CHAPTER 2
OBJECTIVES

2.1. NEED FOR A STUDY - ESPECIALLY AT THE PRE-SCHOOL STAGE.

It may well be asked "why the need for a study of this kind?" The study of language development is undoubtedly an important matter. Languages for the pre-school child, is the basis of future thought and this acquisition of language skills occurs in a surprisingly short time. Language helps in the development of concepts. Over the early language pattern the mother has infinite control: "indoctrination" takes place in the home - which creates the fundamentals of the child's future attitudes towards the world at large. The unconscious use of words by either parents determines the child's attitude towards the world - as also his attitude towards the different languages. His attitude toward an "inferior" language may stand as an obstacle to his proper mastery of that language. Language is also a vehicle of thought and therefore a tool for communication. It is essential that means are not spared to make this communication process a healthy one for the child, and one which is beset with the least amount of obstacles in terms of bilingualism and multilingualism. Even when in a multilingual environment, some children, are least affected by language problems; whereas some children are. Some children carry a vestige of this affect to the first few years of schooling.
too. The ensuing section of this chapter will clarify the need for such a study.

It is doubtful whether there exists any community or any language which has been isolated from and free of contact with other communities and other languages. The historical universality of language contact and consequent bilingualism, together with the intensification of such contacts in contemporary society, makes it almost unnecessary to justify a study such as this. Language enables people to assert their separateness, just as it enables them to communicate and cooperate.¹ There may be a tug between the internal relationship of languages within the family and the relationships of the languages within the wider society. This in turn may help promote a cleavage between two types of cultural milieu for the languages, one, an intimate and "group culture" milieu and the other an impersonal, more formal and "civic" milieu. Furthermore, even within the family differences may be noted - a child will be willing to speak his native tongue only to the grandparents since the intermediate generation is felt to be committed to the intrusive language.

Language acquisition occurs in a surprisingly short time. Grammatical speech does not begin before one-and-

one-half years of age; yet, as far as we can tell, the basic process is complete by three-and-one-half years. Thus a basis for the rich and intricate competence of adult grammar must emerge in the short span of twenty-four months. To appreciate this achievement, we need only compare the child with himself in other departments of cognitive growth as outlined, say, in the work of Piaget.  

Although individual differences are large, in the average child, the vocabulary appears to increase rather slowly, at first, then rapidly between the ages of two and eight years, and then more slowly until maturity.

The intimate relation of verbal habits to the way we perceive the world about us is a familiar fact to psychologists. Many of the differences we perceive among things and events would not be noticed if society had not forced us to learn that they have different names.

Language develops in a social situation and functions to spread information through a group. It enables one person to take advantage of the experience of other persons, and it is our principal weapon for welding a group together for cooperative action. Social control is impossible without a signalling system; even the social insects have a kind of

language. Although the social implications must be kept foremost in understanding language, the possession of language offers advantages to the individual other than those it offers to him as a member of a group. A child learns its language in a social situation and for social reasons, but once he has learned it, his whole personal orientation towards himself and his own problems is altered. A person who does not talk to any member of a group is necessarily isolated from that group. A person who talks only to members of one group is necessarily dependent upon that group for all his information.

One of the nonsocial consequences of language is the user's ability to talk to himself. This ability aids him to pose and to solve problems. By means of the language a problem can be described with a set of symbols. The symbols can be manipulated more easily and quickly than can the components of the original problem; many solutions can be tried symbolically before any action is taken. This is not to say that all thinking is verbal manipulation; but certainly the results of thinking are influenced by our symbolic acts.

Thinking is never more precise than the language one uses. Even if it is, the additional precision is lost as soon as we try to communicate the thought to someone else. The importance of a precise language is most clearly demons-
trated by the value of mathematical language in science.

Language may facilitate thinking, by making it more complex, effective, and accurate. When a child learns a new word in a meaningful way, he acquires the concept that underlies the word. As he uses the word (and thus the concept) over or under-generalization will be corrected by experience, thus rendering the concept more accurate and precise.

