Chapter 6

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION
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The disclamation of linguistic rights of minorities is an important factor in eruption of ethnic conflicts in various parts of the world. A plethora of reviews relating to ethnic struggles across the globe reveals that conflict over language rights and maintenance is an indispensable part of various political struggles of ethnic minorities in the world. The Bodo movement in Assam, during sixties to nineties, was a socio-political struggle that started with the issue of linguistic rights and resulted in a separate political identity for them. In this study, an attempt was made to examine the nature and dynamics of ethnic identity and inter ethnic group relationship of Bodo students after establishing separate political identity. The study has attempted to explore the nature of multilingualism in the state by assessing whether the socio-political change of the Bodos has initiated linguistic diversity with integration or separation/segregation outcome in Bodo-Assamese inter ethnic group relationship. The study examined the perception of own group and outgroup ethnolinguistic vitality of Bodo and Assamese students, own group language and culture maintenance attitude, the outgroup relationship attitude of Bodo and Assamese students and the nature of social identity of the Bodo students in different majority-minority context. It also assessed the role of medium of instruction (mother tongue medium or Assamese medium) in perception of ethnolinguistic vitality for own group as well as the outgroup, own group language and culture maintenance attitude, outgroup relationship attitude, nature of social identity and the pattern of language use of Bodo students. The findings of the study will be discussed in this chapter in the light of the major hypotheses.

6.1 Subjective Ethnolinguistic Vitality

Intergroup Differences in Perceived Ethnolinguistic Vitality

The study has shown that there were significant intergroup differences in perception of own group and outgroup ethnolinguistic vitality. The data revealed significant differences in the perception of own group and outgroup ethnolinguistic vitality of Bodo students and Assamese students from different majority–minority intergroup contact contexts. The Bodos
perceived average own group ethnolinguistic vitality whereas, the Assamese students had perceived high own group vitality. In contrast, the outgroup ethnolinguistic vitality perception of the Bodos was high whereas, it was low among the Assamese students. Thus, the findings support the hypothesized intergroup differences in ethnolinguistic vitality.

Such findings were expected on the basis of theoretical perspectives and research findings in respect of the dynamics of subjective ethnolinguistic vitality of ethnic groups in intergroup contexts. The theoretical model of subjective ethnolinguistic vitality (Giles, Bourhis &Taylor, 1977), as discussed in Chapter 1, suggests that the ethnolinguistic vitality of a group is gathered from status factor (economic status, social status, socio-historical status and language status of an ethnic group), demographic factor (referring to the number of speaker/population of the ethnolinguistic group) and the institutional support factor that refers to the use of the group's language in different formal and informal setting. There is an isomorphic relationship between the vitality perception and these objective indices of vitality and in any majority-minority intergroup contact, the etholinguistic groups differ in relative strength of these factors (Giles et al., 1977).

The Bodos in Assam are a minority group and according to 1991 census, constitute only 5.3 percent people of the total population. Although this tribe is scattered in different parts of Assam, many fragmented groups of this tribe had lost their original Bodo language and melted into greater Assamese language and culture (Gait, 1891). Historically, a large number of people from the Bodo tribe merged into Assamese (sub-national) formation and no longer identified themselves as Bodos. One fraction of this tribe, which is highly concentrated in few parts of northern bank of river Brahmaputra, has been able to retain their original Bodo language. On the other hand, Assamese is the majority ethnic group of the state and its speakers constitute approximately 68 percent of the total population of the state. The Assamese had a dominant history under reign of two most powerful kingdoms- the Ahom kingdom in upper Assam areas and Koch kingdom in lower Assam areas. During their rule, many ethnic tribes were assimilated into Assamese sub-national formation. This dominant community also had a history of struggle to establish its language during the British colonial rule, which imposed Bengali as the language of education and administration. In the post-colonial period, Assamese language occupied a dominant place in
administration, education and in other public realms of the state. As a dominant etholinguistic group in the region, the perceived own group ethnolinguistic vitality of Assamese students remains relatively high, as one would expect. The Assamese students' perception of high demographic strength, socio-economic and historical status of their group and greater institutional support to their language seems to influence their perceived high own group vitality. On the other hand, the relative strength of these vitality indices of vitality of the Bodos is low compared to Assamese. Only a fragmented section of the Bodos have been able to retain their language and culture and able to use Bodo language in education and administration. Practically, their language is widely used in these domains only in few Bodo concentrated areas. The Assamese language has occupied a dominant place in all public realms throughout the state and the Bodos are, naturally or unwittingly, forced to use Assamese instead of their mother tongue. Hence, such a language contact situation seems to lead them to perceive own group vitality as low and the outgroup (Assamese) vitality as high, while the trend was opposite in case of Assamese students.

The social psychological researches by Giles and Byrne (1982), Giles, Rosenthal and Young (1985), Clement (1980) etc. also emphasised the relationship between the socio-structural characteristics of an ethnic group and its perception of group vitality. The majority/dominant group always exercises more power and institutional support to its language. The vitality perception of an ethnic group to a large extent is determined by this factor. Giles, Rosenthal and Young (1985) in their study, found that the Greek minority community's perception of Anglo-Australian's vitality was higher than their own group vitality perception in Melbourne city, Australia. Although, they had reasonable degree of status and numerical strength vis-à-vis other minority communities in Australia, the high demographic strength and more political power and institutional support to Anglo-Australian majority led them to perceive high outgroup vitality. This is also true of the subjective ethnolinguistic vitality in the Bodo-Assamese contact situation.
Contextual Differences in Perceived Ethnolinguistic Vitality

It was hypothesised that the perceived own group ethnolinguistic vitality of the Bodos would be higher in Bodo majority context as compared to Assamese majority context. The results showed a significant difference between the perceived ethnolinguistic vitality of the Bodo students from both the contexts. The Bodos from Bodo majority areas perceived nearly high own group ethnolinguistic vitality and above average outgroup (Assamese) vitality whereas, the Bodos from Assamese majority areas perceived a low own group vitality and quite high outgroup ethnolinguistic vitality. The Assamese students from the Bodo majority areas also perceived average outgroup (Bodos) vitality and high own group vitality whereas, in the Assamese majority areas their outgroup vitality perception was quite low.

