

# Final Report

## UGC sponsored Minor Research Project “A micro study of medium of instruction and languages taught in the primary schools of Assam”

### I

#### **Introduction & Objectives of the Project**

The broader objective of the project is to examine the social and linguistic diversity of the school going population in Assam and to examine the extent to which school system is equipped to manage the diversity. This objective is to be explored through various specific objectives:

1. To explore the government and primary schools in Sonitpur district of Assam to examine the languages taught and the media of instruction used in these schools.
2. To examine the distribution of schools in terms of medium of instruction.
3. To examine the distribution of schools in terms of number of languages taught.
4. To examine the social and linguistic background of language teachers in these schools.
5. To examine the teaching strategies and resources used by the language teachers in managing language classroom.
6. To examine the social and linguistic and background of the students attending these schools.
7. To examine if there is any difference between the language variety used by students at home and the one used in school.
8. To identify the groups which are likely to be in a position of relative advantage/disadvantage in this system.

#### **Literature Survey**

##### **Linguistic Diversity and school education**

In recent times, there has been a growing concern for the need to preserve diversity and to protect the rights of cultural minorities in a political system. The same principle of diversity is also being advocated in the field of education (UNESCO, 2003; UNHDR 2004; NCF 2005). In the larger political discourse, monolingual/mono-cultural character of public institutions is being

challenged while multilingual education is being promoted. Multilingual education is increasingly being seen as the alternative that raises quality of education as compared to the instruction in one language. Some scholars would even argue that linguistic diversity is an asset than a liability for education system (Agnihotri, 2005; NCF 2005).

In India, however, we do have a complex mechanism of handling linguistic diversity at federal and union level. Unlike the European model of one language dominance in polity, in India some space has been given to the expression of diversity at administrative and educational levels. Here measures like reorganisation of state along ethnic/linguistic lines, political recognition to minority languages, adoption of three language formula etc have been incorporated. This could be attributed to the existence of enormous linguistic diversity along with a political consciousness of groups regarding these differences from colonial period. Despite all the above mentioned measures the language of education at school level remains a highly contested issue in India.

Starting from the colonial period, there have been several mobilisations on the issue of language/cultural identity which have also sought to re-define the language of education directly or indirectly. Many of these movements, inspired by ideals of nationalism, have sought to re-define the cultural symbols of educational institutions. For example, the Hindi movement in the early twentieth century, inspired by the ideal of "*Hindi Hindu Hindustan*" instituted Khari Boli Hindi in Devnagri script in the schools of NWP (Kumar, 2005 ;Rai, 2002). Several cultural and literary organisations have also played an important role in challenging the hegemonic state culture represented in schools. However, it is also to be noted that very soon the change in school

cultures may again end up creating similar hegemonic cultures. In such a scenario, the selection of appropriate language for school education is always a result of conflicts, negotiations and bargain between state and various other organisations. All these issues call for a critical study of the cultural fault-lines in the field of education.

### **Language scenario in Assam**

Assam is a highly diverse ethnic society in terms of number of linguistic and ethnic communities. In this state we see the co-existence of hill tribes, plain's tribes, caste-Hindus, and other religious communities, which has contributed to a multilingual social world.

The 2001 census data which collected information on languages also presented the proportion of population speaking a scheduled language. When we compare the all India average (96.56) with the states of Northeast India we can see an interesting pattern where only in case of Assam the proportion of people speaking a scheduled language is as high as 91.96.

Percentage of population speaking a scheduled language in the states of Northeast India, 2001

India	96.56
Arunachal Pradesh	33.06
Nagaland	9.83
Manipur <sup>1</sup>	63.45
Mizoram	12.51
Tripura	70.84
Meghalaya	16.57
Assam	91.96

### **Multilinguality**

Here multilinguality does not refer to a number of communities speaking their own separate distinct languages but rather to a situation of fluid linguistic boundaries where people are naturally multilingual.

