Chapter 3

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3.1 Rationale of the Present Study

The issue of ethnic conflicts on linguistic rights of ethnic minority communities has become an important area of recent social psychological research. Violation of basic linguistic rights of minorities is often a key factor behind most of the ethnic conflicts in the world. In most of the western countries, the pattern of bilingualism is transitional in nature, showing shift from monolingualism in a native language to monolingualism in the dominant language of the country. In pluralistic multilingual countries, multilingualism is stable and functional in nature in which languages are maintained in a non-conflicting relationship with functional allocation into different communicative domains. Such complex but complementary pattern of language use is associated with language maintenance rather than language shift and the linguistic rights of ethnic minorities seems to be well protected. In contrast, in dominant monolingual societies, the minority languages are under pressure of assimilation or shift to the dominant language and hence under threat of disappearance. In such contact situations, the dominant language plays a more important role in the field of education, administration, politics, economy and cultural affairs, whereas the minority languages are mostly confined to domestic use. In such case, minorities are left with the choice between assimilation or resistance and assertion of own linguistic rights and distinct identity.

With increasing salience of ethnolinguistic identities of minority groups, forced linguistic assimilation leads to conflict between the linguistic groups in contact. History reveals that a liberal linguistic policy that facilitates linguistic diversity with the protection of linguistic rights of ethnic minorities has been able to resolve the ethnic conflicts in various parts of the world. Assertion of linguistic rights of minority communities is closely linked to the relationship between language and identity.

The social psychological processes in intergroup relationship and in language contact lead to different outcomes in different contexts. Many minority languages have failed to survive under the pressure of shift and assimilation to the dominant ones. At the same time, in some contact situations, languages tend to be maintained
while in others, they are marginalized to domains of lesser significance. Why does language contact in some cultural contexts facilitate stable bilingualism with language maintenance as well as cultural pluralism or integration of the ethnolinguistic groups whereas, others lead to language shift and assimilation? It is pertinent to investigate the social psychological processes under which language contact leads to ethnic conflict and assertion of linguistic identities, shift or to marginalization. As has been described in Chapter 1, there are different theoretical approaches to understand the issues of ethnolinguistic identity as well as intercultural relations in multilingual societies. Although such theoretical perspectives take into account the linkage between language and ethnicity, the dynamics of inter ethnic group relationship in language contact situations are not fully understood.

In an attempt to take into account the role of language in ethnic group relations, Giles, Bourhis and Taylor (1977) proposed a theoretical model of ethnolinguistic vitality and ethnic identity of ethnic minority communities. The model describes the socio-structural factors of ethnolinguistic vitality that can influence language usage of ethnic groups. Whether or not an ethnolinguistic minority group seeks to maintain its native language as a viable mode of communication in contact situations is related to both objective and subjective ethnolinguistic vitality. Further, the linguistic strategies of the ethnolinguistic groups in contact are also, according to the model, a function of the nature of social identity and intergroup processes. This aspect of the model is mainly an integration of Tajfel’s (1974, 1978) theory of social identity and intergroup relationship and Giles’s (1973) theory of speech accommodation. Tajfel has suggested that when the members of one ethnic group interact with another ethnic group, they compare themselves on a number of value dimensions with that of other group. In such comparison process, the members seek to differentiate themselves or their own group favourably from the outgroup. Such positive ingroup distinctiveness brings a sense of satisfaction and positive social identity. However, when the members of a subordinate group consider their inferior status as fair, they would attempt to assume features of the dominant group socially and psychologically. In such conditions, the group members adopt subjectively appropriate coping strategies which can range from individualistic strategies of social mobility or group/collective strategies of macro level social change. The individualistic strategies involve leaving the disadvantaged group both physically and psychologically or seeking the positive social identity through assimilation into
dominant group. When this is done linguistically, it leads to speech convergence. Sometimes, they adopt strategies to redefine their group attribute socially and psychologically (e.g. seeking positive ingroup identity by changing or reinterpreting the comparison dimensions or the comparison outgroup). When the group members consider their inferior status as illegitimate, then intergroup situation may be unstable involving direct confrontation or, at least, competition with dominant group. In such case, the members seek to achieve positive social identity through actual change in the objective social structure (a revolutionary reversal of status relations). They might do this linguistically, which according to Giles, leads to speech divergence (Bourhis; Giles; Leyens & Tajfel, 1979). Giles, Bourhis and Taylor (1977) applied this concept to their ethnolinguistic vitality model for linguistic minorities. According to the model, if the minority groups perceive ingroup ethnolinguistic vitality as low, they develop negative ingroup identity and try to assimilate into the dominant group, whereas high vitality perception might lead to identity assertion, assertive linguistic maintenance and linguistic divergence.