As noted earlier, the theoretical perspective of Giles, Bourhis and Taylor (1977) and the researches by Giles, Rosenthal and Young (1985), Clement (1980), Giles and Byrne (1982), McNamara (1988), Michael Chi-keung Kam (2001) etc. suggest that the perception of ethnolinguistic vitality of an ethnic group is influenced by various factors like, demographic strength factor, status and institutional support to its language etc. which vary according to context or majority-minority position of the group. In the Bodo majority (BTC) area, the Bodo speakers have relatively high demographic, social, economic status in comparison to the Bodos scattered in other parts of Assam. They have also achieved more socio-political power and more institutional support for the Bodo language through the recent separation movement. The use of the language is more functional and active in the BTC area, as it is used in education and administration to a certain extent. In other words, the Bodos are relatively in a high socio-structural position in these areas with approximately 68 percent speakers of the total population in these areas. The Bodo students’ higher perception of the status appertaining to language, culture and people, could be, in part, due to the perception of a sizeable proportion of own group with more socio-political control in comparison to the outgroup (Assamese) in those particular areas, under the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC). Hence, the findings showed little difference between own group and outgroup vitality perception of the Bodos in these areas, although, the outgroup Assamese is a dominant community in the state. On the other hand, the Bodo students in the Assamese majority areas are affected by their minority position without a sizeable proportion of Bodo speaking people. The Bodos in these areas lack in socio-political control and institutional support for
the language due to massive use of Assamese language in all public domains of language use- education, administration, mass media, business fields etc. Hence, the Bodo students in these areas perceived low own group vitality while, their vitality perception for the outgroup Assamese is quite high in comparison to their counterparts in the BTC area. It can also be said that in the context of growing strength of socio-political control of the Bodos and more institutional power of the Bodo language, the Assamese students tended to perceive the outgroup (Bodos) vitality above average (nearly high) in the BTC area, while it was much lower in case of Assamese students in the Assamese majority areas. So, the hypothesized link between the majority-minority status and the perceived ethnolinguistic vitality is supported by the results in both the contexts. The difference in minority and majority status seems to influence the ethnolinguistic vitality perception of the contact groups.

**Intergroup Differences in the Perceived Ethnolinguistic Vitality of the Bodo Students from Mother Tongue Medium and Assamese Medium Schools**

The study investigated the role of medium of instruction in perception of group vitality of the Bodo students. It was hypothesized that the perceived own group ethnolinguistic vitality will be higher among Bodo students from mother tongue medium schools and Bodo majority areas compared to those from Assamese medium schools and Assamese minority areas. The data showed that the Bodo students from mother tongue medium in the BTC area perceived high own group ethnolinguistic vitality while, the Bodo students from the Assamese medium in the area showed average own group vitality perception. Again, in the Assamese majority areas, the mother tongue medium Bodo students showed a nearly average perception of own group vitality whereas; it was low among the Assamese medium Bodo students. Overall, the mother tongue medium Bodo students perceived nearly high own group ethnolinguistic vitality. It indicates that the mother tongue medium education leads to higher perception of own group ethnolinguistic vitality of the Bodo students.

The use of mother tongue in education, administration and mass media etc. (institutional support factor of ethnolinguistic vitality) increases the vitality of an ethnolinguistic group and the perception of group vitality is influenced by this factor (Giles et al, 1977; Giles & Byrne, 1982). Landry and Allard (1992) in their research revealed that the
Francophone minority students from English medium schools had low subjective ethnolinguistic vitality than the Francophone majority students from mother tongue medium schools in Canada due to perception of stronger educational support in French. Mother tongue education increases the institutional support to the group language as well as its instrumental value. Besides, it promotes and disseminates the indigenous knowledge and practices, which is a primary focus of culture specific pedagogical approach of a school curriculum. Thus, in turn, it enriches the ethnolinguistic vitality of ethnic groups. In India, most of the tribal languages have not yet been included under the VIII Schedule of the Constitution and not used in education as medium of instruction. This is a reflection of relative powerlessness or low status of the speakers of these languages in Indian multilingual context (Nambissan, 1994; Gupta & Abbi, 1995). Unlike the most tribal languages, the use of Bodo language in education as medium of instruction increases institutional support to the language and strengthens the group vitality, which influences the perception of own group ethnolinguistic vitality of Bodos. The high own group vitality perception of the Bodo students seems to be influenced by higher numerical strength and socio-structural status in the Bodo majority context as well as mother tongue education, which does not seem to occur in the Assamese medium schools and Assamese majority context.

6.2 Intergroup Relationship between Bodos and Assamese

The pattern of intergroup relationship between Bodos and Assamese in the Bodo-Assamese language contact situation of Assam was analyzed in the light of Berry’s (1990, 2003) theoretical model of acculturation strategies, as discussed in the Chapter 1 and 2. As the model suggests, the own group language and culture maintenance attitudes as well as the outgroup relationship attitudes of both the contact groups were assessed in the different majority-minority relationship contexts of the Bodo-Assamese contact situation in the state.

Intergroup Differences in Own group Language Culture Maintenance Attitude

The data in respect of own group language and culture maintenance attitude of the Bodo and Assamese students support the hypothesis that the own group language and culture maintenance will be positive for both the groups. The results showed no significant
intergroup difference in own group maintenance attitude. Both the groups showed a favourable own group maintenance attitude.