Mrinal Miri, while commenting on the linguistic scenario in the Northeast mentions that “...languages live so close to each other that, in many cases, one gets inducted into the life of the community not just through one language but several languages, so people grow up as naturally multilingual beings... Multilingualism within a community is, therefore, a perfectly natural phenomenon; in switching from one language to another, and ‘mixing’ up different languages in one’s natural conversation...” (Miri, 2005).

Along with the existence of diversity, there has been a recent history of ethnic consciousness and political mobilisations on ethnic grounds. Various scholars have attributed the emergence and growth of identity politics in the Northeastern region, on one hand, to the legacy of colonial policies of segregation and protectionism, and to the developmental policies of the post-independence Indian state, on the other (Gohain, 1997; Sharma 2011). As a confluence of protective policies and post-independence experiences of uneven development and ‘token-welfarism’, a high sense of community consciousness among several ethnic groups of the region has evolved. In the backdrop of this socio-political climate, I am trying to examine how educational policy of the state has responded to the diversity of population and their multilingual practice at school level.

### **History of vernacular education in Assam: Colonial legacy and competing elite interests**

Historically, the issue of official state language and language of education has been a matter of intense and passionate debate in Assam. The vexed issue of language in the state owes its legacy

to the colonial system of governance on one hand and conflict among competing elites on the other. The issue of appropriate language of administration and education in Assam could be traced back to the early nineteenth century soon after the British annexation in 1826 when Bengali was introduced in the administration and in school education. This was also the time of emergence of Assamese nationalist consciousness among the Assamese middle class exposed to the western education and cultural renaissance.

The society in northeast India, including Assam, is well known for the social, cultural and linguistic diversity of its population. Providing education to such a diverse population is a major challenge before the State, especially in the wake of its commitment to universalisation of primary education. The issue of language education in schools, and the medium of instruction in which diverse students are taught, assume special significance in this context. However, there are few academic studies conducted in this area. A micro level analysis of school situation in different types of primary schools in Assam becomes very relevant.

The specificity of Assam situation prevented an easy resolution of the language issue in the initial years of colonial rule and the unease followed in post-independence period as well. The population profile of the region was highly diverse in linguistic and ethnic terms and included both tribal and non-tribal population. It being situated in the border areas, the reorganisation commission thought to continue to keep the heterogeneous character of the state of Assam for strategic, administrative and financial reasons, despite there being huge differences among the region (Borpujari, 1998).

As per the census data on languages and linguistic minorities in a province, Assam had high concentration of population of linguistic minorities till 1972 (39.1 as cited in Schwartzberg, 1985). Therefore, the principle of state reorganisation in case of Assam was a result of several

complex factors and can not be reduced to language and ethnicity alone. In such a scenario, assumptions of a linguistic principle would have been too simplistic given the diversity of its population profile and the political consciousness among various ethnic groups. It called for a creative and sensitive approach in the functioning of a state administration and the selection of the cultural symbols associated with it. One such approach would have been to keep diversity rather than homogeneity as the guiding principle in its administrative policies including in the field of education. However, the principle of diversity has an uneasy relation with a hegemonic idea of community identity. In post-independence Assam we see a resurgence of community identity assertions ignoring the social reality and political complexities of the region culminating in building up a homogenous cultural identity of the state of Assam. It does not require a special mention that this trend was marked with a rise of a sizeable middle class in Assam. It is one of the ironies of identity politics that you need an emerging middle-class from within a community to raise demands for protection of its cultural identity. This cultural consciousness combined with the threat of cultural assimilation by the Bengalis led to the culmination of *Bhaxa Andolan* in the 1960s. Assam sahitya sabha, a key literary organisation, had set the year 1960 as the deadline for declaration of Assamese as the sole official language of the state. And very soon Official language bill was passed in the Assam assembly on 10<sup>th</sup> Oct 1960. This Act provided that Assamese shall be used for all or any of the official purpose, of the State of Assam. The move was one of the first major official attempts to give a single linguistic identity to an otherwise culturally heterogeneous state. This move was strongly resisted by the Bengali speaking population of Barak valley.