Here, the question arises that what makes ethnolinguistic minority groups to perceive their inferior group status or vitality as illegitimate and strive to assert their distinct linguistic rights and identity. Tajfel (1978) proposes that when no cognitive alternatives to change their status in intergroup comparison are perceived, the members may adopt new strategy to improve its social position vis-a-vis the dominant group (the collective strategies to change the status relation). Collective strategies are adopted when the members perceive their inferior status as illegitimate and the boundaries between ingroup and outgroup as impermeable. This strategy would generate conflict and antagonism between the dominant and the subordinate group. The theoretical model of second language proficiency by Clement (1980, 1984) is a further application of the ethnolinguistic vitality model of Giles et al. (1977). Clement suggests that when the first language of the ethnolinguistic group is perceived to be dominant, the fear of assimilation is not experienced. As the second language group becomes dominant, the fear of assimilation or resistance to assimilation should increase until the relative vitality of the second language becomes so potent that individual actually wishes to assimilate.

The underlying social psychological processes that induce the feeling of illegitimacy among the ethnic minority cannot be understood without considering the role of perception and strategy of the dominant group in such intergroup relations.
The application of the model of ethnolinguistic vitality (Giles et al., 1977) will remain insufficient to understand the ethnic group relations on language dimension until it explores the mutual perceptions and strategy of both the dominant and the minority groups in contact. The model shows how the socio-structural factors or vitality of a group determine its pattern of social identity, which in turn, predicts the nature of intergroup relationship. The model provides dimension to measure the perceived vitality of a group. But it does not provide any insight to assess the pattern of intergroup relationship, the bi-directionality of a community’s values and attitudes towards own identity and towards that of the other contact groups in inter ethnic group contact context.

In cross-cultural research, the theoretical perspectives mainly take into account the process of intergroup relationship of ethnic minority as well as dominant groups in plural societies to understand the outcomes of linguistic and cultural contact. The researches try to find out answers as to why does some cultural and linguistic contact lead to transitional bilingualism i.e. cultural/linguistic assimilation of minorities into the dominant group whereas, other contact situations lead to either cultural integration with own group language culture maintenance or conflicts between the contact groups. In this context, the theoretical models by Berry (1990), Schermerhorn (1970) etc. provide some broad perspectives.

Berry’s (1990) model of acculturation, cultural relations in plural societies (Berry & Sam, 1997) analyses the contact outcome in terms of acculturation attitudes and strategies of individuals and communities in contact along with two dimensions - maintenance of own group identity, culture, language and way of life, as well as maintaining positive relationship with the other group. The positive or negative acculturation attitudes of both the dominant and the minority or the subordinate group are taken into account while studying the contact outcomes of interethnic group relationship in language and culture contact situations. Berry identifies four outcomes of inter ethnic relations in language/culture contact situations, viz. assimilation, integration, separation/segregation and marginalization. If the contact groups maintain own group identity, language, culture and way of life along with a positive attitude for maintaining positive outgroup relationship, the contact outcome is integration oriented which leads to multiculturalism, multilingualism and stable bilingualism. In such case, the languages of both the groups co-exist in a mutually complementary way with functional allocation of the languages into different domains of use. When the
members of subordinate group seek to maintain their own group identity, language and culture and do not prefer any positive relationship with the dominant group, the condition leads to separation outcome. When the assimilation is imposed by the dominant group in contact, while the minority group seek own group maintenance; the contact situation leads to conflict in inter ethnic group relations. In such case, the minority group may show a strong feeling of language nationalism with distinct linguistic identity. But if the assimilation is voluntary i.e. the minority group seeks to have positive relationship with the outgroup and give up its own language /culture and identity, a transitional nature of bilingualism with language shift is the outcome. Some times the subordinate group does not seek to maintain its own group language culture and identity and wish to assimilate, but the dominant group wants to keep the subordinate group away and distinct, the outcome becomes segregation oriented. Thus, the model is more elaborate in explaining strategies of inter group relationship in language and culture contact situations.