The language policy in Assam during post-independence period, which declared Assamese solely as a language of administration and education, had infused discontent among the Bodos. This sidelined the protection and safety of own group language maintenance of the Bodo speakers. The Assamese oriented language policy encouraged the ongoing assimilation process of many indigenous tribes in the state whose languages were under process of gradual shift. However, the discrimination inherent in such language policy brought collective awareness among the Bodos to safeguard their linguistic rights, assertion of Bodo identity and rise in the integrative value of their own group language maintenance. The use of Bodo language in education and administration increased its instrumental value and strengthened the group vitality, which seems to be leading towards more favourable attitude for its maintenance. Thus, the favourable own group language and culture maintenance attitude of the Bodos is a reflection of their ethnic awareness and striving for reversing any pressure of assimilation into the dominant linguistic groups. On the other hand, the wider use of Assamese language in all domains seems to encourage the Assamese students to have favourable attitude for own group maintenance.

Intergroup Differences in Own Group Maintenance Attitudes of the Bodo Students from Mother Tongue Medium and Assamese Medium Schools and from Different Majority-Minority Contexts

The data on the own group language and culture maintenance attitude showed highly favourable own group maintenance attitude (both integrative and instrumental) of Bodo students from mother tongue medium schools and from Bodo majority areas. It was found to be average among the Bodo students from Assamese medium schools and also from Assamese majority areas. Hence, the findings confirm the hypothesis that own group maintenance attitude will be more favourable among the Bodo students from mother tongue medium schools and Bodo majority areas, compared to those from Assamese medium schools and in Assamese majority areas.

The assumption behind this hypothesis was that the own group maintenance attitude of an ethnic group is influenced by relative majority-minority status or relationship in
intergroup contact contexts. Mother tongue education can also encourage own group maintenance by creating the scope of its use in formal setting, while increasing the instrumental value of the language. Studies by McNamara (1988), Sachdev et al. (1988), Lewis (1996) Michael Chi-keung Kam (2001) etc. partly revealed similar differences in own group language maintenance in majority–minority context. These studies showed that in the majority contexts the linguistic groups are in a relatively more powerful position and have more exposure for maintenance of their languages. The own group language maintenance attitude of the majority groups is related to their perception of high own group demographic strength and status and more institutional use of their languages. In the Bodo-Assamese contact situation, the favourable own group maintenance attitude (both integrative and instrumental) of the Bodo students in Bodo majority area can be related to relatively high numerical strength and status of Bodos and greater institutional support for Bodo language that lead to high maintenance of the language and culture contrary to the subordinate position existing in the Assamese majority areas. The relatively high demographic strength and status of Bodos in Bodo majority areas seems to influence the Bodo students for having favourable own group maintenance attitude, as in that context, the Bodos have more exposure in Bodo language, such as having large number of educational institutions and other religious, social institution where Bodo language is used. In the Assamese majority areas and in Assamese medium schooling, the wider use and more exposure to Assamese language and culture demands greater contact in the Assamese language among the Bodos, which in turn, triggers lower maintenance attitude in favour of the Bodo language.

**Intergroup Differences in Outgroup Relationship Attitudes**

The hypothesis that outgroup relationship attitude of Bodos will tend to be more favourable than Assamese, is partly confirmed by the findings, which showed a significant difference in outgroup maintenance attitude (integrative and instrumental) of the Bodo students and the Assamese students. It was found to be average among Bodo students whereas, unfavourable among the Assamese students.

In the Bodo-Assamese contact situation in Assam, as a minority group, Bodos need to use the dominant Assamese language and have knowledge of Assamese culture for participation in mainstream Assamese society of the state. Hence, their attitude for
relationship with Assamese is still found to be average, in spite of their prolonged movement for assertion of own group linguistic rights and identity. The outgroup relationship attitude of an ethnic group is, to a large extent, influenced by the relative status of the both contact groups. The researches done by Landry and Allard (1992), Mc Namara (1988), Michael Chi-keung Kam (2001) etc. in language contact situations reveal that perception of own group minority position and the higher numerical strength and status of the majority or dominant group, where there is a frequent exposure to the majority or dominant group's language and culture, influences the outgroup relationship attitude of an ethnic minority group. These researches showed that dominant use of majority or dominant group's language is often a transitional step towards assimilation into the dominant group. Micheal Chi-keung Kam (2001) found in his study that the high degree of integrative and instrumental motivation of ethnic Chinese in Australia for acquisition of English was their survival needs. Thus, the researches find that in a minority context, the ethnic minority group often seeks positive relationship with the outgroup in contact for participation in various domains of mainstream society. Similar outcome is seen in Bodo-Assamese contact situation in Assam.

**Intergroup Differences in Outgroup Relationship Attitude of the Bodos from Mother Tongue Medium and L2 Medium Schools and from Different Majority-Minority Contexts**

The findings showed that the outgroup relationship attitude was less favourable among the Bodos from mother tongue medium and Bodo majority area, compared to those from L2 medium and Assamese majority areas. It is seen that the Bodos from the BTC area had unfavourable outgroup relationship attitude whereas, it was favourable among the Bodos from Assamese majority areas. Again, the mother tongue medium Bodo students also showed a somewhat unfavourable attitude whereas, the Assamese medium Bodo students showed a favourable outgroup relationship attitude. The findings, which showed a significant difference among the Bodo students in outgroup relationship attitude, support the hypothesis.