What calls for a more systematic examination is the social and educational consequences of *Bhaxa Andolan* in Assam and to what extent was it successful in the formation of Assamese as a

composite community. One of the fallout of the construction of a homogenous Assamese identity through state administration and education has been the alienation of tribal and other minority linguistic communities. As we have seen that gradually the resistance to a hegemonic education policy has emerged from tribal communities of the region such as Bodo. As a result of social mobilisation Bodo is also recognised as a school language and also as language of administration.

### **Language of education in schools of Assam: An evaluation in terms of linguistic diversity**

In the backdrop of all these developments, if we analyse the contemporary educational scenario in Assam we find that there has been a considerable expansion in terms of access to school education. But this expansion does not give us sufficient information in terms of diversity because data is not available on linguistic-community lines. This is an area which calls for intensive field based studies. However, if we examine data on the number of schools by medium of instruction we may gain some insights.

If we examine the official data on the number of schools by medium of instruction we find that at present the state has atleast five major media of instruction in its schools. Apart from English and Hindi the three major languages used as medium of instruction are Assamese, Bengali and Bodo. As per the annual statistics released by the state government there has been a trend of increase in absolute number of schools in each category including Assamese Bengali and Bodo medium schools. But what is more strongly emerging is an evident case of stronger polarisation between Assamese and Bodo as language of education. If we look at the seventh All India school education survey by NCERT in 2007 on the three language combinations taught, there are a few combinations listed in case of Assam when it comes to the schools teaching three languages.

**Table 1 Number of schools by combination of languages taught at Upper primary level**

<b>Combination</b>	<b>Number of schools</b>
Bengali-Hindi-English	651
Assamese-Hindi-English	6076

**Table 2 Number of schools by combination of languages taught at Secondary level**

<b>Combination</b>	<b>Number of schools</b>
Bengali-Hindi-English	238
Assamese-English-Arabic	293
Assamese-Hindi-English	2972

Source NCERT 2007

Complete absence of any combination with Bodo as one of the language is because the survey reported only those combinations which constituted at least 5% of the total sample size.

It is in this backdrop of historical context and secondary data on educational scenario in Assam that we started our project. This survey helped us in deciding our sample of schools to include schools with Assamese, Bengali, Bodo and English medium schools with a focus on Assamese medium Government schools as they cater to the largest and most diverse category of students.

## **PART II**

### **1. Theoretical approach**

The project has adopted interdisciplinary approach to research. Perspectives from sociology of education, sociology of language were combined to frame the study appropriately. An extensive Literature Review was done by the PI before effectively starting the survey. Books were procured for a better understanding of issues related to the project. Review of the books and articles related with Northeast India and Assam in particular, helped the researcher to



understand the historic context of Assam, its social structure and issues regarding language of education in Assam.

## **2. Survey of Literature:**

The project started with extensive review of existing literature on themes of language and politics in northeast India, language education in India and in Assam. See section I for details.

- 3. Methods of study:** To examine the above objectives, a combination of quantitative and qualitative approach was adopted to generate some broad data as well as to get some insights into the school situation in Assam. It was planned to conduct a survey of schools. Apart from a survey of school, language teachers were interviewed using an interview schedule. In the final phase, school going children were interviewed from selected schools picked up for case study. A step by step description is given below.

### **i. Collection of secondary data from District Education Office**

Some basic data pertaining to school education in Assam and Sonitpur in particular, were collected from DISE offices in Guwahati and Tezpur respectively. This data proved useful in giving a macro picture of different types of schools in Assam and their categorisation as per government records. It also helped in planning the required sample for the project. See Annexure 1 for data table collected from the Sonitpur District education office.

### **ii. Universe and Sample for Survey**

The universe of the study included government and other primary schools of Sonitpur district in Assam. Sonitpur district is the second largest district of Assam in terms of its geographic spread and is third largest in terms of population. It has a lower literacy rate of 50.79 as compared to the state average of 64.28. The district has a diverse population belonging to different communities and tribes. Apart from Assamese, there are speakers of Bengali, Bodo, Nepali, Hindi and other tribal languages. Sonitpur district is divided into seven educational blocks which are:

- |               |            |              |             |
|---------------|------------|--------------|-------------|
| 1. Balipara   | 2. Behali  | 3. Biswanath | 4. Chaiduar |
| 5. Dhekiajuli | 6. Gabharu | 7. Naduar.   |             |

A non-random sampling method was used in which the major criteria for selection of schools was coverage by management type as well as a by medium of instruction followed. Initially 40 schools were selected with all these factors in mind. However due to incomplete data from some of these and because of absence of any primary level children some schools had to be discarded. The final sample consists of 33 schools from all the seven blocks.

