

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

The fact that language changes is a universal fact; it can neither be disputed nor denied by anyone (Varshney 290; Sharma 132-135). In the history there have been several attempts to preserve a language in its purest form. For instance Latin existed as a living language, more or less unchanged and corruption free for over 200 years. (Lyons 180). But these efforts failed with the passage of time. The efforts of various organizations and students unions (in the recent times) have not been successful in preventing language change because it is a universal and undeniable linguistic process of every language (Ibid 179). Every linguistic community desires to preserve one's native language in its pristine form but unfortunately language being dynamic in nature continues to change gradually (Ibid).

As discussed earlier it is said that 'no language in the world has ever been able to totally resist the influence by another language' because it appears that change itself is one of the characteristics of a Language. Thus, the phenomenon of language change has been, is being and will be observed in the future. The Bodos too have experienced this phenomenon over time as a linguistic group. The sound system as well as the vocabulary of Bodo language is very much influenced by the contact languages and loanwords from languages like, Bengali, Assamese, Sanskrit and Hindi (Brahma A vi). One of the languages that have influenced the Bodos is also English. English words seem to have rather large influence on the native speakers of Bodo language today.

The contemporary Bodo linguistic community is found to use numerous English loan words for communication. Today this phenomenon has become all the more visible

in the world of mass media. It has been a huge struggle for the Bodos to survive and flourish as a linguistic community being cultural minority in the state of Assam. The Bodo script movement, the struggle for recognition of the Bodo language in the state of Assam as a recognized language had become a huge movement in the later half of the 20th century (Narzary 82). The struggle in choosing a script was hugely influenced by the political upheavals of the time. The Bodos shifted from Latin to Bengali to Assamese and at last to Devanagri script (Ibid 82).

The research attempts to awaken awareness on the usage of English words among the native speakers of Bodo language. Though there does not seem to be any significant structural change to the language due to this practice until now, it is difficult to assume if it will do so in the near future. The truth is extensive borrowing of foreign words and vocabulary does aid language change. But so far in the case of the Bodo language there hasn't been such a drastic change in language form but future remains uncertain. 'Borrowing' has played a key role in the penetration of English words in the Bodo linguistic community.

A close observation and analysis of the interviews of the prominent Bodo politicians, Artists, Journalists and common men shows how most of them use English words today while conversing in the native Bodo language. It has also been noticed that even the News anchors of Bodo news channels feel helpless but to use English words to describe and narrate news items.

As mentioned in the earlier chapter, the former Rajya Sabha Member of Parliament from Kokrajhar (ST) Constituency Mr. Biswajit Daimary and the present

speaker of the Assam legislative Assembly used over one hundred and forty five English words in his thirty minutes interaction with a local Bodo journalist (of Bodoland Radab Channel) on 22nd February 2021 (BODOLAND रादाब, 22 Feb. 2021). Mr. Promod Boro also used over two hundred and eleven English words in his twenty eight minutes interview with the ‘Bodoland Radab’ (News) Channel on 6th October 2020. (BODOLAND रादाब, 6 Oct. 2020). Similarly Mr. Hagrama Mohilary the former Chief Executive Member of Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) used over two hundred and forty nine English words in his thirty seven minutes interview on 26th February 2020 with Engkhong Television Channel (Bodoland Engkhong Television, 26 Feb. 2020).

Thus, Bodo politicians, journalists, artists, as well as common villagers have been found to use number of English words in their conversations and public speeches these days. The samples collected for analysis looked at the language used by people of all classes and education levels. They also varied from different strata of the society. However, there is some commonality in the fact that Bodos of all walks of life and all strata of society do use English words while conversing verbally.

The possible reasons for the use of English words among the native speakers of the Bodo language could be as follows:

It is said that Language changes according to the needs of the society (Varshney 5-6), in the case of Bodo language too most people today feel the need to use some English words due to the needs and demands of the time. It could be due to English education, influence of mass media or just because they feel at ease using those English words.

Darwin and others seem to suggest that theory of natural selection too applies in the case of language change. For him Language changes from generation to generation as a consequence of natural selection¹. This theory suggests that languages with certain new properties are fitter for our communicative needs, better, and therefore more likely to flourish (Lightfoot 227). Probably this could be one of the reasons among the Bodos in the use of English loan words too. For instance words like ‘problem’ ‘easy’ etc. are frequently used these days, though some of these terms have already existing Bodo words.

Another reason for language change or use of loan words is that Language has a tendency to change from complexity towards simplicity, from length towards precision, from difficulty towards ease and from disorder towards order (Varshney 275). There are certain Bodo words which are lengthy, complex and difficult to pronounce which have been substituted for the easier and simpler English words.