It can be said that the Bodos from Assamese majority areas, due to their low numerical strength and status and high exposure to the Assamese language and culture, showed a greater acceptance to the Assamese and ergo, sought a favourable relationship with the outgroup. It may also be attributed to closer and longer contacts between Bodo and Assamese students and better bilingual proficiency that the Bodo students may have

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developed in the Assamese medium schools, besides perceiving the instrumental benefits of the Assamese language. In Bodo majority areas, there is lesser threat to maintenance of the Bodo language with very little institutional support (instrumental use) and less pressure of assimilation into Assamese compared to Assamese majority areas. The higher demographic strength and status might have influenced the Bodos in these areas to take up such alternative.

6.3 Pattern of Intergroup Relationship in Bodo-Assamese Contact Situation

A closer look at the findings reveals that there is a significant difference between the outgroup relationship attitudes of Bodo students and Assamese students in the BTC area. The attitude for outgroup relationship of Bodo students from mother tongue medium schools was quite unfavourable in the BTC area, although, the own group language and culture maintenance attitude was highly favourable. This shows that there is a separation orientation of the Bodos in their inter ethnic group relationship with Assamese in the BTC area. While the Assamese students showed a moderately separation orientation towards the Bodos, as their own group maintenance was high and the outgroup relationship attitude was slightly unfavourable. According to the Berry’s (1990) model of acculturation strategies, the outcome of Bodo-Assamese contact situation in the BTC area can be regarded as separation oriented, since the both contact groups have favourable own group maintenance attitude and the unfavourable outgroup relationship attitude. The possible integrative consequence in the contact situation in the area seems to be impeded by the both groups’ unfavourable outgroup relationship orientation. The separation outcome on the part of Bodos reveals that the Bodos are still in a process of assertive maintenance of their own group language and culture and counter the marginalized status enforced by the state during post-independence period. It seems, the impact of the recent assertive movement for greater linguistic rights and political autonomy still exerts prominent influence among Bodos in the BTC area. Further, in the context of recent intergroup tension for the Bodo movement, the Assamese seems to have developed a separation attitude towards the relationship with the Bodos. Thus, it seems, the mutual negative perception of outgroup relationship has not been cooled off during this period time after the Bodo movement.
The acculturation attitudes of the Bodos in the Assamese majority areas was found to be assimilation oriented, but tilting towards integration orientation, according to the Berry's model of acculturation strategies (1990), as the own group maintenance attitude of the students was found just favourable, while the outgroup relationship attitude was found to be quite favourable. The Bodos in these areas have showed a greater acceptance of Assamese language and culture. The positive relationship with Assamese is an adoptive strategy for the Bodos for participation in the socio-political domains in these areas. The wider use of Assamese language in all public realms in the area necessitates more linguistic contact in Assamese and imposes assimilation pressure on the Bodo students in those areas. On the other hand, the Assamese in these areas showed segregation orientation for the outgroup as they showed highly favourable attitude for own group maintenance and unfavourable attitude for having relationship with Bodos.

A considerable number of researches, such as studies by Berry and Sam (1997), Sinha et al. (1992), Clement (1993), Azurmendi and Espi (1994) reveal that in a multilingual society, the indigenous minorities likely to follow acculturation strategy of separation rather than integration, as they are still under the struggle for bringing equality in the ethnolinguistic status with the dominant groups. These researches showed a link between the pattern of ethnic identity and acculturation strategies. Berry et al. (1989), Rogier et al. (1991) etc. found that the ethnic minorities with a history of distinct cultural heritage and identity mostly prefer separation strategy. The ethnic minorities who identify with the mainstream society adopt assimilation strategy while, those who maintain a bicultural identity i.e. maintaining own group identity while adopting the important features of mainstream society, prefer integrative strategy. The findings of those studies resemble the findings of the intergroup relationship pattern in Bodo-Assamese contact situations. The Bodos in the majority context perceived their distinct cultural heritage, numerical strength and status and showed a highly favourable own group maintenance attitude. Their separation orientation towards Assamese is a reflection of resistance towards assimilation into the Assamese formation.
6.4 Social Identity of Bodos

The study assessed the pattern of social identity of the Bodo students in Assam. The study examined the role of majority-minority contexts of the Bodos as well as medium of instruction (mother tongue medium or Assamese medium) in development of social identity of the Bodos in the Bodo-Assamese contact situation in Assam.

The Pattern of Social Identity of the Bodo Students

The findings showed that Bodos have developed a strong social identity in the state. It is assumed that their collective efforts to maintain their group distinctiveness through the recent socio-political movement have resulted in development of a strong social identity among them. This finding can be interpreted in the light of theoretical perspectives in identity and social movement participation. According to the social psychological perspectives, there are three levels of analysis, which describe the dynamics of relationship between social identity and social movement participation. At the macro level, the asymmetry in the status and power of the contact groups is identified. After that at the micro level, the psychological experiences; feeling of discontent and motives that is transformed in collective action to bring change in the asymmetrical social structure is identified. The psychological perception of the asymmetrical social structure leads to the feeling of low self-esteem of the members. Consequently, according to Tajfel and Turner (1986), the members find the ways to improve their material and psychological conditions and adopt variety of strategies i.e. from individual strategies of social mobility to collective strategies (together with the group as a whole) for changing the social macro structure. The collective strategies are adopted when the members perceive the status asymmetry as illegitimate and the group boundaries are impermeable. However, in between the macro level and micro level connection, a meso level analysis identifies the collective identity formation in the immediate context of interaction that connects the social structure (macro level) and the psychological experiences (micro level) and transforms these into collective action or a social movement. The collective
identity is strengthened by awareness of common fate, problem and the collective strength of the group members (Simon, 2004).

