

# Bilingual Education and the Khamties of Assam

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## ABSTRACT

*Bilingual education involves teaching academic contents in two language, in a native and secondary language with varying amounts of each language used in accordance with the programme model. Bilingual education refers to the utilization of two languages as means of instruction for students and considered part of the entire school curriculum.*

*It is the pathway to bilingualism, which is the goal of understanding a second or foreign language. Bilingualism provides provides a multidimensional view of language learning that contains five categories, individual, societal, family, school and disciplinary. Not only does bilingualism introduce new linguistics, but it gives a perspective on cultural diversity. This allows intercultural communication which can lead to an increase in globalization and harmony among the universe.*

*Khamti is major tribal community of Assam. They are basically living in the districts of upper Assam. They have own distinctive language, culture and tradition. Their language is minor in compare with the other major tribal groups of Assam such Mising, Bodo, Kachari etc. Bilingual education of Khamti language will definitely enhance the community's language, culture, and their identity. This paper is an attempt to trace the possibilities of bilingual education of the Khamti language with the help of both the primary and secondary sources.*

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## 1. Introduction

It seems that only the students who are belonging to the community of bilingual get the chance to take education through bilingual. Within these two languages normally it is supposed to be the language they use domestically or in home and the other community use from the crowd. But in reality, the opposite appearance could be seen. Because it could be noticed that in the matter of almost every crowd of bilingual the dignity of their language are not equal. Socio-economic dignity in the majority of language is almost low and deprived of education. These languages are bit of flawed and to use these languages in schools or to provide education through these languages are treated as to be inconvenient. So, there is to be found such kinds of examples everywhere in the world, like- the children who are introduced to only one language in school, they cannot speak the language like the local children can speak the same language. For example, it can be recognized in the case of different language communities such as Bodo, Rabha, Deori, Khamti people of Assam. The children of these communities need to learn Assamese, Hindi etc. languages in the schools. Because, they have to exchange their intention through their own mother tongue in the homely environment. For the consequence, the language they learn in the school is not in the same wavelength when the local people speak the same language.

Such kinds of events are referred as the disorganization of language in the homely school and such disorganization creates some negative circumstances. Even the educational view of students could become weak. There is only one way to avoid this situation – Making a provision of giving education by including the minority languages through education medium in the school.

## Methodology

While preparing the paper titled “**Bilingual Education and the Khamties of Assam**” Socio-linguistic and descriptive method has been applied. The study is based on both primary data and secondary data. Primary data includes field observation. The secondary data includes critical references, journals and internet sources. All the collected sources will be used to analyze the proposed objective of the study. The theory to be applied for this study is bilingual education.

## 2. Minority Language in Schools

Generally it seems that in education system it has less importance of minority languages. But some exceptional examples are also found. In the matter of this, it was an arrangement for the medium of mother language of many community dwellers in United States of America in the first decade of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century. At the time, after India got independence, the new united government gave less importance towards the English language which played a vital role in education system of the country. According to new education policy, it paid importance to the students to give them education through their mother tongue. Besides this, it was made free and mandatory in education system till the age 14. It is mentioned in the constitution as such –

“It shall be the endeavor of every state and of every local authority within the state to provide adequate facilities for instruction in the made longue of the primary stage of education to children belonging to linguistic minority group.” (Article 340 A)

It is started to be discussed better in extensive form than former about education of the students of minority community from 1950. In this sequence, the year 1951 is remarkable. That

is the reason why, in this year a conference was held in Moscow of linguists about to use country languages in education system. In this conference, it was discussed about language education of third world countries. Further, it was discussed related to educational dignity of other countries of minority languages. In this conference, it was decided to give importance on providing education through mother tongue of the students.

"...It is axiomatic that the best medium for teaching a child is his mother tongue"

(UNESCO, 1953:11)

In the united state, the minority languages were applied in case of educational re-launch before 1960. A curriculum was started by establishing "Dade County Public Schools" in Florida in 1963 through the Coral Way School with a Spanish-English programme. A protest was also begun for this incident. Under this observation, bilingual education act was passed in 1967 (Title VII of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act). Through this support of bilingual education a policy was enacted for all the students of minority language speakers.

Some such kinds of changes were happened in Western Europe in case of education system. It was decided to give importance on the education system of minority language in the 70<sup>th</sup> decade. For this reason it is to be found in the instruction of EEC (1977) and Council of Europe (1976). The African countries also propounded education through minority language. For example, it can be talked about Nigeria and Sudan. In 1957 the Government of Philippines was also decided to provide education in the schools through their mother tongue in the first two years.