Need for new expressions because of new inventions, discoveries, developments, and need to find words for new objects, concepts and places too cause language change (Ibid 275). In the context of the Bodo linguistic community too this is applicable. The Bodo linguistic community lacks proper terms to describe new invention, discoveries, developments and concepts. Due to which the community borrows already existing English words and apply it to daily usage. Some of the examples could be ‘Phone,’ ‘T.V,’ ‘Computer,’ ‘laptop’ etc.

It is said that languages that engages in business and trade relations too influence each other to a great extent (Sapir 93). In the case of Bodo language there might not have

been trade or business relation with the British. But the fact is Bodos lived under the British rule for a long time which was the point of contact between the two languages. Later English medium schools and the Missionary activities must have played important role in adaptation of English words.

It is said that creation of new lexical items/words happens partly because of necessity and partly because of fashion. For instance terms for new inventions require new names to describe them (Varshney 289). Here Bodos have become heavily dependent on English loan words to bridge the gap.

One of the obvious reasons for borrowing is to fill the gap in the borrowing languages; the gaps arise due to the lack of those words in the language itself (Hockett 405). This is one of the main reasons for the use of English loan words among Bodos too. Often Bodos find themselves short of certain words to accurately describe experiences, new objects and new practices and in the process end up using borrowed terms to fill the gap.

Sometimes people imitate a culturally and linguistically dominant group so as to be identified with them and be treated as they are. This practice too brings about language influence. The feeling of need for conformity with the more influential group affects the language of the imitator. This was one of the probable reasons for use of Assamese and Bengali scripts as well as language among the Bodos. But it doesn't seem very applicable in the context of borrowing English words. No doubt in the past many Bodos even changed their surnames so as to identify themselves with the larger and more influential

group so that they could avoid discomfoting experience of being the minority (Hockett 404).

Most often the influence of language runs heavily in one direction that is one is the model language and other is the borrower. The language of a group that is looked upon as a center of culture is naturally far more likely to exert an appreciable influence on other languages spoken in its vicinity than to be influenced by them (Sapir 93). In other words dominant language influences the other smaller languages. In the case of Bodo language too, the influence is of course only in one direction as Bodo language is the borrower and English is the model language here. The English language or culture is looked upon as a centre.

Sometimes cultural influence gives rise to loan words because when culture is borrowed so too is part of that particular language (Sapir 93). However, in the context of Bodo language and culture there doesn't seem to be cultural borrowing but linguistic influence.

The borrowing of foreign words invariably entail certain phonetic modifications when used by the borrower that's how certain phonetic compromises are made to those borrowed words (Sapir 95). In the case of Bodo linguistic community it is very evident that there is phonetic modification of the English loan words. Some of the commonly used loan words have been so modified that it's even difficult to be identified as one originating from English.

Actually the phenomenon of continual infiltration of new lexical items or words is a normal and healthy linguistic practice. It shows how productive a language is and how

it is able deal with new situations (Varshney 289). Thus, infiltration of new words in a particular linguistic community need not be taken as something negative in any way because that's the way a language adjusts itself to the changing times and circumstances for its survival. And it seems to be very applicable in the case of the Bodos using English words.

A single act of borrowing affects the language only temporarily. But if it is accompanied by others it leads to language change. If people do not use the borrowed words habitually for a long period of time it disappears gradually (Hockett 403). In the case of the Bodo linguistic community it is difficult to assume the future at the moment whether the popularly used English words of today will gradually become part of the language or it will gradually go out of popular usage. However, the fact is that many English words have found regular and wide usage among the native speakers of the Bodo language especially in the colloquial context.

Thus we can conclude that there are various motives and needs which have influenced the Bodo linguistic community to adopt English loan words. This practice need not be look at something negative because it is a common practice among most languages of the world. In fact it is unavoidable for a linguistic community to not borrow words from another. Most of the popular languages of the world have the history of borrowing. English language itself is one of the best examples of how language grows and develops through borrowing of new lexical items from other languages. Therefore, rather than looking at this phenomenon as something negative it should be taken as a common linguistic practice.

The research findings of the dissertation points to huge scope for further research in the area. For instance, the dissertation didn't delve into quantitative research of the English loanwords in the Bodo linguistic community. Apart from the influence of English words the influence of other languages such as Assamese, Bengali, Hindi, Sanskrit etc. could be researched. There are also other areas like Influence of English language on the contemporary films, songs and modern writings of North East India. These are just a few areas but there could be much more that can be researched in this area.

ⁱ The application of the theory of natural selection could be understood in simple words as 'fitter and better language survives and the languages that are not fit enough vanish from usage.'