At the macro level of the Bodo-Assamese relationship in the state, it is indeed evident that after the collapse of the glorious Kachar dynasty of Bodos, towards the end of 18th century, they were placed in lower strata of the social hierarchy in Assam and faced relative deprivation in various public realms. The process of assimilation of many indigenous tribes into greater Assamese formation also induced a threat to their distinct language and culture maintenance. In the beginning of 19th century, their political and economic downfall started with the land alienation system by colonial rule and the monopoly of Assamese and Marwari traders in their cross-border trade practices (as described in Chapter 2). The Bodos are yet to overcome the socio-economic and political downfall and the majority Assamese community has become dominant in these spheres. As a result, at the micro level, this socio-political and economic asymmetry seems to have induced in them a feeling of relative deprivation and discontent and in turn, motivate them to have collective action to bring change in their socio-political and economic status. During the beginning of 20th century, a section of enlightened Bodos, as described earlier in Chapter 2, started a socio-religious movement. In that socio-religious reform movement, many collective actions were taken like organizing Bodo mass rally, compiling Bodo literature etc. in order to unite the entire Bodo community for uplift of their socio-economic life and educational reforms. The Bodos took the next significant step in this direction through another collective effort of Bodo language movement that gradually took the shape of a separation movement. During this phase, their collective identity seems to be strengthened by the awareness of relative socio-economic deprivation of Bodo speakers and threat to Bodo language and culture maintenance. The movement is initiated and strengthened by Bodos’ desire to preserve their distinct linguistic and cultural identity. The social identity of the Bodo students, thus, seems to be strengthened by their collective identity in the context of Bodo movement in the Bodo-Assamese contact situation.

In India, many tribal groups are discriminated and marginalized. But unlike Bodos, these groups do not resort to collective movement for identity assertion. It is seen that if the power asymmetry in an intergroup contact situation is evident and becomes psychologically real, the minority communities are either under pressure of assimilation into dominant group
or marginalization. But when ethnic minority communities perceive scope to improve their own group status, they may take collective strategies and assert distinct identity. Clement’s model (1984) showed that when the first language group is dominant, the threat of assimilation is not experienced. The fear of assimilation increases as the second language group or the outgroup crosses over the equality threshold and becomes dominant. If the outgroup or the second language group is very potent or powerful, the individual members of ethnic group voluntarily assimilate into the outgroup. Thus, the acceptance of the use of dominant language by many other tribal groups in India seems to reflect the profound or formidable power asymmetry in language contact situations. The Bodo movement for linguistic rights and identity assertion is a reaction towards their unequal status with Assamese, where the power asymmetry may have been perceived as not insurmountable.

Intergroup Differences in Social Identity of the Bodo Students from Mother Tongue Medium and L2 Medium Schools and from Different Majority-Minority Contexts

The Bodo students from mother tongue medium schools and Bodo majority areas were expected to have stronger social identity, compared to those from Assamese medium schools and Assamese majority areas. The hypothesis was supported by the findings. The results showed significant differences in social identity of Bodo students from the two different medium schools and from majority-minority contexts. The social identity of Bodo students in Bodo majority area was quite strong while, it was average among their counterparts in Assamese majority areas. Again, the mother tongue medium Bodo students had stronger social identity than the Assamese medium students.

According to ethnolinguistic identity theory (Giles, Bourhis and Taylor, 1977), which is an integration of Tajfel’s (1974,1978) social identity and intergroup relationship theory and the theory of speech accommodation (Giles, 1973), when members of an ethnic minority group perceive low own group vitality in comparison to the outgroup vitality, it leads to negative ingroup distinctiveness and a sense of negative ethnic identity. When the perceived own group ethnolinguistic vitality of an ethnic group is high and there is positive ingroup distinctiveness from the outgroup, the ethnic group develops strong positive ethnic identity. The perception of low own group vitality of Bodo students in the Assamese majority areas seems to develop negative ingroup distinctiveness among them and hence, they develop a
weak own group ethnic identity or social identity. On the other hand, in the BTC area, the high perception of own group vitality leads to positive ingroup distinctiveness and strong ethnic identity among the Bodo students.

Tajfel (1978, 1981) suggested that when the members of ethnic minority group consider their inferior group status as fair and perceive the boundaries between own group and outgroup as permeable, they adopt individualistic strategies by seeking positive social identity through assimilation into the dominant group. But when the members consider their inferior group status or low vitality as illegitimate and perceive the group boundaries as impermeable, then the intergroup contact situation becomes unstable embracing confrontation with the dominant group and adoption of collective strategies to change the present status of the ethnic minority group.

The Bodos, once most powerful tribe of the region, are now in some areas clearly in a minority position in the state, while in the BTC area, they occupy a majority position. In the majority areas, the Bodos might have perceived their low own group status and prevalent power asymmetry as illegitimate. As a sizeable majority in that area, perceiving asymmetry in socio-political control seems to have induced them to adopt collective strategies for improving their socio-political status. The social identity of Bodos in the area seems to be strengthened by such collective identity formation.

In the Assamese majority areas, the Assamese group occupies dominant place in the socio-political structure and most of the other linguistic groups are under process of assimilation into Assamese sub-nationalism formation. This situation seems to be somewhat similar to the linguistic strategies of South Africans. Potgieter and Giles (1988) said that in South Africa the powerful sub-group of African speakers, constituted by those who, are majority in number and have socio-political power, isolates the less powerful sub-groups. Those powerful groups imposed their notion of identity on the less powerful groups. By virtue of their socio-political control, the powerful sub-groups disseminate the definition of Afrikaner identity. In their opinion, all African sub-groups should speak same language, share a common culture, fate, background and history and should maintain a unique Afrikaner identity. In Assam, the language policy in post-colonial period seems to impose the use of Assamese language upon all indigenous minority groups, who retained their own language and identity. Such a language policy was expected to initiate a greater Assamese
sub-national formation. In such language contact situation, many indigenous minority groups with lower numerical strength, lower socio-political, and socio-historical status are assimilated into the Assamese formation.