### **iii. Preparation of Tools: Questionnaire, Interview Guides/Schedule**

- Preparation of Tools
  - Measuring Multilinguality is very difficult in social science research but was very important for the current project. For this purpose a language-use- matrix was developed which could store information about use of language across family and various domains.
  - Questionnaire on schools: The questionnaire on school included questions about management type, source of funding, medium of instruction,

number of languages taught, number of teachers divided into trained and untrained, students' number, male and female divide, and students' composition in various categories. The questionnaire also had had 3 open ended questions about schools history, vision and relation with local community. These were to be noted down or recorded separately.

- Interview schedule for teachers was developed along with the questionnaire. The interview schedule contained questions about basic background details of the teachers. Second section tried to locate the teacher in a multilingual society. And third section included open ended questions about teachers' perception about classroom teaching, teachers' sensitivity about linguistic diversity of students, language- classroom- management and strategies adopted.
  
- A Pilot study was conducted in one school, and two teachers were interviewed to check for errors and quality of data obtained. Minor changes made to questionnaire and Interview schedule for teachers and students. It was realized that conventional categories fail to give an idea of linguistic diversity of students in school as such records are not maintained in most of the schools. Such details were available only with teachers who interact on a daily basis with students on a daily basis in classroom. Therefore, an additional question about linguistic composition of a classroom was included in the schedule prepared for the teachers through which they asked to give estimates of distribution of students in linguistic communities.

See Annexure 2 for questionnaire and interview schedules prepared for collection of data from school administration, teachers and students.

**iv. Selection of fieldworkers**

The project did not have provision of Research Assistant/Associate, therefore, only one person was hired on temporary basis for secretarial assistance during preparatory phase, and to assist in fieldwork in the first phase. Later, on-spot fieldworkers were hired from the blocks to assist in the fieldwork on daily basis.

**v. Survey of schools and language teacher**

After finalizing the above, the survey of schools and language teachers was started with the help of temporary fieldworkers.

**vi.** Data entry of survey was carried out with the help of hired secretarial assistance. Collected data was divided in two categories. The quantitative information about school and teachers was entered into a pre-designed excel sheet. Qualitative information collected through field entries were transcribed and entered into word file

**vii. Case-study of schools**

- Preparation of interview schedule for students from selected schools
- Selection of four schools out of 33 schools for case study
- Preparation of observation chart for case studies of selected school

Collection of data from four selected schools through observation method and interview method begin. Three schools were Assamese medium- one government school, one

government school run by High Madrasa board of Assam and one privately managed school. Apart from these one Bodo medium school was also examined in detail.

### III FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The preliminary findings of the study are reported below. Extensive analysis of the findings will be submitted in the final report.

#### 1. Schools in Sonitpur

As per DISE data from Sonitpur, there are more than 2200 schools in primary and upper primary level schools of these blocks. However a small sample of 33 schools was selected for detailed study to examine aspects of language of education.

**Blockwise Nos. of LP & UP Schools under SSA, Sonitpur**

SL	BLOCK	Primary				Upper Primary			
		LP (Prov.)	LP (NEW)	LP (TG)	TOTAL	MV (Prov.)	ME (Prov.)	ME (Recog.)	TOTAL
1	BALIPARA	210	86	33	<b>329</b>	11	19	32	<b>62</b>
2	BEHALI	131	53	16	<b>200</b>	5	8	17	<b>30</b>
3	BISWANATH	103	45	13	<b>161</b>	3	9	12	<b>24</b>
4	CHAIDUAR	286	61	8	<b>355</b>	16	36	62	<b>114</b>
5	DHEKIAJULI	197	86	22	<b>305</b>	4	30	32	<b>66</b>
6	GABHARU	176	38	0	<b>214</b>	9	18	19	<b>46</b>
7	NADUAR	210	86	6	<b>302</b>	10	24	19	<b>53</b>
	Total	<b>1313</b>	<b>455</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>1866</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>144</b>	<b>193</b>	<b>395</b>

## 2. Distribution of selected schools by administration and medium of instruction

The schools were purposively selected to include Assamese, Bengali, Bodo and English medium schools. Majority of schools were government schools and only few schools with completely privately managed.

