Chapter VI

CONCLUSION

This study aimed at finding out what factors influenced the attitude of the people of Assam towards the English language. Technical study was adopted in order to statistically prove the reliability of the identified factors. Attitudes according to Crystal, are the feelings people have about their own language or the language of others. Variation in attitudes may result in a language being considered as difficult, useful, prestigious, easy, international or local. This study was also interested in identifying the perspective of the student community of Assam towards this language.

Initially the relation between language and society is studied in the first chapter. Language is undoubtedly God's greatest gift. Society and language are inseparably interlinked and it can be said that no society can exist without language. Language can be analyzed in the form of individual competence, an express an actual dialogue among a group of individuals, as an expression of the innermost feelings of man, as a cultural system and many others. Language is in fact an essential part of human social behavior and thus is by itself a social institution. As a major form of communicative behavior language is bound up with self identification and also with other people's perception of one another.

Language is a skill that enables people to understand the mindset, appreciate the values, the ways of doing things and unique things of other
cultures. It involves interpersonal communication, language within the individual and language and society. Together, as a family, a society, or a country, speakers of the same language or dialect share an immediate sense of recognition. As a result people inevitably transcend and perpetuate their traditions, myths and religions via the societal functions of their respective language.

Languages evolve and diversify over time. Today there exists great Diasporas of languages throughout the world. The use of language is deeply entrenched in human culture and apart from being used to communicate and share information it also has social and cultural uses such as group identity, social grooming and entertainment. Language completes every realm of knowledge simply because it is the most commonly used way of communicating ideas and perceptions. Thus language interacts with every part of human life. It can be understood only if it is a part of society.

The second chapter "Perspectives of English Language" traces the origin of the English language and its development as a world language. This language belongs to the Germanic branch of the Indo-European group of languages. The history of this language can be traced back to the arrival of the Germanic tribes to the British Isles during the 5th century A.D. Over the centuries the British Isles were invaded and conquered by various people who brought their languages and culture with them. Before the arrival of the Angles, Saxons and Jutes the inhabitants of Britain spoke a Celtic language.

English language over the ages was influenced by Northumbrian culture,
Scandinavian languages like Danish and Norse and by Latin. The year 597 A.D. proved to be a turning point in the linguistic history of England. It was at this point of time that Christianity was introduced in England. As a result the great bulk of Christian terms entered into the English language. Later the impact of the French language was felt on English. The English language as it is known today has evolved through three stages—Old English period, Middle English period and Modern English period. The linguistic omnivorousness of this language has resulted in it's having one of the greatest vocabularies than any other language of the world.

The rise of the English language to the status of an established national language of Britain coincided with the beginning of colonial expansion by Britain. English became the official language of most of Britain's colonies. English today has become the language of international commerce, of business, of diplomacy, education and entertainment. English is also the mainstay of the internet.

The spread of English language and its role as an international language has also lead to the decolonization of this language. It is a kind of natural response to the hegemony of the English language. The natural result of linguistic hegemony is that it empowers some but simultaneously it also disempowers. English hegemony has lead to a Mcdonaldization of cultures worldwide. Apart from its dominance in academic and scientific fields it has created social divides and incited language riots.
In the third chapter the background of Assamese society and culture has been touched upon. Assam boasts of a multiethnic and has a diversified culture. Assamese culture is traditionally a hybrid one emerging from the cultural assimilation of different ethno-cultural groups. The state has a broad racial intermixture of Mongoloids, Austrio-Asiatics, Tibeto-Burmese and Aryans. Assam has the largest number of tribes and most of these tribes have their own language. Bodo (or Kachari), Karbi, Kosh-Rajbongshi, Mising, Rabha, Dimasa, Deori are some of the tribes of Assam.