It is to be observed that, after the conference of UNESCO in 1951, there is an importance growing on the minority language in the curriculum of the schools whole worldwide. Some important points related to the context of education through the minority language are given below-

- a) To ensure the primary level of education through the first language, there should not be any obstruction in educational growth for the children. Of course, the minority language can be taught as a subject. Educationists have conceded to an opinion, that specially, in primary stage, first language is the most convenient way for child education. Before teaching the second language it is necessary to teach the children to write and read in first language.
- b) There will be obstacle in the development of knowledge of the minority children if they are not admitted into the education in mother language or in the development of mother language in school education.
- c) There is the need of providing education through minority language in order to improve child's personality and healthy self establishment. If the education was not provided through minority language in schools, then there will be no existence of that language or its culture and it can be awaken questions connected to their social ownership. By providing education through the minority language

there will be good built up between the children and their education with the community.

- d) Education of minority language is very important for the improvement in first language to the children and it is important for pre-determination in the successive collection of the education in majority language.

There is a good relationship between the development society and person. From the perspective of minority language community and society; for the classification of the relation of the educational probability in minority students these aspects can be analyzed that are as follows-

- a) Minority language teaching will help to stop the flow of union of language and culture of minority communities, in wholesome cultural abundance could be referred as the social prosperous aspect. Minority language is an important aspect of the cultural ownership of a minority community. Through the cultural ownership, minority community can able to save this existence. A nation can be prospered by its cultural varieties and therefore many dual- language citizens can be seen here.
- b) The acknowledgement of minority community language can be increased the importance on the relationship between society and the community. By making strengthening the cultural ownership of minority community, the amount of socio-political conflict can be lessened through the teaching of minority language.
- c) Teaching minority language could be a better way in the case of communities who were not participated in the mainstream of the society of third world countries. Such communities can be educated through their own language and majority languages.

A wave of change had been started in the direction of the use in education of the minority language, which was thought to be creation of economic imbalance in the worldwide. Education in minority language was admitted as a luxurious thing. Some ethnic conflicts are also observed in the western countries. Some alternate perspectives of the education in minority languages are also discussed here-

- a) If the education is to be provided in the majority language to everyone of a country then the cultural ownership of the country would be developed.
- b) To protect the political unity of a country, there is a need of providing education in the same national language to everyone. For instance, a certain fact of United States of America can be cited- "One nation, one flag, one language", that means there is one flag and one language in a country; that is there is an important cultural and political unity of the minority languages for the minority communities. The use of minority language could strengthen the political ownership of these communities. But it could be awakened as a dangerous process for the political unity. Specially, there could be movement build up for the regional and ethnic independence.
- c) In order to develop of social unity of a country there is to be needed to educate them through the same language. By providing education to various

communities through various languages, the social differences increase among the communities and at a certain time it forms a very powerful figure.

- d) It is important to provide majority education for the socio-economic development and future of students. Students have to increase the possession of majority language in order to ensure the socio-economic development and then the students will be improved and succeeded.
- e) There are several inconveniences in order to launch the education in various minority community languages. That is the reason why, the situations of these languages are very difficult. It is not enough to have only certain amount of economic and other services. Besides this, it is observed that in the case of receiving script, preparing curriculum the language is left behind.
- f) Having negative perspective towards the minority language from some parents of minority community, protest against such kind of education could be observed.
- g) Sometimes the students of the minority community through the minority language through the minority language use a different form or sub-lingual form and it is different from that of using in school. It seems to be faced inconveniences in order to such kind of situations in the education of minority languages.
- h) Majority language education make to taking back the students of minority language. Many such kinds of situations have been seen in our society. Such kinds of situation make a community economically backward and for this reason the problem of unemployment has been increased.

### 3. Types of Bilingual Education

Bilingual Education is such kind of method, where an inability detachment role has connected with the minority and majority language. Generally, this kind of education method is to be launched in preliminary schools. It could be discussed about various kinds of bilingual education through some determined perspectives that are given below-

- a) Will the both language be used in whole curriculum or be used only in the certain level?
- b) Will the both language be used as a medium of classroom communication?
- c) Does it have a type for one between subject and language or does it have to use as alternative medium of language, both the languages except the subject languages in case of all languages?
- d) Are the both languages included as the one particular subject or is it the aim of bilingual curriculum to teach both languages?
- e) Will there be only minority students participated in bilingual education or will all the majority students be included?

From above the questions, it can be said with the relation to question no. (c) it is to be observed generally one language is used for one subject in the bilingual education. Two kinds of model of bilingual education could be determined on the basis of question no. (a), (b) and (d). This model is presented

systematically in the picture (Figure 3.1) given below that is drawn here. Related to notable language in both models that decided time could be separated.

