CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSIONS.

The present study has been a long and intensive one. It has been spread over four years. The investigator has viewed the patterns of vocabulary development of eighteen children of which ten are of bilingual parentage and the other eight of monolingual parentage. All the children have had the same mother tongue, viz. Khasi. But with the ten bilingual children the environmental effect has been of two languages, the mother tongue, and the language spoken by the father, or the mother tongue and the "Common-to-both" language, viz. English. But they have all been exposed to Khasi in the home, this being a matriarchal region, and Khasi being the mother tongue.

The raw data has been sorted and sieved as best as possible in Chapter 5 and 6 under Data Analysis. The individual growth rates in the different tables and the resultant growth curves presented in these chapters bring out a comparative picture of vocabulary growth between the bilingual and monolingual cases. The graph showing the combined growth curves of the bilingual and monolingual cases indicate how very parallel the growth rates of the bilinguals and monolinguals are. (Chapter 7.)

The results of the study repudiates the generally held belief that all children with a bilingual parentage display (a) problems in correct concept formation and (b) suffer from
a poor vocabulary. The first of the two beliefs is repudiated in this study by the fact that whatever initial problems may have appeared on the scene as far as correct concept formation was concerned was soon swept off with the bilingual child showing normal progress after an initial set back. The bilinguals have progressed hand in hand with the monolinguals, intermixing words from different languages with great ease. In fact they have surpassed the monolinguals in the age levels of 18, 24, 30 and 36 months (See table 7.1.3. for Mean Percent Comprehensible Responses, Chapter 7.). The second belief is repudiated by the fact that at forty-two months, that is, at the end of the study, the average bilingual vocabulary of 1043 words is only sixty words less than the average monolingual vocabulary of 1103 words. Moreover the correlational study (Chapter 7) indicates that the growth rates of the bilingual and monolingual cases throughout the developmental stages display a high degree of positive correlation which is calculated at 0.79.

After a close study of the patterns of vocabulary growth and an observation of the individual cases, the investigator has come to certain basic conclusions which it is hoped will be of use for further studies in the same field. The conclusions are both general to monolingual and bilingual cases and specific to bilingual cases alone, as will be evident in the particular conclusion itself. These are
(368)

summarised in the following:

(1) Young children differ from one another in the time at which they begin to speak, the rate at which they progress in language development, and the adequacy of their language patterns. There is a very wide range of individual difference.

(2) Maximum vocabulary growth takes place between the ages of twenty-four and thirty-six months. (Table 5.2.5. Chapter 5).

(3) The percentage of comprehensible words increase as the children grow older; the period between 12 and 18 months significantly characteristic of the 'Shedding' phenomenon for both bilingual and monolingual children.

(4) The bilingual cases show wider ranges at different levels of age compared to the monolingual cases, where the percentage of gain seems to be very close and parallel.

(5) Children's speech becomes increasingly comprehensible with the increase of chronological age and it is almost entirely comprehensible by the age of three or three-and-a-half years.

(6) The Mean length of sentences increases with age.

(7) Recognition of colour increases with age.
The most important influence upon a child's learning to talk is the kind and amount of stimulation to which he is exposed during his developing years.

The factors that influence a child's speech most directly are:

(a) Slurred enunciation (e.g. Susan Hek: Bilingual)
(b) Incorrect Pronunciation (e.g. Sadhana: Bilingual)
(c) Poor and inaccurate grammatical form practised by the adults in his environment (e.g. Sadhana: Bilingual)
(d) Use of 'Baby Talk' by adults (e.g. Ginette: Monolingual)

A child who has a good model in his parents tends to have good pronunciation and enunciation. Incorrect pronunciation of parents influence the child's speech directly (As in Sadhana Sharma: bilingual—'Mareka', 'Ho Kiya' etc.).

The type of speech a child develops is related closely to the kind of speech he hears around him. This applies also to the use of slang, imitation of unsavoury adult forms of speech and sound forms, and precocious talk. (The present study indicates that the effect of religion is sufficiently noticeable in the child's conversation. In the cases of Susan Hek and Desmond Rynjah—both bilingual cases with Roman Catholic Mothers—the vocabulary is noticeably interspersed with
words about the Church and God.)

(11) The child does not build his vocabulary from his own first sounds, but learns to imitate and use the words used by others around him.