The Neo-Vaishnavite movement swept across Assam in the sixteenth century and brought about a new and comprehensive outlook on life. Srimanta Sankardeva was the leader of the Vaishnava renaissance in Assam. This movement which is also called the Bhakti movement brought in an era of socio-cultural renaissance in Assam. Sankardeva was instrumental in setting up of the 'sattras' and 'naamghars' which are now synonymous with Assamese culture. Sankardeva was a great poet and dramatist, a formidable scholar and above all a great social reformer. The golden era of Assamese literature is considered to be the Vaishnavite period.

The Yandaboo Treaty of 1826 brought Assam under colonial rule after 600 years of Ahom rule. After it came under British administration it was seen that the British encouraged the establishment of English schools in Assam as they needed people with knowledge of English to help in the administration. There was a time when Assamese was abolished from the schools and courts
in Assam and Bengali was introduced. However vigorous advocacy in favour of Assamese and a movement spearheaded by Assamese intellectuals led to the restoration of Assamese to its rightful place in 1873. The American Baptist Missionaries did some pioneering work by writing a grammar and dictionary. With the advent of the British western education was introduced in Assam and gradually English education began to spread in Assam.

The Baptist Missionaries published 'Orunudoi' that heralded the advent of Modern Assamese Literature. Later on with the publication of the monthly journal 'Jonaki' the romantic movement of Assamese literature was launched. The contact with the British and the spread of liberal education through the medium of English brought about a social and intellectual awakening which led to the emergence of a new literary era.

The fourth chapter shows the influence of English language on Assamese society and culture. Here the spread of English education in India and its position in the multilingual context of India has been portrayed. English in India has taken on a number of regional variations and a unique variety of English called 'Indian English' has come into force. Though the entry of the English language into India and subsequently Assam is linked with the entry of the British but the importance of English continues till today.

In order to find out what kind of role this language has in Assamese society a survey was conducted. The data for this survey was collected through questionnaires which were distributed amongst the various sections of society
and the results were analyzed using the SPSS software. The results revealed that a number of factors play a decisive role in determining the role of this language in Assamese society. Eight factors were identified but only six factors were found reliable and have an important role in assessing the influence of English language on Assamese society. These factors and their correlation with independant variables like age, sex, marital status, education, income group, occupation and area of residence have also been considered.

Along with the factors that have come to light in the fourth chapter another survey was conducted to find out students perspective towards English in Assam. Their perspective and attitudes were analyzed under seven categories. The study brought to light the fact that students were not averse to learning this subject and neither do they feel that this language has in any way imposed western culture on them.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

1. This study aimed at finding out the factors which influenced the role of English language in Assam. The study established that the influence of English language on Assamese society and culture were based on six factors. The established factors are as follows:

a. Promoting International Relations and Higher Academics:
   i. It is an accepted fact that the English is a language which is known globally and is therefore crucial in promoting
International Relations. Without English there will undoubtedly be great difficulty in communicating between nations. Language has a great role to play in conveying one's skills and requirements. In the academic field especially in higher academics English reigns supreme. English is essential for students who are interested in forging a career in science, medicine, engineering and technology.

ii. It is found from the regression model 1 of chapter IV that Gender, Marital Status, Occupation, Location of Residence i.e. urban or rural and Mother Tongue have statistically significant association in Promoting International Relations and Higher Academics, individually. Thus these variables have significance in terms of predicting 'Promoting International Relations & Higher Academics'.

b. Attitudes towards English:

i. The result of the study revealed a positive attitude towards the English language. It was found that most of the respondents agreed to the fact that they would need English in their future. They did not show any aversion towards the language and strongly disagreed to the
statement that there was no need to study English in Assam.

ii. It is found from the regression model 2 of chapter IV that Gender, Marital Status, Occupation, Annual Income, Residence Location and Mother Tongue have statistically significant association with Attitudes towards English, individually. Thus these variables have significance in terms of predicting 'Attitudes towards English'.

c. Perceived Utility of English:

i. The result also shows that the respondents realized the importance and utility of the English language in this era of globalization and global communication network. A fundamental knowledge of English is instrumental for sourcing information from the internet. In planning and executing reports and projects and also in the field of translation studies this language has great utility.