The researches by Sachdev et al. (1988); Giles, Rosenthal and Young (1985); McNamara (1988); Lewis (1996); Michael Chi-keung Kam (2001); Hogg (1996); Clement and Noels (1992); Landry and Allard (1992) etc. revealed that ethnolinguistic vitality of an ethnic group under different language contact contexts differs and ethnic/social identity and language maintenance is context dependent as a result of variant ethnolinguistic vitality. The findings of those studies reveal that development of ethnolinguistic identity of a group is linked with high demographic vitality of the group, educational support for the group language and strong individual network of linguistic contact in that language. The ethnic identity of a linguistic group is strong in case of high-perceived own group ethnolinguistic vitality with high own group language and culture maintenance. For example, Sachdev et al. (1988) in their study found that the low own group vitality perception of succeeding generation Cantonese speakers (Canadian born Chinese) - a minority community in Canada, on demographic, status factors and institutional support to their language was a determining factor of their group identification as English Canadian and English language maintenance, where the first generation Chinese Canadian reported higher use of Cantonese language in home and the Church and strongly identified themselves as Hong Kong Chinese. The similar link between the perceived own group ethnolinguistic vitality and ethnic identity in different majority-minority contexts is noticed in case of Bodo students in Assam. The Bodos in Assamese majority areas have lower numerical strength and status. Their perception of low own group vitality seems to initiate the process of assimilation into Assamese, although they still have retained their Bodo identity. The frequent exposure to Assamese language and culture seems to lead to acceptance of Assamese by the Bodos in Assamese majority context. Unlike the Bodos from BTC areas, the Bodos in these areas are in the outer rim of the effects of the linguistic and political movement and their social identity seems to be relatively unaffected by the collective movement.

In Assam, the language policy in post-independence period gave rise to feeling of discontent among the Bodos, as Assamese language was declared as a language of administration and education. The sufficient knowledge of Assamese language had become
sine qua non for entry into formal education and government jobs. The avowed aim of that language policy was to re-establish Assamese language with an official status, as it was replaced by Bangla during the British rule. As a result, the protection and safeguard to linguistic rights of some fractions of the indigenous tribal population who retained their own languages in the state was sidelined. The Bodo agitation started with this issue of linguistic rights and the demand for mother tongue education was the pivotal issue of their collective movement, as the dominant Assamese language education imposed a pressure of linguistic assimilation upon them.

The establishment of Bodo medium institutions has strengthened the institutional support to the language and increased its instrumental benefits. In consequence, it seems to strengthen the perception of own group vitality of the Bodos. It is seen that perceived own group vitality of Bodo medium students is higher than that of the Assamese medium Bodo students. In terms of the ethnolinguistic identity theory (Giles, Bourhis & Taylor, 1977), it can be said that high perceived own group vitality leads to positive social identity among the mother tongue medium Bodo students. The mother tongue education seems to encourage the high maintenance of own group language of Bodos as opposed to education through the dominant Assamese language. Thus, in Bodo majority areas, the higher demographic strength and status with mother tongue education seems to strengthen the group vitality of Bodos with high maintenance of Bodo language and culture, which in turn, seems to reinforce the social identity of the Bodo students.

The Bodo language movement resembles the ethnic resurgence on educational linguistic rights of linguistic minorities across the globe in recent years. The nationalist struggle with demand for Irish medium schools (O'Reilly, 2003), Scandinavians language movements by the end of 19th century (Scandinavian Review, March 1978), Flemish language movement in Belgium against French language domination in education and administration during early twentieth century (Bourhis et al., 1979), the assertion of separate Welsh political identity in Britain, which started with demands of Welsh language schools in Welsh dominated areas (Bowie, 1993) appear to be somewhat akin to the Bodo-Assamese language contact situation. These movements show that the issue of medium of instruction is a salient dimension of assertion of distinct ethnolinguistic identity of ethnic minorities. Threats to mother tongue maintenance by dominant outgroups and negative own group
distinctiveness perceived as illegitimate by linguistic minorities, gave rise to these movement. Mother tongue education has been viewed as an important means for improving inferior own group status or having positive own group distinctiveness and strong social identity.

6.5 Intergroup Differences in Pattern of Language Use of Bodos

The findings showed a difference in the pattern of language use in different domains of life by Bodo students in different majority-minority contexts of the Bodo-Assamese contact situations. In the Bodo majority contexts, all the Bodo students reported the sole use of Bodo language in home with family members, with friends and in neighbourhood, while for official purposes, a considerable number of them use Assamese language or other language (English). In religious, cultural and other social occasion, majority of them dominantly use mother tongue, although Assamese is also occasionally used by some of them along with their mother tongue. In education, all the Bodo medium students in both contexts solely use their mother tongue, whereas, the Assamese medium Bodo students use only Assamese. In the Assamese majority contexts, majority of them mostly use Assamese in social occasion, with friends and neighbours. Unlike the Bodo majority areas, all Bodos in these areas solely use Assamese for official purposes. A generation gap is noticed in the use of both languages in home with family members in these areas, as majority of Bodo students use only Assamese with their siblings, while many of them use Bodo with their parents and grand parents. This is an indication of gradual language shift.