It is true that mothers in our culture are closer to their children, than fathers. In part because of the necessity of physical care of children, mothers are likely to be present in the home more and have more contact with children. Research indicates that children in general are more favourably disposed towards their maternal parents (Harris and Tseng, 1957). But what about children and father?

Despite the impression given by cartoons, television family skits, and popular fiction, the father is still an important (and in many families) and authoritative figure. While the mother is in hourly, intimate contact with the children—especially very young—her ways of dealing with them reflect her husband's attitude in many ways. Thus, the research on mother-child relationships really includes both parents.

From both parents as such there is very often an influence on the speech patterns of a child. Induction is
a familiar device. "Don't drink from that tap, Vivek! Dirty people drink from there." If the child's thirst is greater than his fear of the "dirty people" he may well ignore his mother's warning. But he nevertheless absorbs an impression of certain undesirable people along with his water, and when he is less thirsty or more thoroughly indoctrinated he may well pass up both the tap and the "DIRTY PEOPLE".

Experiments suggest that the more mature child profits more from training than the less mature child. With special attention an immature child can be pushed ahead of his normal development, but even a hard push by a conscientious parent has little permanent value. When the child is ready to talk he begins to talk, provided a normal verbal environment is at hand. Training is necessary, of course, but intensive training at an early age is less rewarding than the same training given when the child has reached a more advanced stage of physical and mental development.

A child cannot learn verbal responses until he is old enough and mature enough to learn them. Maturation sets the pace. With a normal environment the child's speech awaits a step-by-step unfolding of the growth process. Consequently we find a succession of developmental stages that are quite similar in all children. By manipulating the language environment of the child we can modify or delay the development,

3. The investigator's personal experience with one of the bilingual cases, VIVEK PRADHAN.
but we shall never teach a baby to utter prepositional phrases before he begins to babble. The successive stages of language development are similar in all normal children.

Successive stages in the development of speech are indicated in Table 2.1.1. (See Appendix). This table has been compiled from eight major studies of child development (McCarthy, 1946). The length of the bars represents the approximate range of times reported by the various studies for the onset of the different stages.

Table 2.1.2. (See Appendix) indicates the general pattern of vocabulary growth in average monolingual children; parental bilingualism and environmental multilingualism often demonstrates a deviation from this pattern.

"Thought is different from language. This assumption means that while concepts and thoughts may find their expression in language, i.e. in vocabulary and syntax, this is not to say, that thought is equivalent to language." 4. This assumption agrees with the findings of Piaget (1959) who views the relationship between thought and language as complex and dynamic.

If thought is defined as structuring reality, or "making sense" out of the quality of events and continuous stimulation to which the individual is submitted by virtue of being

equipped with senses and proprioceptors, then thinking is an active process (Willink, 1973 p.81). For the individual can mediate NOT just one but two types of symbols into meaning, the "theoretical" and the "qualitative". (Briefly the individual acquires meaning not only through words and numbers, but also through such meaningful events as smiles, gestures and other non-linguistic symbols.)

Language is one of the most basic processes of human socialization. When we say, that a child brings to school some knowledge of his first language, we must understand how he has acquired it in order to take full advantage of the kinds of learning strategies already demonstrated by the child.