Distribution of school by Management and Medium of Instruction (MoI)

Management	Assamese	Bengali	Bodo	English	Total
Government	20	1	1	0	22
Govt-Aided	1	0	1	0	2
Private	6	0	0	3	9
Total	27	1	2	3	33

## 3. No of languages taught in schools

It was found that majority of the surveyed schools taught atleast three languages in the school. While some schools such as Bengali medium school and Assamese medium Madrasa taught more than three languages as an option. The dominant combination of languages was Assamese English and Hindi.

School type by no of Languages taught (N=33)

Number of languages taught	Number of schools	%
1	0	0
2	3	9.09
3	27	81.82
4	3	9.09
Total	33	100

#### 4. Whether student population in schools is linguistically heterogenous or homogenous?

School type by students' linguistic composition (N=33)

SN	School Type		%
1	Heterogeneous schools	20	60.60
2	Homogenous schools	11	33.33
3	Data not available	2	06.06
	Total	33	100

The findings are based on teachers' estimation of the number of linguistic groups in school. The results suggest that the majority of the surveyed schools have heterogeneous population of students in terms of linguistic diversity. While only one third of total no of surveyed schools had linguistically homogenous population. It is important to note that completely homogenous population was found only in Bodo medium schools and in Government Madrasas.

#### 5. Students Composition by social category in Government schools

	GEN	SC	ST	OBC	Total	%
Boys	1161	118	303	582	2164	47
Girls	1275	139	308	715	2437	53
Total	2436	257	611	1297	4601	100
%	53.00	5.55	13.27	28.18		

#### Gender composition of students in private school

		%
Boys	1052	58.12
Girls	758	41.88
Total	1810	

It was found that in government school at primary level there seems to be a trend of decreasing gender gap. However, traditionally dominant caste groups continue to hold majority of the seats at primary level. Data on social composition of students is not recorded in private schools

causing it difficult to conduct survey. However, it was revealed that there is a significant gender gap in private schools.

## 6. Teachers

Teachers' interviews were conducted on a sample of 49 teachers from all the 33 schools. The sample was selected purposively to include both male and female teachers and from different religious background.

### a. Distribution of teachers sample by gender and religion (n=49)

SEX	NO	%
MALE	30	61.22
FEMALE	19	38.77
Total	49	

### b. Distribution of teachers sample by religion

RELIGION	No	%
Bathou	4	8
Buddhism	1	2
Christianity	1	2
Hinduism	37	75.51
Islam	6	12.24
Total	49	

### c. Distribution of teachers' sample by their primary language

Primary Language	Assamese	%
Assamese	30	61.22
Bengali	4	8
Bodo	6	12.24
Mishing	1	2
Mymensinghia	3	6.12
Nepali	5	10.2
	49	



Teachers sample consisted of a mix background of teachers but most of them were Hindu and Assamese speaking.

## 7. Multilingual teachers

Languages used (inclusive)	Teachers No	%
5 or more	4	8
4 or more	11	22.45
3 or more	24	49
2 or more	37	75.51
Only 1	12	24.49

It was found that the majorities of teachers were multilingual and spoke more than one languages outside school. However, when they were interviewed about their practice of multilinguality in school they denied it.