The social psychological process of intergroup relation on linguistic dimension i.e. role of language in identity formation and its linkage with inter ethnic group relationship and the complexities of group conflict developed around it, cannot be discussed within the framework of any single theoretical model. In a complex multilingual context, either a voluntary assimilation with language shift into the dominant group or integration process with language maintenance is not just simple outcomes of contact. Complex socio-political, cultural factors induce integration or language maintenance in some cases and forced assimilation, separation or segregation outcome often resulting in ethnic group conflict in others. It is difficult to find out the underlying social psychological processes of such complex contact situation without integrating the concepts from different models.

The ethnolinguistic vitality model can predict that positive social identity, based on strong ingroup vitality, is likely to lead to linguistic and cultural maintenance of minority groups. In other words, one can expect positive relationship between high ethnolinguistic vitality and own group language and culture maintenance. The outcome of such language maintenance forces can be predicted by theoretical integration of Berry's (1990) model of acculturation or Scermerhorn's (1970) model of ethnic relations with ethnolinguistic vitality theory and other theoretical approaches to social identity.
In a context of intergroup contact between a powerful dominant majority group and a minority group of lower status/power, the assimilation of the minority group into dominant group language and culture is often the most probable outcome. In such situation, the language shift or assimilation is the only alternative for minorities to cope with the pressure of so called mainstream ways of life. When the minority group seeks to improve their status or ethnolinguistic vitality by maintaining their language and culture in different domains of society, but experiences pressure of assimilation into the dominant group, the outcome would be separation oriented with strong ingroup distinctiveness and linguistic identity and ethnic conflict between the contact groups. In other words, if the minority group members perceive scope to improve their own group vitality, but are still under pressure of assimilation, the contact situation leads to conflict between the groups. This is the zone of assertion of linguistic rights and distinct identity for linguistic minorities.

In a context of intergroup contact of equal status or high ethnolinguistic vitality groups, the languages and culture of all the linguistic groups in contact coexist in a non-conflicting relationship with functional allocation of the languages in different domains of social life. Such contact situation leads to stable bilingualism with integration orientation in the society.

There is a wide variety of evidence, which reveals that most of the ethnic conflicts around the world are linked with the issue of assertion of distinct identity by ethnic minorities whose language rights have been violated by dominant linguistic communities. For these ethnic groups, the knowledge and use of dominant language is the only tool for social mobility, as the dominant group occupies the position of power in the social structure and imposes its language in all important public domains like education, administration, politics, economy and cultural affairs. In India, though the multilingual setting is stable and functional in nature in comparison to the western countries, still during recent years various ethnic tribal/minority groups have started to assert their rights and distinct identity in reaction to the increasing assimilation pressure towards the dominant language and culture, as the history of language movements in various parts of India shows. Despite the strong maintenance norms, Indian multilingualism is characterized as hierarchical with unequal power relationship and discrimination against minority and dominated languages (Mohanty, 2004). In face of asymmetrical power relationship and discrimination, minority linguistic groups seem to adopt very different strategies even when languages appear
to be maintained. In most cases, particularly in case of tribal languages, there is a marginalization process which pushes the languages into domains of lesser significance (Mohanty, 2006). However, in some cases, such as in case of Bodo-Assamese contact situation in Assam, power asymmetry and discrimination has led to assertive language maintenance and socio-political movement resulting in revitalization of Bodo language. The search of linguistic rights and identity, which finds expression through separate identity assertion movement such as Bodoland movement, movement for Jharkhand, Gorkhaland etc by various tribal groups in India, has developed the need to understand the underlying social psychological processes. Investigation of such processes not only can reveal the dynamics of group identity strategies of linguistic minority and ethnic tribal groups and the pattern of inter ethnic group relationship (with the dominant group), but also, can help in understanding the nature of multilingualism in India and the conditions under which languages are maintained or become assimilated or extinct.