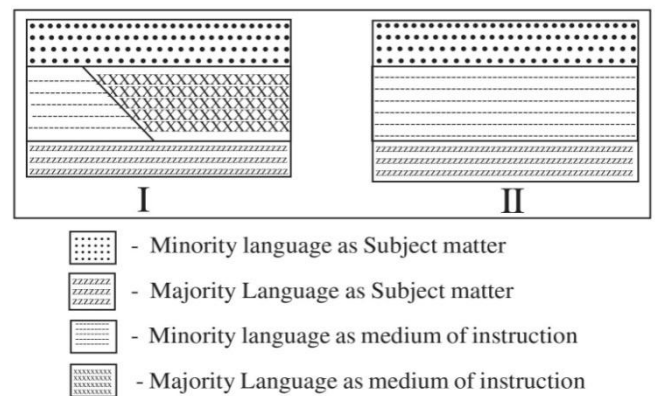


Figure 1. Models of bilingual education

For example, in the first model according to a curriculum, it will not have long conveniences the minority language as a subject to teach after first stage. In another curriculum, the majority language can be included in such a momentum in the first stage as a medium of classroom language. In where, the minority language can be provided only as a subject, in this case, it is often seemed to use a first model language. In this approach, day-to-day curriculum is provided in majority language and for sometime it is taught the minority students of their language. Actually, such kind of system cannot be called as bilingual education system.

In generally, the first model is called Transitional or Assimilationist model. Generally the minority language is used in mainly in the preliminary step. To make assimilation between the homely difference and schools, this method is very important. In reality, if the minority language is used in the school, then it is to be easy to assimilate with the students of the circulating education.

The second sample is Pluralistic or Maintenance model. Through this sample it is promulgated or developed of language pluralism theory. Here, it is not considered the minority language as a problem. But in this case, it is related towards the minority language in the approach of social gestures, socio-economic sorrowfulness of minority language etc. The own value of minority language and its importance is to be realized regarding the majority language. Therefore, it is also used in next level of classes besides the preliminary stage. Compared to the majority language in the case of curriculum, minority language got more important position in here. That is the reason why, the lowly reputed and weak language is to be tried to establish here. For this reason, it is also called as Language Shelter Model. It is tried to give maintenance to minority language and by creating positive gestures in order to increase the possession in spoken and written language through this process.

Though, almost every speaker of bilingual education supports the idea of maintenance, the use of contagious model is seen frequently. May be it happens for the powerful

assimilation of the mainstream of society. But in some developing countries and opposite situation is to be seen. India can be mentioned as an example. Education is provided through the local language and Hindi and English languages are to be studied in secondary education at preliminary stage.

#### 4. Bilingual Education and The Khamti Language Community

Almost 6000 languages are being utilized in the present world. According to the report of UNESCO's Atlas of World's language, the amounts of endangered languages are 2498. It is remarkable that according to the report published in UNESCO's Atlas of World's language, the most endangered languages have been found in India. Though the numbers of endangered languages are the most in India, it does not seem to be paid attention for the conservation of these languages. Political, economic, improbability, lack of proper education policy of the Government etc. of a minority language community, and for many reasons for potentiality of assimilation, with majority community, a language is seemed attained to endangered or rare.

Such unified or assimilation of potentiality is mainly connected to socio-economic reason. Khamti language of Assam is also included in such a endangered list. Many factors like economic, political, social, education and geographical etc. have been shrinking the Khamti language. In such observation Khamtis have been becoming bilingual in present time.

In 2003, UNESCO gave an advice in a letter to provide education to the children in the medium of mother tongue. Such advices are- "UNESCO supports mother tongue instruction as a means of improving educational quality by building upon the knowledge and experience of the learners and teachers"

In 1968, National Policy of education had given importance related to providing education through regional language. In 1956, the office of director of national education announced in "Trilingual Formula" and in the next stage it is also accepted in the session of chief ministers. According to this formula in secondary education English, local language and Hindi- these three languages will be included. It is observed in the working session that this policy is also not helping to security to the Indian language. In the place of that it is becoming helpful in order to circulate English and Hindi language in its expansion. In the medium of mother language, many language policies or Educationalists acknowledged the importance on giving primary education though it is not executed in India. Some problems could be observed in the case of Assam. Only in an oral form of a language can never be in secured position at all. Otherwise in order to keep the continuation in social reputation it is important to use in educational medium.

Related to the bilingual education in Khamti community, its importance and perspectives are given below-

a) In the primary stage in order to not be the challenge for educational development of child it is compulsory to provide education in the medium of first language or mother tongue. This matter is also relevant to the case of Khamti community of Assam. Through the

mother tongue Khamti of Khamti minority community it is needed to provide education in primary stage. Their second language Assamese also can be included as a language.