Born into a social group, the child has acquired socially meaningful behaviours, one of which is language. Language has helped him to be integrated into the daily patterns of life in his home. He has learned appropriate ways to talk about the comings and goings of others, just as he has learned to predict when others will come and go. Without being directly taught; motivated by his own needs for food, cleanliness, love, and attention, he has learned by looking, touching and making people and things react. Piaget (1970) has referred to the active process of taking in the new and building on the old as a form of self-regulation. Throughout this process, the child is not passive, and while he may imitate and repeat, he is the architect of his knowledge of the world.
The child learning a second language - (the father language in a bilingual home) just as the child learning his first, may make the mistake of assuming that similarity of sound means similarity of meaning. Just like the first language learner, he will learn certain set phrases, perhaps overextend meanings, and use these phrases before becoming fully able to use the elements in the phrase in grammatically correct and appropriate ways. For example, the first language learner uses "I DON'T KNOW" before he can say "DO YOU KNOW IT?" or "HE LAUGHS LIKE I DO". Some second language learners (Khasi-English) may learn to use DON'T but may overextend its meaning to include "is not" and "couldn't" and "wouldn't". The investigator of this work has witnessed during her study a monolingual Khasi child trying to speak in English. He translated his Khasi WAT KHANG into English saying DON'T CLOSE referring to the door. During his play he complained to the investigator about his friend not going home to have his meal as "AUNTY, HE DON'T GOING HOME." Both the first- and second-language learner have communication as their goal. If the structure requires a change in word order, or some other modification that creates complexity, it will be simplified or experimented with until the learner understands and learns to control the complexities.

5. JOSHUA MARBONIANG : A Child of Khasi parentage, from a monolingual home.
Children organize their world through language and try to create a reasonable fit between their present capabilities to understand and the ways they can communicate this understanding. This process involves guessing about meanings, words, or expressions. For the young child, as meanings about the way objects and people behave become more differentiated, vocabulary and structure also become differentiated. Sometimes only the structures are difficult, requiring a new word order, agreement rules, or more choice with regard to patterns.

Socialization with regard to language too depends on three preconditions: (1) certain biological endowments, (2) an outgoing society, and (3) an opportunity for the person to interact with the society.

The biological inheritance of the child is the beginning. Without it nothing can proceed. But the child needs more than biological inheritance; he needs a social inheritance from those who have preceded him. He is not a social vacuum, alone and unattended, but comes into a society. From the moment of birth others care for his physical needs, and before long he is being taught to think and behave as they think he should. His capacity to think and behave depends on the third precondition for socialization, his opportunity to respond to the society around him.
Children are endowed with a biologically founded inborn capacity for language acquisition, this hypothesis is not new. The existence of an inborn capacity for language was taken for granted during the 19th Century.

Acquisition of language is largely a matter of maturation of an innate language capacity. The maturation is guided by internal factors, by an innate 'form of language' that is sharpened, differentiated, and given its specific realization through experience. Language is thus a kind of latent structure in the human mind, developed and fixed by exposure to specific linguistic experience.

There is one further question that might be raised at this point. How does the human mind come to have the innate properties that underlie acquisition of knowledge? Here, linguistic evidence obviously provides no information at all. The process by which the human mind has achieved its present state of complexity and its particular form of innate organization are a complete mystery, as much of a mystery as the analogous questions that can be asked about the processes leading to the physical and mental organization of any other complex organism. It is perfectly safe to attribute this to evolution, so long as we bear in mind that there is no substance to this assertion - it amounts to nothing more than

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the belief that there is surely some naturalistic explanation for these phenomena. 7

Meaningful speech starts around the age of one year. Some children may start somewhat earlier, others may do so several months later, while still others may begin appreciably later, for a variety of reasons. It is interesting that some of the latter may start right away with more advanced sentence structures, having used this latent period to better internalize the system, to better refine the theory, the (abstract) concepts and rules of sentences. Indeed, some of these children, during the longer pre-sentence or pre-combinatory period, do mature mentally a little more, and thus may be able to handle more abstract concepts, recognize more complex constructions, and therefore may also be able to produce from the inception of their speech production longer and more complex sentences. Naturally such a longer incubation period of language in highly intelligent children deserves special study. 8

It is, indeed remarkable how fast and how independently the little child manages to perform the enormous mental task of language acquisition, even before he is capable of carrying out other complex mental or intellectual tasks. In a way, it does not seem to depend on intelligence

7. pp 426 ibid.
8. pp 434 ibid.
solely, since unintelligent children, and even children with various retardations also manage to acquire language, although it is limited to a certain degree. Evidently the child should be credited with a capacity for analysis and internalization, since he obviously does not learn by rote and merely duplicates the sentences he has heard, but rather he seems to be extracting the rules of the language he is exposed to and creating for himself a set of rules, a grammatical system, as it is apparent from his speech. One might conceive of this system as a theory that the child makes up about the internal system possessed by the speakers around him. This competence is not limited to the actual corpus of sentences that he possesses or has been exposed to, but it goes beyond it, enabling him to recognize, comprehend, and adequately produce by himself an infinite set of completely new situations. Moreover, he also learns to recognize, sift and disregard poor examples of adult speech such as deviant, incomplete, and disorganized sentences.