(12) The size of vocabulary can be regarded as the best single indication of intelligence (Peter, Vivek, Ravi: Bilingual; Joshua, Brenda: Monolingual). Also both language and intellectual development are related to the socio-economic status of the family in which the child is born and brought up. A child cannot manipulate certain facts, if his environment has kept him ignorant of these facts. (This conclusion is not backed up by the results of intelligence tests but by observation over the long period of study. The investigator felt that under the prevailing circumstances administering 'culture-free' tests would not be feasible and also, results obtained from such administration would not be authentic.)

(13.a.) The ability to speak words lags behind the ability to comprehend words. In this context it is noticed that stuttering in a child, especially among the brighter ones, is common when his 'thoughts run ahead of his tongue'. In this event the child's expression is still inadequate. (This was seen with Joshua Marboniang: monolingual - who has the highest vocabulary count at the end of three-and-a-half years
of age among all the cases - bilingual and monolingual. But the problem was not persistent, it was short lived. Joshua got over it before he was two-and-a-half years old).

(13.b). A child utters and repeats numbers before he can actually count things.

(14) Children use language mainly when they want to obtain fulfilment of their wants and to express their feelings. This they do both when they are alone, or in the presence of another person. But after a child has come to the word stage he likes to express his feelings to someone. A child of this age who is left alone most of the time has a slow vocabulary development (e.g. Geoffrey).

(15) A language handicap is automatically produced in a bilingual home environment where there is parental bilingualism. But it does not necessarily delay the first use of words. (In the present study the average age for the first word is: Monolingual - 11.25 months; Bilinguals - 9.4 months). Upto about two years of age there is slight confusion and vacillation in the use of words.

(16) With regard to bilingualism it is found that confusion is at its worst when the child finds that certain verbal expressions at one time have a definite effect upon those who hear him, and then at another time fail to have that effect. For instance it has been found in the present study
that a child in a bilingual home environment hears a Nepali word and in time picks it up in his vocabulary and uses it either (a) to express his feelings or (b) to ask for some object for the fulfilment of his wants. Both the above needs are satisfied in his own home by the use of Nepali words. He then moves for a few days with his mother to her parents' home where no one speaks or understands Nepali. The words he learned from his father no longer produced the results he had come to expect from their use. Since the words did not bring results he promptly gave them up and made no further attempts to use them again.

Confusion also results when the child hears more than one language from the same source. This was found to be pronounced in at least three of the bilingual cases in the present study. (Vivek Pradhan, Bablu Khaund and Vishal Mehra.)

Bilingualism does not seem to be a serious handicap in the linguistic development as measured by the mean length of response (3.15 words for bilinguals as against 3.59 words for monolinguals.). All that can be concluded from this meagre data is that the hearing of a 'foreign language' (Father language or English) in the home does not seem to be a handicap in linguistic development as it is measured by the mean length of responses which for the bilingual cases is only slightly lower than the monolingual cases. (3.15 : 3.59). It is also only marginally less than the overall average of 3.37.
Children under the influence of parental bilingualism invariably pick up the language which is 'Common-to-both' parents. It is noticed in most homes at present that English occupies a predominant place in the conversation of the adult members of the family. It is more so when the home comprises a husband and wife both having different mother tongues as happens with mixed marriages. English then becomes a 'Common-to-both' language. In Meghalaya the problem becomes more acute as the Khasi language which has a Mon-Khmer origin has very little similarity with other Indian languages with a Sanskrit origin. Therefore men of different parts of India who have Khasi wives find English the most convenient vehicle for vocal communication. In the present study only four of the ten bilingual cases speak the mother tongue. Five cases speak English which is the 'common-to-both' language. One speaks the father-tongue Assamese, which also happens to be the 'Common-to-both' language as the mother speaks perfect Assamese. His vocabulary also comprises of a sizeable percentage of English words (Ravi Baruah).

From the final analysis it is evident that there is no detrimental effect from learning more than one language at the same time provided that each one is taught correctly and the child is not confused by suddenly finding that his language produces no results, provided that there are no emotional factors involved, which would make the child antagonistic to one of the languages.
(20) There is no language deficiency in a bilingual child (as indicated by the quantum of vocabulary. Bilingual: 10^43 words, Monolingual: 1103 words).

(21) Outside the home and in a broader context it may be mentioned that bilingualism, or for that matter, multilingualism becomes an issue only through conflicting claims for official recognition. The examples of certain European countries such as Switzerland show that problems of multilingualism may be resolved peacefully.

(22) For the bilingual child who enters school it may be a sound idea to send him to a school which uses a 'Common-to-both' language (English in the present study) as the medium of instruction.