The present study attempts to empirically examine the pattern of ethnolinguistic identity of Bodos and inter ethnic group relationship after the settlement of a widespread socio-political separation movement. The movement was an assertion of distinct ethnic identity with a separation attitude like the nationalist movements around the issue of language right of linguistic minorities in various parts of the world. The present study seeks to find out whether the recent change in the ethnolinguistic status of the Bodos have led to development of positive ethnic identity in them and change in the inter ethnic group relationship.

3.2 Objectives

The present study examines the ethnolinguistic identity of Bodo students in Assam and the inter group relationship between Bodos and the Assamese community in the present multilingual setting of Assam. The major objectives of the study were to examine -

- the relationship between the dimensions of ethnolinguistic vitality and the pattern of social identity of Bodos and intergroup relationship strategies in Bodo-Assamese contact situation,
- the role of the different contexts of majority-minority relationship between the two linguistic groups in moderating the perception of ethnolinguistic vitality,
own group language and culture maintenance attitude, outgroup relationship attitude and social identity of the Bodos,

- the role of medium of instruction (mother tongue or L2) in influencing ethnolinguistic vitality perception, social identity and acculturation strategies among the Bodos in different intergroup contact contexts in Assam.

The present study is concerned with the empirical investigation of ethnolinguistic vitality of Bodos and its link with inter ethnic group relationship with Assamese under the integrated theoretical framework, discussed earlier, based primarily on the model of ethnolinguistic vitality and ethnic identity of linguistic minorities (Giles et al., 1977) and Berry's (1990) model of acculturation, or model of cultural relations in plural societies. The history of Bodos shows that this once most powerful tribe has been linguistically, socio-culturally under pressure of assimilation into Assamese sub-national formation. The Assamese community plays important role in the field of administration and education and its language is widely used in all public realms. Thus, the upward social mobility of the Bodos was dependent upon adoption of Assamese language. However, in the early sixties, a sudden awareness emerged among the enlightened Bodos against such process of assimilation. Their low ingroup vitality might had been perceived as illegitimate and no longer acceptable. The Bodo movement resembles the political resistance of linguistic minorities with a distinct history and culture against the dominant language oriented politics.

The recent socio-political development and changes brought about by the widespread Bodo separation movement can be regarded as an added vitality to the Bodos, their language and culture. The major focus of the movement had been the revival of Bodo language, its official use in different domains through which Bodos can strive for upward social mobility and assert distinct identity.

The present study investigates the pattern of inter ethnic group relationship at the end of such vigorous ethnic conflict arising out of the movement. The improved ingroup vitality (or the added vitality) as a result of the vigorous movement can lead to a stable bilingualism with positive ethnolinguistic identity and language maintenance of Bodos. Whether this added vitality is followed by positive cultural and linguistic diversity and stable bilingualism is a matter of investigation and of significance in analyzing dynamics of such ethnic conflict. Theoretical approaches in analyzing the various ethnic conflicts on linguistic rights of ethnic minorities, suggest
that high vitality of both the dominant and the minority languages/linguistic groups
leads to linguistic diversity and stable bilingualism which can resolve conflicts and
bring integration. In such added vitality context, the outcome of inter ethnic group
relationship is an important issue. Whether assertive language maintenance and
revitalization leads to integration or separation/segregation orientation remains a
question and is required to be investigated. It depends upon the mutual reaction of
both the Bodos and the Assamese community towards having positive relationship
with each other.

