CHAPTER IX
CONCLUSION

*People who make music together cannot be enemies, at least not while the music last*.

— Paul Hindemith

IX.1. A SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS:

This research emphasizes the significance of ethnolinguial parameters and their likely impact on the process of development in a multi-speech area like Manipur. In order to examine this question following parameters have been studied with the help of statistical techniques and on the basis of primary data generated from the field:

(i) the likely composition of speech communities;
(ii) classification of unrelated ethnic groups;
(iii) their distributional pattern in the state;
(iv) the degree of linguistic diversity;
(v) the nature of ethnic and dialectal territoriality;
(vi) the nature of inter-ethnic communication and communicativity; and
(vii) comparative analysis of linguistically homogenous and diverse areas based on few selected socio-economic indicators.

It will be appropriate to highlight a number of conclusions as they are applicable to all multi-speech areas regardless of the reliability of their data.

IX.2. Manipur is indeed a multi-speech area, as illustrated by multiplicity of dialects/languages spoken. As recorded by the census, at least 45 different mother-tongues can be identified. Of these, at least 30 are ‘major native-speeches’; each having a sizeable population. Though, the actual sizes differ the number remains almost the same in most of the areas.

IX.3. The entire population can be classified based on criteria such as topography, distribution, racial component, religion, etc. However, this study reveals that the best criterion for classification is the ‘ethnolinguial parameters’
- i.e. based on combined innate ethnic traits and dialectal affinity of the myriad groups.

IX.4. The pattern of distribution of ethnic communities reflects that every community has specific area of concentration and clustering; never intermingling. The Kuki group appears to be the most ubiquitous community and are scattered all over the state. However, they are scattered within a defined area. In the North, East and West districts the major Naga communities are found while the Kuki-Chins concentrate in southern parts of North and Tengnoupal districts. East district has Tangkhuls as the most dominant group, Kabuis or Zeliangrongs in the West, and parts of North district has the Mao-Maram group.

No two or more groups co-habit an area or even a village. A village is, in a strict sense, an independent ethnolinguial unit. Such patterning has created a societal mosaic which is unique in all respects.

The distribution of the different groups leads to the following conclusions:

i). Only Central district has all the speech communities. But Meitei is the most predominant one accounting for about 85%. Other non-native tongues also have quite a large population in this district - viz., Bengali, Nepali, etc.

ii). South district and its divisions are the core areas of the Kuki-Chins. Dominant among them are Paite, Hmar, Thadou, Vaiphei, Kom, Zou, Simte, Gangte, Lushai, etc.

iii). In the West district, the Kabui groups or Zeliangrongs are the most dominant. The Liangmeis and other minor groups are found in the northern and western divisions.

iv). East district is the core area of the Tangkhuls. Though each village holds different patois or dialect groups, the divisions mainly consist of 'cognates' of Tangkhuls.

v). North district represents an interesting pattern. It is a tribal core area, but, of late, a non-tribal community-Nepalis-has gradually become quite
dominant. The major ethnic groups are Mao, Maram, Thadou, Kuki, Nepali, etc. Nepali is the single largest community in the Sadar Hills West sub-division.

vi). In Tengnoupal district also a few non-native groups are found, especially businessmen from different parts of India. The native communities are Maring, Anal, Thadou/Kuki, Aimol, Lamgang, etc. The distribution of various ethnolinguical groups therefore show independent concentration and clustering. It can be generalised as:

i). Meiteis are the most predominant group found densely only in the Central district and its divisions. They are insignificant in other areas of the state.

ii). The major Naga tribes are concentrated in the West, parts of North, and East districts. They are also found in Tengnoupal areas. In the West, the ‘Zeliangrongs’ are predominant. The Mao-Maram groups are found in parts of North district, while the Tangkhuls are clustered in East district. Only in Tengnoupal and North districts the Nagas are inter-spersed with the Kuki groups.

iii). All the major Kuki-Chin communities are found in South district, parts of North district and Tengnoupal areas.

iv). Tengnoupal and North district are the two areas where substantial population of both Kukis and Nagas are interspersed, within delimitable areas.

v). Due to ‘illega l immigration’ and sheltering, the Gorkhalese/Nepalese are now one of the most populous ethnolinguical groups in North district constituting about 16.13 percent. In Sadar Hills West sub-division they are the single largest group surpassing other speech-communities. In this division they account for about 36.55 percent.

vi). Among the Indian languages, Bengali has the largest population, and accounts for about 1.30 percent of the total population. They constitute about 1.81 percent of Central district’s population. Bengalis are quite prominent in Jiribam sub-division, where they constitute about 48.00 percent.
IX.5. Another exercise which has been done in this research is the measurement of linguistic diversity. The results of this exercise highlight some significant dialectal features. As frequently emphasised in the analysis, most of the areas have a very high diversity.

The linguistic diversity shows an ever-increasing trend. For instance in 1961 the value was 0.56. It gradually increased to 0.58 and 0.61 in 1971 and 1981 respectively. Generally, the values of the index of linguistic diversity suggest that the state a has diversity index 'mid-way' between total homogeneity and diversity. However, the diversity within the state is very high. The index values range between near uniformity (0.04, as in Thoubal division of Central district) and the situation of total diversity (0.90 in Churachandpur sub-division).