- b) By giving education through minority language the good development of personality of a child becomes possible. This fact is also applied to the child of Khamti community. In order to make possible the healthy development of personality of their, cultural and linguistic tradition is needed. It will be inconvenient in case of protecting social ownership of their inability to attain the community language and cultural education in an educational environment. Presently, among the Khamtis such kind of problems cannot be denied.
- c) If the child was not given the education in the medium of mother language their amount of knowledge development is decreased. So, in school the need to provide education in the medium of mother language is really important. Such kinds of problems are found in Khamti community for not using mother language in schools.
- d) The medium of mother language is able to protect the unity between homely environment and school environment. In this way, there is the need of the language in Khamti community to use in schools. That is the reason why, through the mother language it becomes possible between the connection of child and their community.
- e) The education of this language is very important in order to increase the possession of first language of a child and this education helps to receive the second language. In order to increase the possession of the first language of the child from Khamti community, that means, the education is to be provided through Khamti language in the schools.
- f) Education in minority language can resist the linguistic and cultural assimilation or united potentiality of a community. In order to continue the stability of linguistic and cultural ownership, the united potentiality is to be resisted within majority community by the Khamti community. In order to make it possible they have to make the provision of education through their language.
- g) Acknowledgement of language and culture of minority community increase the relationship and importance of the communities in society. Through the education of language in Khamti community it will be convenient in society to increase the importance of the community and its social relations.
- h) It is to be observed that in the third world countries, generally, the minority communities are stayed away from the mainstream of society. Such kinds of situation are also to be faced by the Khamti community under the observation in Assam. In such of situation for the development of the community the need of providing education in the medium of mother tongue cannot be ignored.

In the case of bilingual education and in the matter of Khamti language many types of faults and inconveniences are

to be observed. Encapsulating all such kinds of perspectives some view points are given below-

- a) A country or cultural ownership of a state is possible through its majority language. That mean, its cultural ownership is to be safe through the majority language education. Through this wholesome glance, in case of India or Assam it is to be acknowledged to give education through majority language than Khamti language.
- b) To provide continuation of political unity of a country or a state, education is to be provided through its majority language. In case of Assam to keep safe the political unity it is necessary to provide education through Assamese language.
- c) Such as, to keep safe the social unity of a state it is necessary to provide education through majority language. To keep the wholesome unity of Assam, here, it should be the medium of the majority language for education in Assam.
- d) The forth reason is very important. To give safety of the students for economic future, education should be provided through major language. However, Khamti language is circulated in a certain range. Therefore, it is necessary to provide education in the medium of majority language for the safety of socio-economic future of the students of this community.
- e) The gestures of parents or guardians can influence in order to medium of education in many times. That means, the social gestures of parents towards the language can make encourage or discourage in case of studying the language. In this sequence, the negative influences of gestures are to be seen only in case of studying in the medium of Khamti language among the Khamti community of Assam. Therefore, if we illustrate through this gestures, some inconvenience cannot be ignored in case of in the medium of Kkamt language.
- f) Another reason which influences on the medium of education is- linguistic complicated situation. It is to be lacked of enough necessary educational properties in this medium of language. Such a situation is to be

observed in case of Khamti language of Assam. Lack of necessary books, teachers and probable infrastructure can be seen in case of Khamti language. Even though, another notable approach is- economic. Without economic aid such an initiative would never be fruitful.

## 5. Conclusion

In order to establish the bilingual education for the Khamti language community in Assam, various kinds of convenience and inconveniences need to be faced. Some discussions are to be pointed out above perspectives. After analyzing these conveniences and inconveniences there is one thing left to admit that- through the legit language planning there is need to be launched the bilingual education method among the Khamti community. The first thing as a citizen of an independent country they have the right to secure the cultural linguistic tradition by living. Second thing is that a country has to take the responsibility to secure the cultural linguistic tradition of its community. Such kind of action is not impossible to fulfill through a healthy environment. There is a need to accept the model of bilingual education, by enabling the security of ethnicity and tribal ownership of Khamti community by accepting clear language policy.

Though numerically less, the language gestures are enough strong of their same community and implementation of planning scheme can be given them safety of their language education. Circulation of bilingual education among the Khamti community through various glances would gain the community.

- a) The students would be able to learn the Khamti language through (reading, writing, numerical etc.) all the approaches.
- b) The influences of cultural discrimination would be less in case of education. That mean, using of this Khamti language at home and school would sign a stable educational environment.
- c) The Khamti community would able to keep their tribal ownership and social ownership.

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