In order to study the entire underlying social psychological processes of
ethnolinguistic identity and their role in ethnic group relationship in the situation, the
mutual perception and strategies of both the dominant Assamese and Bodo ethnic
minority are taken into account. The perception of ethnolinguistic vitality for own
group and the outgroup and the pattern of inter group relationship attitudes of both the
groups are assessed in the study.

To a large extent ethnic identity is defined by the context in which inter ethnic
group contact takes place as in different contexts the relative size or numerical
strength and status of the ethnic group varies. There are very few researches, which
empirically examined such relationship. The ethnic identity varies according to the
context, i.e. it varies according to the situation in which the ethnic group lives and the
people they interact with (Rosenthal & Hrynevich, 1985; Phinney, 1990).

The Bodos are scattered in different parts of Assam, where in some areas they
are clearly in a majority position and in others they are minority. The minority-
Majority position may influence their perception of ethnolinguistic vitality and hence,
there may be differences in the pattern of inter ethnic group relationship in two
different social contexts. In the majority context, their demographic status and the
social status is likely to be high and also their language is functionally more active as
used in education and administration to a certain extent. So the nature of their
ethnolinguistic identity may vary across the different social contexts depending upon
their relative status as a majority or minority group. The outgroup relationship pattern
of the Assamese may also be influenced by the Bodos’ relative majority-minority
position. Hence, the intergroup relationship of the Bodo students may also likely to be
influenced by their majority-minority positions. The present study may suggest how
identity of an ethnic group may be threatened, or maintained due to status differences
in different contexts.
Further, the ethnic identity also can be reinforced by mother tongue education. A wide variety of researches shows that bilingual education with mother tongue instruction encourage cultural pluralism, language maintenance and positive ethnic identity as opposed to the education through the dominant language (Edwards, 1977; Fishman, 1966). The traditional monolingual education through the dominant language imposes linguistic assimilation for the ethnic minority children and has been found as a main factor of linguistic disappearance of ethnic minorities. The World Conference on Linguistic Rights, Barcelona in 1996 put forward the argument that punishing a child for speaking his/her mother tongue in school is the beginning of destruction of the language. The formal education in which the instruction is not given in mother tongue is considered as the main factor of language loss (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000). The educational linguistic rights have therefore been considered as most important linguistic human rights for maintenance of linguistic and cultural diversity and most of the linguistic right assertion movements are based on this issue.

The Bodos in Assam could not access this right for a long period. Until the beginning of 60s, the Assamese language was the sole medium of instruction in the schools of Assam. The Bodo agitation started with this issue in the beginning. As a result the Bodo medium schools were established in the state. The demand for mother tongue education has been made as a weapon for assertion of separate identity by Bodos and it had emerged as most important medium of expression of their distinct ethnic identity. Thus, its impact on their children’ (later generation Bodos) ethnic identity is still likely to be prominent. It can be seen as an important factor of their perception of ethnolinguistic vitality. So the present study is conducted on both the mother tongue medium Bodo students and the Bodo students who still study in the dominant Assamese language in Assamese medium schools.

There is some evidence that with increasing age, individuals are more likely to have an achieved ethnic identity. Although very few empirical studies investigate it, the results suggest that formation of ethnic identity takes place through developmental progression. The studies show that social identity gets crystallized during the adolescent period (Phinney, 1990). During this developmental stage, individuals search more about their ethnic identity. The members of an ethnic group start developing awareness about own group position in inter ethnic group contact context during this stage of development. To a large extent, they reflect the attitudes of parents and elders towards ethnicity.
The present study is conducted on young high school Bodo and Assamese students. The historical evidence shows that the most important body behind any socio-political movement in Assam is the student's organizations. During the post-independence period, the expansion of educational institutions in Assam has led to emergence of a space where young people from different parts of Assam come together. At present, there are various students' organizations in the state, taking active role for bringing out socio-political change. The most strong and active among these are All Assam Students Union and All Bodo Students Union. Predominantly, Assamese and Bodo secondary schools and colleges have become part of these federations. In the Assam movement against foreigners' infiltration and the Bodo separation movements, these students' organizations played a leading role and the students of different levels, high school to university level actively participated. It is therefore necessary to understand the young students' nature of ethnic identity and their attitudes towards inter ethnic group relationship. The sample of this age group, to a large extent, can be assumed to reflect the nature of ethnic identity of the native community.