What the linguist does explicitly, in formal terms, the child does implicitly. Yet, as it has been pointed out, the child too must be working very systematically even when unconsciously, in order to accomplish the enormous task of mastering such a complex system as that of a natural language, and within several years only.
Under normal circumstances the baby gets to hear a fair amount of his mother's or mother-surrogate's language during his waking hours. This chatter will either be directed at another adult or at the baby himself. The infant is in a position to hear much of this talk (of course, we are unable to tell whether he is paying attention). Some of it he doesn't hear, because it is masked out by others, competing noises, e.g. his own cries or those of brothers or sisters in the throes of sibling rivalry, the ring of a telephone, or a tropical bird, the banging of utensils or the barking of dogs. All of these masking noises come and go relatively randomly with respect to what is being said in the child's vicinity. That is to say, that no sound or word is more likely to be masked out than any other; the disadvantage is thus equal for the various elements of the language. In any event, it is unlikely that at this stage the child can distinguish his mother's voice from those of other's.

Between the babbling period and the later speaking period there seems to be one difference of crucial importance; **The role of auditory feedback cues from the infant's own behaviour.** During babbling, under our assumption about secondary reinforcement, the baby's main object is to obtain

secondary reinforcement by sounding like the mother. Most of his sound-production probably meets this standard fairly easily, since it doesn't have to make up meaningful utterances; he therefore gains no particular advantage from paying special attention to how he sounds. However, when he begins, toward the end of this period (at about one year of age, give or take a few months) to try to say something he has heard said, such as "Mama", "ball", "milk", or "blanket", he soon finds that just any old motions of the vocal apparatus will not do. Some of his productions will get better results than others. These results come in the form of maternal smiles, cries of delight, and increased attention generally, to say nothing of the possession of the thing (e.g. the ball) for which he asked or was thought to ask. In other words, for the first time, the child finds that he must listen to what he is saying with the object of matching it to what someone else had said. The closer the match the better the results. In this respect the parents of the child may help by giving more opportunities for imitation and repetition by increasing the quantity of talk.

In the case of the little pre-school child with bilingual parentage, it is found that little children learn the "foreign language" very easily indeed, if appropriate methods are used, or, perhaps, we should say, if no method at all is used. The learning is a sort of play for them. They forget,
however, even faster than they learn. So, if the parents want the child to learn and retain the father language (foreign language) as well, it should be spoken more often in the presence of the child. At the same time it must be remembered that too much overlapping may bring about undue interference in the child's learning the first language. As a result confusion might set in. There is widespread opinion that bilinguals - usually early bilinguals - and multilinguals rarely develop into great artists, especially writers, because bilingualism and multilingualism allegedly hamper literary expression (cf. M. Prevost 1912, 82: O. Jespersen 1922, 147: N. Ries, 1928, 18-19, J. G. Weightman, 1947, 25: E. Ludo- viey C. 1950, 495). Some of these authors admit that bilingualism fosters commerce, and gift for natural sciences. L. Bloomfield (1935, 56) mentions, however that bilinguals are frequent among both artists and men of science. 10

There is one major problem that faces a pre-school child of bilingual parentage. This child is already exposed to two languages at home - one of which is not necessarily English or Hindi - assuming that either of these two is the medium of instruction of the school to which he will soon be sent. D. D. Saer (1928, 38) fears the stagnation or deviation of the mental activity of a child who is sent suddenly to a school where there is a medium of instruction other than the

10. ibid.
mother tongue. W. Hesse (1928, a 81 ff) mentions that thinking without words may be more common in bilingual children and adults than monoglots; he thinks that in early childhood this might endanger sound mental development. He mentions that bilingual children are inclined to squint, to be left-handed, to stutter, and are exposed to emotional and even moral dangers.