These findings in the pattern of language use, support the hypothesized difference in the pattern of language use of Bodo students in different majority-minority contexts and medium of instructions. In the Bodo majority areas, there is more exposure to Bodo language and culture due to sheer number of its speakers and high group status. On the other hand, in the Assamese majority areas, there is more exposure to Assamese language and its culture, which limits the use of the minority Bodo language by its speakers. Hence, it seems that the majority status (with high group vitality by having large number of educational institutions and other religious social institutions in Bodo language, its official use etc.) facilitates the use of mother tongue of the Bodo students in all domains of language use in the Bodo majority areas. On the other hand, the wider use of Assamese language limits the use of Bodo

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language in various public domains except the domestic use. Such language contact seems to lead towards gradual language shift among the Bodos as, majority of the Bodo students use only Assamese in all the domains of language use with their siblings and friends.

6.6 Correlations between Ethnolinguistic Vitality Perception, Own Group Language and Culture Maintenance Attitude, Outgroup Relationship Attitude and Social Identity

The findings showed a positive relationship between own group vitality perception and own group language maintenance attitude of the ethnolinguistic groups in contact. There was also a positive correlation between own vitality perception and social identity, whereas, there was a negative relationship between own group vitality perception and outgroup relationship attitude. The outgroup vitality perception had opposite relationship with these variables. The findings confirm the social psychological analyses of language contact situations that show the link between vitality perceptions, development of social identity and own group language maintenance. Lewis (1996) suggests that a measure of a group’s ethnolinguistic vitality can be seen as a predictive factor of the group’s social identity pattern and can provide indications of the group’s probability of language maintenance. Language maintenance or shift of an ethnic group is shaped by surrounding demographic and socio-political forces, which influence the group vitality in language contact contexts. For example, in a research on language attrition and shift among Turkish immigrants, carried out by Yagmour, de Bot and Korzilius (1999), the vitality perception of Anglo-Australian and Turkish Australian were assessed and compared. It was found that low own group vitality perception of Turkish immigrants in Australia was related to their language shift behaviour. Similar findings were obtained in the study on Israeli immigrants in Australia by McNamara (1988). The Israelis perceived their own group vitality as low because of their minority status and low institutional support to their Hebrew language. In consequence, their language attitude favoured dominant English rather than mother tongue and a transformation of social identity and rapid shift to English among their children was noticed. Thus, the researches reveal that high perceived vitality of an ethnic group reflects greater exposure to its language for maintenance by use of the language among large number of its speakers, in a number of educational institutions and other socio-cultural institutions. In contrast, high own group
vitality leads to little outgroup relationship as the ethnic group sufficiently maintains own group language in all domains. Hence, there is a positive relationship between own group vitality perception and language maintenance or shift attitude. This positive relationship is also evident in the Bodo-Assamese language contact situation.

6.7 Limitations of the Study and Suggestions for Further Research

Limitations of the Study

Some limitations of the study are mentioned below:

1. The study intended to investigate the nature of intergroup relationship between Bodos and Assamese after recent socio-political change in the ethnolinguistic status of the Bodos. Though Bodos have gained stronghold in the socio-political affairs through a widespread movement, the changes were still in a gestation period by the time of data collection for this study. So, it may be too early to identify the change in intergroup relationship pattern between two communities. The impact of the recent socio-political change due to Bodo separation movement which ended with a settlement just a year before the data collection for this study, may not have percolated to the population of this study.

2. In the study, quantitative measures were used which consisted of questionnaires based on established questionnaires for assessing Subjective ethnolinguistic Vitality (Bourhis, Giles & Rosenthal, 1981), Own group Maintenance Attitude (Mohanty, 1987), Outgroup Relationship Attitude (Mohanty, 1987) and Social Identity (MEIM, Phinney, 1992). Given the complexity of the processes in ethnolinguistic vitality, intergroup relationship attitude and social identity, it is felt that going beyond the questionnaire measures and including in-depth interviews as a part of the assessment methodology could have added to the value of the study.

3. Admittedly, identity and intergroup relationship processes are holistic and are affected by other factors such as religious, political, socio-economic dimensions of ethnicity and intergroup relationship. These factors were considered in the light of linguistic dimension in the study. But it is possible that these factors may also operate independently of linguistic dimension and in a much more complex manner. Thus, focus on language as
the main factor in intergroup differences may be someone biased pertaining to the interpretation of the findings.

4. The study was conducted on secondary school children of age ranging between 14 to 16 years, as social identity gets crystallized at this age range and also to a large extent, this age group reflects the attitudes of parents and elders towards ethnicity. But it could have been extended to people of other age groups for a more comprehensive picture of the language contact scenario.

Suggestions for Further Studies

1. The study was undertaken on the section of Bodo people who retained their language and culture. But the nature of ethnic identity of those Bodo people (Bodo origin) in Assam who have already shifted their language and culture into dominant Assamese can also be investigated. Such investigation can give a comparative analysis of nature of social identity of those minority tribes who retained their language and culture and those who have shifted their language and culture into dominant group. Such comparative analysis can have significant implications for ethnic conflict in language contact situation.

2. The study explored the pattern of multilingualism in Assam by taking into account the ethnolinguistic identity and intergroup relationship pattern of Bodos with Assamese. But, apart from these two groups, there are other small tribal and non-tribal groups who inhabit Assam. The study can be extended to take into account the pattern of ethnolinguistic identity and intergroup relationship of these groups to have a broader picture of multilingualism in the state. Their perceptions of intergroup relationship between Bodos and Assamese in language contact situation and also their relationship with Bodos as well as Assamese add to the complexities of intergroup dynamics. Thus, further studies need to consider the multi-ethnic, multi-lingual nature of the complex plural scenario in Assam.

3. The study can be conducted on different age group to have more comprehensive picture of the nature of ethnolinguistic identity and dynamics of intergroup relationship of the two ethnic groups.
4. The study in future can incorporate some other variables like, 'individual’s network of linguistic contact’ (INLC) i.e. broadly measuring quantity and quality of the opportunities for linguistic contact in L1 and L2 of members of both communities, other aspects of contact hypotheses which may influence the language behaviour in intergroup contact context.

