k/. The glottal stop [ʔ] was realized as phonation property of the stopped tone on open syllables. The other three tones: /high, mid, low/ can occur with any one of the final nasal consonants /m, n, ŋ/. Tone sandhi in Leinong Naga is observed in two instances: in the formation of compound noun and in causative prefixation. In compound nouns both noun and adjective suffixes with low tone /21/ undergo a process of tone alternation to mid tone /33/ when they are preceded by mid tone /33/. Another tone sandhi affects the first syllable of a verb stem with high tone /53/. It becomes a mid tone /33/ when preceded by the causative prefix with a high stopped tone /44/.

In this study while describing the phonology of Leinong Naga a section on word formation process was also included as it plays a significant role. Among the six syllable structures, the disyllable was seen as the most productive one for word formation processes, which involve prefixation and suffixation. Prefixation in Leinong Naga, having four different functions is done by the use of an open front unrounded vowel /a/ with high and low contrastive tones, and mid-central unrounded vowel /ə/ with high tone. A prefix /a²¹-/ is a negation prefix which is uncommon from other related languages, and /a⁵³-/ is a nominal prefix, mostly occurring on bound noun stems relating to the sky, atmosphere, season, and time. /ə⁵³-/ functions as a nominalizer prefix and as a third personal pronoun prefix.

Affixation in Leinong Naga was observed that the causative affix /ləu⁴⁴/ in most instances appears in the prefix position but it can also appear in the suffix position. In the case of a prefix position, a verb stem is always followed by a realis particle /an⁵³/. However, switching of the position required a different structure that when the main verb stem is followed by the causative affix /ləu⁴⁴/ the realis particle /an⁵³/ is always preceded by an insertion of /tan⁵³/.

As far as morphophonemic processes is concerned: phonologically conditioned alternation involves: resyllabification, deletion, and lexical alternation in numeral system, noun suffixes, and reduplication. The realis particle /an⁵³/ and the case marker /a⁴⁴/ undergo a process of resyllabification determined by the preceding phone from V(C^T) pattern to CV(C^T) pattern.

Deletion of the nominal prefix /ə⁵³/ from the head of the compound and the realis particle /an⁵³/ from the verb stem were observed in the process of compound noun. Shortening of vowels in the syllables of repetitive words were also observed.

Numeral system in Leinong Naga from one to ten have two forms: monosyllabic and disyllabic words. The first syllable words of /ba²¹, sə²¹, bə²¹, bə⁵³/ in disyllabic numeral words appear very much like prefixes. However, they are not phonologically conditioned but rather lexical alternation. Reduplication of the whole or part of a word is found and they are used for verbalized and intensive functions.

6.2 Suggestions for further study

As in this study, the close-mid front unrounded vowel /e/ in Leinong Naga shows a very limited distribution, it will be of interest to do further research on the distribution of such vowel in order to have a clearer explanation and conclusion. Also, it needs to be seen and confirmed the relationship between /e/ and /ei/.

Another issue which needs further research is suprasegmental phonology, for example: intonation, stress, and others related to tone. Furthermore, an orthography is also proposed on the basis of the phonological analysis in this study (see Appendix 2), but further research on designing the orthography of Leinong Naga is needed.