ii. It is found from the regression model 3 of chapter IV that, primarily Gender, Marital Status, Occupation, Residence Location and Mother Tongue have statistically significant association with dependent variable Perceived utility of English, individually. Thus these variables have significance in terms of predicting 'Perceived utility of English'.

d. Intra-national Communication:
i. In India there are as many as eighteen different state languages coexist. English can therefore prove to be very effective as a link language between people speaking umpteen mother tongues. English is the associate official language of India since Hindi was not acceptable as the sole official language.

ii. It is found that primarily Gender, Marital Status, Occupation, Annual Income, Residence Location and Mother Tongue have statistically significant association in the regression model 4 of chapter IV with Intra-national Communication, individually. Thus these variables have significance in terms of predicting 'Intra-national Communication'.

e. Internalization of English:

i. English has become a part and parcel of the lives of majority of the people around the world. Number of English words are often use in day to day conversation. People are also interested in watching English movies without sub-titles or dubbing. Often songs are heard which have a liberal sprinkling of English words. Moreover many movies also have English words in their titles. By knowing and learning English multi-lingual's can be created who in
tern can help enrich the regional language.

ii. It is found that primarily Gender, Occupation, Annual Income, Residence Location and Mother Tongue have statistically significant association in this regression model 5 of chapter IV with Internalization of English, individually. Thus these variables have significance in terms of predicting 'Internalization of English'.

f. Passport for Employment:

i. Proficiency in the English language entails better job opportunities. Language skills become essential if order to enjoy the fruits of information technology. With employment on the rise in Assam fluency in this language can assure jobs in multinational companies, call centres and medical transcription centres.

ii. It is found that in the regression model 6 of chapter IV, primarily Gender, Marital Status, Occupation, Annual Income, Residence Location and Mother Tongue have statistically significant associations with Passport for Employment, individually. Thus these variables have significance in terms of predicting 'Passport for Employment'.

g. It has also been observed that gender, residence location and
mother tongue have significance in terms of predicting all factors responsible for determining the role of English language in Assamese society. However educational qualification does not have any association with the factors.

2. The study also aimed at finding out the students' perspective towards the English language in Assam. The findings under the different categories are as follows:

a. Attitudes towards English as a subject: Survey reveals
   i. Complete affirmation to the study of English.
   ii. English should be retained as a compulsory subject.
   iii. English is not the weakest subject of the student community.
   iv. Students face no problem in comprehending whatever is taught in the class.
   v. Students feel nervous in English class due to lack of communicative ability.

b. Attitudes towards extracurricular English: Survey reveals
   i. Students are interested in developing fluency in English. The fear of making mistakes is a great deterrent in speaking in English.
   ii. Students agree that English will help to increase job opportunities.
   iii. Confidence levels have nothing to do with knowing
English. It is actually the ability to communicate well and get across to the other person that matters.

c. Parental influence in the study of English: Survey reveals
   i. Parents encourage their children to study English.
   ii. Parents felt the study of English is important.

d. Use of English in daily life: Survey reveals
   i. Students face difficulty in expressing their thoughts in English.
   ii. English is not used within the family or friend circle.

e. English and western culture: Survey reveals
   i. Students do not link up English language and western culture.

f. Need for English in the future: Survey reveals
   i. Students are not averse to the idea of working in Assam. They feel English will be fruitful for their future.

g. Disadvantages of monolingualism albeit advantages of multilingualism: Survey reveals
   i. Positive response to multilingualism.

COMMENTS

1. Two of the identified factors were found to be unreliable. The factors are 'Interest in International Community' and 'Present Outlook'.
2. In spite of being a mandatory subject the students involved in this present study do not harbor any negative feelings towards this subject and neither do they feel that this subject is being 'imposed' on them.

3. Overall the study reveals a positive attitude towards the English language.

4. Further studies may be conducted in future regarding the association of gender, residence location, income, occupation and mother tongue etc. with the identified factors responsible for role of English Language in Assamese Society and Culture.