6.8 Conclusion

The findings of the study are discussed in the light of theoretical perspectives of Giles’s (1977) theory of ethnolinguistic identity, Tajfel’s (1974,1978) theory of social identity, Berry’s (1990) model of acculturation or the model of cultural relation, theoretical perspective of social identity and social movement participation (Simon, 2004) etc. The theoretical concepts suggest that ethnolinguistic vitality of an ethnic minority group predicts its pattern of social identity. If the vitality is high, the social identity of the group is strong which, in turn, leads to high own group linguistic and cultural maintenance of the ethnic group. The outcome can be opposite with language shift or assimilation to the dominant group in such contact situation where, the own group vitality of the ethnic group is low. In an asymmetrical power relation in inter ethnic group contact, the perception of low group vitality of the minority group can induce the members to take collective actions to bring change in their status. The collective identity of the members mediates in that process of collective movement formation to bring socio-structural change in the contact situation. The collective identity finally strengthens the maintenance of distinct group identity with own group language culture maintenance. But the outcome of an inter ethnic group contact situation cannot be predicted without considering the mutual strategies of both the contact groups. Berry’s (1990, 2003) model of acculturation studies such strategies which suggests four outcomes of inter ethnic relations in language and culture contact situations.

In an inter ethnic group contact situation, strong social identity with positive outgroup relationship of both contact groups produce the outcome of integration orientation. In such contact situation, languages of both groups coexist in a non-conflicting way with functional allocation of the languages into different domains of use (Mohanty, 1994; Del Pilar and Udasco, 2004). In case of weak social identity, the ethnic minority group is likely to assimilate into the dominant group with language shift. The outcome of such language
situation may be assimilation oriented, if the dominant group welcomes the positive relationship with the ethnic minority group.

In the Bodo-Assamese language contact context of Assam, the Bodo students in Bodo majority areas perceived high own group ethnolinguistic vitality and average outgroup vitality and showed strong social identity. They had highly favourable own group maintenance attitude and unfavourable outgroup relationship attitude. The Assamese in the area also had high own group and outgroup vitality perceptions, favourable own group maintenance attitude and slightly unfavourable outgroup relationship attitude. It shows that both contact groups had strong social identity and language maintenance and showed a separation orientation. Although, high own group language maintenance of both the groups can be a reflection of functional bilingualism with equal maintenance of the languages in all domains, the language contact situation does not seem to be stable as both groups showed separation orientation. It indicates that the impact of recent collective separation movement still lingers among the Bodos in that area. The recent intergroup conflict and tension generated by Bodo agitation may have resulted in a mutual separation orientation in the intergroup relationship between the Bodos and the Assamese in the area. But there is a probability that the separation orientation may gradually turn into mutual acceptance and integration since the linguistic rights of both the contact groups are well protected, although, the gradual increase in socio-political control of the Bodos may induce dissatisfaction among the Assamese.

In contrast, Bodo students in Assamese majority areas showed an assimilation orientation (tending towards integration) for relationship with the Assamese, but the outcome seems to be quite segregation orientated as, the Assamese have shown reluctance to foster relationship with the Bodos. After the recent socio-political change in the ethnolinguistic status of the Bodos, the earlier inter ethnic group tension in the state is slowly plummeting. Thus, the nature of bilingualism in the present Bodo-Assamese contact situation in Assam seems to be moving towards stability from the earlier transitional type.
Implication of the findings for Ethnic Groups Relationship in Assam

Diversity is an essential ingredient of any social set up of intergroup contact context. Due to its very nature, all distinct elements of social whole demand an equal place in every walk of life. Despite Constitutional or legal commitment for equality in respect of diversity in a nation state set up, there exists a palpable sense of asymmetry as minorities are generally marginalized and denied their rightful existence which leads to collective efforts of assertion of their rights. Language being one of the intrinsic components of ethnic identity development, assertion of linguistic rights is one of the foremost channels of separate identity assertion. Based on this premise, preservation of ethnolinguistic identity is quite evident in the northeastern tip of India. The struggle of Bodos against Assamese was such assertion of linguistic rights; as such they have witnessed very obvious and clear erosion of their linguistic attribute vis-à-vis Assamese. The Bodo assertion struggle changed the apathetic stance of the Assam government and its policy makers towards the rights of minority tribes in the state. The Bodo movement has resulted in revitalization of Bodo language and restoration of linguistic, cultural and political rights of Bodo people. One can expect that the mild separation orientation in the intergroup relationship in Bodo-Assamese contact noted in the study in the aftermath of a prolonged conflict will gradually yield to integration, the Bodo autonomy and political power in the Bodo Territorial Council area have opened up new issues and questions in respect of the other indigenous groups, vis-à-vis Bodos and Assamese. The dilemma for equitable linguistic rights of other minority tribal speakers within the Bodo dominated areas is now apparent. The issue of choice of language in various socio-political, economic and educational domains becomes crucial for the other small tribal groups who do not wish to be identified with Bodos and at the same time are marginalized from Assamese to some extent. It has also raised the question pertaining to the numerically minority Assamese speakers' acceptance to growing strength and dominance of Bodos in these areas. In spite of these dilemmas, grant of equal status to minority Bodos in terms of preserving their linguistic and other socio-political rights seems to have reduced conflict between both the contact groups and brought some stability in the state. It shows that by endorsing the policy of equal functional status to minority tribal languages, the state can dispel probable ethnic conflicts in future. In other words, the functional multilingualism with linguistic diversity can enhance stable multilingualism in the state. However, with a large
number of other linguistic minorities in the Indian multilingual scenario, the complexities of linguistic diversity may continue to pose new challenges to intergroup stability in India.