Stuttering among children, especially among bright youngsters is common when his "thoughts run ahead of his tongue". This is because expression is still inadequate. When a child of bilingual parentage is exposed to language of both tongues just when he has started developing concepts, his concepts are vague and he is beset with confusion. As a result his vocabulary growth is slow. This is the time when stuttering might set in. Parents can help by talking to him in one language at this stage.

There is a group of scholars who fear the dangers of early bilingualism and multilingualism so much that they would like to postpone the start of study of a foreign language to the end of compulsory school age or even beyond. M. Prevost (1912, 247) believes that no foreign language other than Latin, should be taught (in France) before the child is

11. Investigator's experience with SUSAN H.E.K - One of the bilingual cases.
12 years of age. E. Pichon (1936, 102-103) is also sure that early bilingualism is harmful and maintains that this is the opinion of all those who have studied this question on concrete material. He believes that the difference between early and late bilingualism is very important.

Geissler\textsuperscript{12} distinguishes only two main types of language learners among very young children: (1) the open-minded and receptive child, and (2) the shy, self-centred and meditative type. The former type absorbs a foreign language more readily than does the latter who, however, does not forget as fast as the former. If a child of the latter type becomes bilingual he will always be inclined to translate, to compare, and to mediate about the exactness of the concepts; such a child will never be completely bilingual. The former group put up more readily with the peculiarity of their position and keep cheerful. The latter are sometimes troubled by it and do not overcome their painful experience easily.

In Geissler's opinion organic bilingualism exists if the subjects think and feel in one and the same language. A second language is for them merely a language acquired for practical purposes. Inorganic bilingualism exists in subjects who think in one language and feel in another. This type of bilingualism is in his opinion especially harmful.

In Geissler's opinion the speech of bilingual children is also poor in concepts. Another handicap may be the imitation of the mixed speech of adults. The bilingual child is perhaps more logical than other children but his style is poor. Geissler admits that a child learns a foreign language relatively fast. The main asset of Geissler's study lies in the careful descriptions of many different types of bilingualism and multilingualism of which some are more harmful than others. His work contains many excellent observations and analyses of details; he is against uncontrolled bilingualism and in this he is perhaps right.

In present times the school going age is rather early. The pre-school child who is exposed mainly to familial and peer group influences is on the door step of his first school. What he has so far acquired he carries to his first school days. Very often, especially in Meghalaya, children of both monolingual as well as bilingual parentage enter their first school where the medium of teaching is a foreign language. For the monolingual infant it is the second language and for the bilingual infant, his infant school medium will be his third language. Summing up, we think that whoever decides at what age the teaching of a foreign language should be started- and whether some subjects should be taught through the medium of foreign languages, will have to consider, first of all, the direct practical advantages to the individual and
to the community. He will have also to consider the advantages of the very good mastery of the foreign languages concerned (especially of correct idiom and pronunciation for the latter) which is likely to result from early and thorough bilingualism or multilingualism. He will have to weigh these advantages against the dangers of such policies. These dangers are:

(1) **Linguistic**, as it is likely that the language learned at first will be influenced to some extent by the interference of further languages. Where very much time is devoted to the foreign languages the knowledge of the first language may remain restricted.

(2) **Intellectual**, as it is possible that, especially if, owing to political changes more than one sudden plunge into a foreign language (Hindi for the Khasi child) as a medium of instruction takes place in the course of school attendance, a prolonged intellectual stagnation could result. This danger is, of course, greater with weak pupils.