The study also investigates the pattern of language use by Bodo students in different domains of life in two different contexts. This investigation will reveal how and to what extent the Bodo language is used in different domains with people of different walks of life and different ethnic groups in different minority-majority contexts. The greater percentage of use of the language in different domains with people of different groups, walks of life indicates the strength of ethnolinguistic vitality and ingroup language and culture maintenance. This investigation also reveals the differences in language use by different generations, hence, the changes in the pattern of the Bodo language maintenance over generations, which cannot be specifically investigated by ethnolinguistic vitality measures.

3.3 Hypotheses

On the basis of the analysis of different social psychological theoretical perspectives underlying ethnolinguistic identity and inter ethnic group relations of ethnic minority groups, discussed above, the following hypotheses of the study were formulated.
The vitality perception of an ethnolinguistic group for own group as well as outgroup is gathered on three main factors - i) status (economic status, social status, socio historical status, language status of the group), ii) demographic factor (the number of speakers/population) and ii) institutional support factor (use of the group’s language in different formal and informal settings). Generally, in minority-majority intergroup contact context, the ethnolinguistic groups differ in relative strength of these factors of group vitality. Hence, it is assumed that there will be significant intergroup differences in perception of own group and outgroup ethnolinguistic vitality. Thus, the following was hypothesized.

**Hypothesis 1:** There will be significant intergroup differences in perception of own group and outgroup ethnolinguistic vitality.

Perception of ethnolinguistic vitality may vary according to the context because, the relative status of the ethnic group varies in different context. When the minority group is in powerful position (by demographic strength, social status etc), its perception of own group vitality tends to be higher. In the Bodo majority context, the perception of own group vitality of Bodos is likely to be influenced by their relative demographic strength and status. In other words, in Bodo majority context, Bodos are relatively in powerful position compared to their counterparts in Assamese majority context. So the difference in majority and minority status may influence the ethnolinguistic vitality perception of Bodos. Hence, following hypotheses was adopted.

**Hypothesis 2:** The perceived ethnolinguistic vitality of the Bodos will be higher in the Bodo majority context, compared to the Assamese majority context.

The use of language of ethnic minority group in educational institutions may influence the perceived own group ethnolinguistic vitality, as the perception of group vitality is gathered by institutional support factor along with demographic and status factors. Education in mother tongue medium can be seen as important factor in perception of own group ethnolinguistic vitality. The higher numerical strength and status as well as mother tongue education that increase the strength of institutional support factor can be seen as added ethnolinguistic vitality. This does not happen in
case of Bodo students from Assamese medium schools and in Assamese majority areas. Hence, the following hypothesis was adopted.

**Hypothesis 3:** Perceived own group ethnolinguistic vitality of Bodos will be higher for the students from mother tongue (MT) medium schools and Bodo majority area than those from Assamese (L2) medium schools and Assamese minority area.

The recent movement for assertion of linguistic rights has improved the status of Bodo language and showed a positive upward trend. The assertion of their rights through the movement has also developed their collective identity, which may influence their integrative attitude towards own group maintenance. The use of Bodo language in education and administration has increased instrumental value of the language and may also influence the Bodos to have positive attitude towards own group language and culture maintenance. On the other hand, the Assamese language is widely used in all domains as a dominant language. This may influence the Assamese group to have positive attitude towards maintenance of own group language and culture. Thus, the following was hypothesized.

**Hypothesis 4:** Own group language and culture maintenance attitude will be positive for both the groups- the Bodos and Assamese.

The mother tongue medium education encourages language maintenance and positive ethnic identity of a minority community. So, the mother tongue medium schooling and relatively higher demographic strength and status of the Bodos in Bodo majority areas may influence them for higher maintenance of own group language and culture. While, in Assamese majority areas and in L2 medium schooling, the dominant status of Assamese language and culture and greater contact with Assamese may influence the Bodos to maintain the outgroup (Assamese) language and culture instead of own group maintenance. This calls for the following hypothesis.