At the district level, South District has the highest index of diversity. The value is 0.90. Followed closely by Tengnoupal (0.87), North district (0.82), and West district (0.81). Interestingly, East district has the lowest index among all the tribal areas. The diversity value was only 0.33 in 1981. Such homogenous situation prevails because the entire population declared their affinity with 'Ukhrul speech' as their mother-tongue. Central district has the lowest diversity value and some of its divisions like Thoubal, Imphal and Bishenpur have values indicating total homogeneity (about 0.04 to 0.10). Such uniformity exists due to the dominance of Meitei-Lon in these areas.

IX.6. An analysis of the patterns of inter-ethnic communication and measurement of communicativity in this multispeech area leads to the following conclusions:

i). Inter-ethnic interaction is a product of compulsion rather than necessity in these areas. Once interaction was harsh only through inter-ethnic wars, raids, etc.

ii). Patterns of communication differ among the groups and the different areas, e.g., in the tribal areas 'inter-ethnic' communication is through native dialects or village patois. But inter-tribe interaction is possible only
through the use of a lingua-franca which is substituted by Meitei-Lon or English.

iii). The inter-ethnic communication is effectively transmitted only among the bilinguals. In most of the areas, bilinguals constitute about 30-40 percent. North, West, and Tengnoupal districts have a larger population of bilinguals. Most bilinguals, in any area and age-group, speak or understand 3 languages very well, i.e. Meitei-Lon one native tongue and English. Most of them learn the second language either in school or through contact with friends.

Bilingualism in the case of the Meiteis is usually articulated through the knowledge of the English language or other Indian languages.

iv). Results of the measurement of communicativity of languages reflect that:

a). Meitei-Lon has the highest index of communicativity in the state;

b). even among unrelated ethnic groups, Meitei-Lon is the only ‘tongue’ for communication. The communicativity of Meitei-Lon and English is high among bilinguals of all groups, but not impressive.

c). In most of the districts, ‘communicativity’ is very low. This is due to the presence of several native dialects in the sub-divisions.

IX.7. The pattern of territoriality of the speeches and the ethnic groups reveals another unique feature. Differences in dialectal features (e.g. lexical, phonetic, etc.) greatly determine ‘group identity’, ensuing to territoriality and polarization of the speech and its speakers.

IX.8. One of the most important features of multi-speech areas observed in this study is the relationship with development. There appears to be a sharp contrast between linguistically homogenous and diverse areas with regards to socio-economic development. Some of the features which emerge out from this study are:

i). when the 2 areas are compared, linguistically homogenous areas are always better-off than diverse areas, in terms of any selected socio-
economic indicators. For instance, homogenous areas tend to have more schools, medical facilities, urban centres, density of population, literacy, etc.;

ii). also when indicators of diversity and selected indicators of development are correlated the following results emerge:

a). The relationship with the development indicators is either negative or very low. The study suggested an inverse relationship between diversity and levels of development. The relationship is negative with urbanization, medical facilities and literacy.

b). those variables redundant to development have high corelation values and are quite significant, some even at the 0.01 level of significance. Such variables are percentage total workers, scheduled tribes and Christian population, etc.

IX.8. CONCLUDING REMARKS:

Although some of the above findings are based to a great extent on data that require considerable refinement, the conclusions of this inquiry will be applicable to all multi-speech areas like Manipur. Few distinct observations emerging from this reaearch, especially on linguistic diversity, are:

i). areas of linguistic diversity and homogeneity do greatly differ in terms of any socio-economic variables, even suggesting inverse relationship between high diversity and development;

ii). the degree of diversity in a particular area can be immensely reduced if a particular speech is very dominant, e.g., Meitei-Lon in Central district and its sub-divisions. Such dominance of a speech group effectuate inter-ethnic communication. Therefore, in areas where a dialect or speech group is dominant interaction is easier and such areas have higher levels of development;

iii). among the tribals, multiplicity of tongues usually means: (a) consolidated ethnicity (b) preservation of identity and ethnocentricism, (c) ethnic
competition, (d) infrequent interactions, etc. Each dialect is an ethnic shibboleth or distinguishing mark;

iv). ethnic groups concentrate in specific areas, usually exclusively, thereby obstructing inter-ethnic interaction and the overall levels of development. Here, diffusion of any innovation is limited and polarised and could not efficiently penetrate into the 'isolates';

v). therefore, there is a need to formulate a means by which people communicate effectively without restrictions set by the dialects. It is believed that reduction in speeches will lead to better understanding and higher levels of development, for, multiplicity of speeches is responsible for low level of socio-economic development.

A likely stages of language efficiency of a child in a multi-speech area is given below. The chart compares the degree and stages of second language usage between Meiteis and the Tribals:

**STAGES OF LANGUAGE EFFICIENCY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tribals</th>
<th>Meiteis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Other Languages</td>
<td>Other Languages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English (at school)</td>
<td>English/Hindi (at school)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manipuri (at school or outside)</td>
<td>Own Tongues spoken at home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Native Tongues</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tongue Spoken at Home</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(A)
Chart no. IX.1: shows the stages of language acquisition in the Tribal and Meitei communities. The numbers in parentheses and the lines indicate the stages of learning and also intensity of multilingualism.

The illustration above shows that degree of multilingualism among the tribals is greater than among others. Usually, a tribal child has to overcome few language barriers as he grows up.

These findings of this exploratory research illustrate the reality and nature of many ethnic communities and their areas. It opens up many avenues through which these ethno-lingual groups can be better studied and new strategies for their upliftment be formulated and implemented.