(3) **Aesthetic**, as a writer or orator may be hampered by the interference of other languages. The present investigator does not think there are any moral dangers resulting from bilingualism or multilingualism; if there are any, e.g., the inferiority complexes which may appear in certain slightly older children, or other children persecuted because of their
nationality, they are due to the accompanying circumstances. Still, when such circumstances cannot be changed, it is only natural that some scholars recommend a restriction of bilingualism or multilingualism.

2.2. OBJECTIVES AND JUSTIFICATION.

The major objective of the study will be to examine whether bilingualism, as defined, poses any serious problem towards the natural development of a child's "own language" as a tool of verbal communication. This will include a systematic study of:

(a) early articulation and its continuation;
(b) growth of a meaningful vocabulary including parts of speech; and
(c) functional speech patterns in relation to grammatical sentence structures.

The examination will be made among two comparable groups of children considering their ability to form adequate concepts, to understand the meaning of a verbal communication, and to develop skills in verbal communication—all in relation to their general adaptability to environmental situations.
Child-development research has much to gain from and to contribute to other branches of behavioural science. "Children are one of the most interesting phenomena in the world; they are newsworthy, they are good copy for advertisements, their cute sayings appear in hundreds of magazines and newspapers everyday." At the best and worst of times they are worthy of observation and study. At all times the study of children constitute a very serious business and this is one field where the study is pleasant and full of exciting experiences alongside. It is necessary that we have better understanding of children and their various behavioural changes and adaptation; for in this we have a way to practical human betterment.

There is no end to the multifarious problems that demand research in child development. What patterns of social and interpersonal relationships are developed in today's children will in large part determine the stable developmental patterns in future generations. There is no end to the potential contributions that exist in the research in child development. Research of this type may show us the direction in which efforts may be made to change attitudes, and improve teaching techniques both at home, as also at

school. If we at all aim to add to general psychological theory, it is children we have to look up to; they constitute extremely valuable subjects. They provide valuable experimental material. By virtue of their being relatively complicated and yet relatively inexperienced they offer research possibilities of fundamental value to persons interested in learning problems.

The objectives of the present study will be to compare the language development of bilingual and monolingual children up to 3½ years of age, and to determine whether bilingualism poses any obstruction to concept formation during the initial stage of infant vocalization. Do children in a bilingual home learn the "father tongue" or the "mother tongue" more during the first two years? One objective is to determine whether the use of two languages in a home constitutes a hurdle for the child in acquiring vocabulary skills in a third language and whether there is a language deficiency in a bilingual child. If there be any language deficiency in a bilingual child would the very fact of the two languages that he is exposed to constitute a hurdle for the acquisition of a third language? Would a child reared in Meghalaya with a Khasi mother be not much better off exposed to his mother tongue alone, which in this context would be Khasi.15

14. Meghalaya has a matriarchal Society.
15. In all the cases taken up—both monolingual and bilingual—the mother tongue is Khasi.
With the necessity of studying English and Hindi at the school level, the probable findings from the vocabulary of bilingual children justifies the pursuance of a child study such as this.

In a study such as this we strive to produce a theory that satisfies our ideals. The simplest definition of a research programme in child psychology derives from an interest in "seeing what happens". Such an interest may arise from casual observation, from a hunch about the way children develop, or from an articulated theory.

Much of what is known about infant speech actually is based on research with adults. For example our knowledge of the placement of the tongue in articulation and a great deal of our knowledge of speech errors and difficulties that comes from work with adults has been applied to children.

Recognition of speech handicaps among school children and the striking incidence of language disturbances in the population points to the importance of the area of language and communication as a discipline in its own right.

Summary.

A Child in our country needs at least a working knowledge of more than his mother tongue alone. This makes him basically bilingual in his community, if not multilingual. Where the
situation is created in the child's own home due to parental bilingualism the problem is even more pressing.

For the monolingual child the medium of instruction used in his first school may be for him his first or second language. For the bilingual child it may even be his third language.

In this study an attempt has been made to ascertain the quantum of vocabulary in children of bilingual and monolingual parentage and determine their comparative capability at pre-school age. The results will help in determining whether teaching of a third language in schools would be a reasonable imposition or not.