**Hypothesis 5:** Own group maintenance attitude of Bodos will be more favourable for the Bodos from MT medium schools and Bodo majority area, compared to those from L2 medium schools and in the Assamese majority area.
As a minority group, the Bodos need to acquire dominant Assamese language and knowledge of its culture for participation in various domains of social life as well as for their social mobility. Hence, their attitude towards maintenance of relationship with Assamese may tend to be more favourable than the attitude of Assamese towards maintaining relationship with Bodos. Hence, the following was hypothesized.

**Hypothesis 6:** The outgroup relationship attitude of the Bodos will tend be more favourable than Assamese.

In the Bodo majority area, relatively higher demographic strength and status of Bodos and lesser degree of contact with Assamese influence them to maintain own group language and culture more favourably instead of assimilation to the outgroup. The mother tongue medium schooling also increases own group maintenance. Besides, the wider use of their mother tongue in education and administration in the area decreases the instrumental demands of the outgroup language (Assamese). Hence, the outgroup relationship attitude can be expected to be less favourable among these Bodo students, leading to following hypothesis.

**Hypothesis 7:** The outgroup relationship attitude will be less favourable among the Bodos from MT medium schools and Bodo majority areas, compared to those from L2 medium schools and Assamese majority areas.

Social identity of a group tends to be strengthened by collective identity formation in an intergroup context through collective movements. Collective movement of a group represents collective efforts by a large number of people to solve a problem (mainly their inferior status due to power asymmetry between the contact groups), which they perceive as common to all of them. The collective identity is strengthened by awareness of common fate, problem and collective strength of the people. The Bodo movement was a collective effort of Bodo people and resulted in separate socio-political identity, which has bearing for improvement in their socio-economic, political, and linguistic status. This can be seen as an added vitality to the ethnolinguistic status of Bodos. Such improvement in etholinguistic vitality status of Bodos may lead to high own group linguistic and cultural maintenance and positive social identity formation. Further, as noted earlier, the majority-minority contexts and medium of instruction in schools are likely to influence social identity of Bodos. Hence, following were hypothesized.
Hypothesis 8: The Bodos will show a very positive social identity and group distinctiveness.

Hypothesis 9: The Bodos from MT medium schools and Bodo majority areas will have stronger social identity, compared to those from L2 medium schools and Assamese majority areas.

The study assessed the pattern of language use by Bodo students in different domains as well as in respect of different generation of people in their families. Usually, sociolinguistic studies show that language shift/assimilation is indicated by intergenerational differences in use of the language and also lesser use of it in various domains. The assimilation/shift pressure is likely to be greater in areas where Bodos are minority. So, contextual differences in language use pattern can be expected. Hence, the following was hypothesized.

Hypothesis 10: The pattern of use of contact languages by Bodo students in different domains of life and with people of different ethnic groups, age and walks of life will vary in different minority-majority contexts. The pattern of use will be more clearly differentiated in the Bodo majority areas.

Various researches reveal that there is a positive relationship between perception of ingroup vitality and language maintenance/shift of ethnolinguistic groups. The perception of high ingroup vitality of an ethnolinguistic group reflects greater exposure to its language for maintenance. The findings of various studies show that development of ethnolinguistic identity of a group is linked with the perception of its ingroup vitality. The ethnic identity of a linguistic group is positive when it perceives high ingroup ethnolinguistic vitality. The perception of low ingroup vitality leads to development of negative ethnic identity and language shift. Such relationship can be expected in case of ethnolinguistic identity and language maintenance/shift of Bodos in the Bodo-Assamese contact situation. Hence, the following was hypothesised.

Hypothesis 11: There will be positive correlation between ethnolinguistic vitality perception, social identity and own group language and culture maintenance attitude. The outgroup vitality perception will have opposite relationship with these respective variables.