## General Findings from case studies

After completing the survey, four schools were selected for extensive and in-depth study. The schools were selected for detailed case-study to understand the teaching learning process of language in schools of Assam. Unlike the previous stages, the field investigator attended the school for a month's time to get a sense of language learning processes at school. Interview schedule was prepared for the students. Data were collected from 61 students from four different schools. Three of these schools were Assamese medium and one was Bodo medium. One was a government run- Assamese medium Madrasa. Bodo school had complete uniformity in their students linguistically and so was in the Madrasa where everyone was seen as speaking the Bangla of mymensinghia variety. Maximum heterogeneity was seen in Assamese medium government school. (detailed case study report in Annexure 3)

### 1. Occupational background of students

Following is a brief description of the students interviewed in this phase and their distribution by occupation and language. As is evident from the table below, none of the students came from professional salaried class background as majority of the schools were located in rural areas. At the same time these students are not necessarily coming only from agricultural background. Apart from cultivation and agricultural work, families are engaged in some small entrepreneurship and skilled manual work.

Distribution of students (61) by parental occupation and education

<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Numbers</b>	<b>%</b>
Not known	4	6.56
Not working	4	6.56
Unskilled manual worker	5	8.20
Agricultural worker	3	4.92
Cultivator	8	13.11
Small entrepreneurs	9	14.76
Low ranking professional/skilled worker	25	40.99
Teacher	3	4.92

## **2. Primary language of students**

These schools catered to students from diverse socio-linguistic communities of Assam. Even though three of these schools are Assamese medium but all the students named different varieties as the language spoken at home. Most of them use Assamese as the common language in mixed settings and common spaces like market, neighbourhood, school. Among these schools, majority of the students came from non-Assamese speaking background (refer table no ) such as Mymensighia, Bengali, Nepali and Hindi. Many students from Adibasi community were not able to identify their language and called it *Adibasi bhaxa*, few of them identified their language as

*Mundari*. Unlike, Assamese medium schools, Bodo medium school catered to the Bodo speaking students only.

Distribution of students by primary language spoken at home in sample

Primary language	No	%
Adibasi	5	8.20
Assamese	8	13.11
Bengali	4	6.56
Bodo	13	21.31
Bihari	1	1.64
Mymensinghia/Miyan/Bangla	26	42.62
Nepali	4	6.56

### 3. Multilinguaity among students

One of the most important finding of the study is that all the students reported that they speak more than one language in their everyday life including at school. Around eighty percent of the students speak three languages. This finding suggests that students are coming from multilingual environment where they are used to speaking many language varieties outside school.

Distribution of students by no of languages spoken

	Numbers	%		
One	0	0	0	One
Two	12	19.67	100	Two or more
Three	27	44.26	80.33	Three or more
Four	19	31.15	36.07	Four or more
More than four	3	4.92	4.92	Five or more

But this multilinguality is not necessarily literate multilinguality. The multilinguality was learnt in neighbourhood and sometimes also exercised at school level. Students could easily switch from one language to the other while speaking. When students were asked about access to written material at home, most of them denied access to literature other than textbooks and religious books at home.

#### **4. Multilinguality in school**

The nature of language learning in schools is such that it teaches formal multilinguaity in the form of number of languages taught in school (refere table on number of languages taught in schools). But the schools do not promote multilingual environment. Most of the teachers said that they actively discouraged students from speaking in their mother tongue or neighborhood language. It is believed to have a corrupting influence on their speech. Students also said that they are sometimes punished for speaking in their home language.

#### **5. Language curriculum in schools**

In all the government schools textbooks were prepared by SCERT Assam. These textbooks were revised in the wake of National Curricular Framework 2005. These textbooks were written in Assamese/Bodo. Schools run by Jatiya Bidyalaya Trust had their own textbooks prepared by the trust as per government norms.

Students did not find it very difficult to read their Assamese/Bodo language textbooks. But they admitted that the words used in these textbooks were difficult for them and were not used in their everyday practice.

Most of the students found English as the most difficult language to learn from textbooks. Hindi was becoming relatively more accessible because of support from Mass media.

Some of the teachers complained that the new textbooks are more difficult to teach than the older ones. Sometimes they also find it difficult to relate the textbooks with students own experience.

## **6. Teaching learning style at school**

Though many teachers had received some sort of training for teaching after joining the school, they did not apply what is learnt in school. Sometimes, the training received was of no use to their classroom teaching and sometimes they lacked resources. One of the teachers attended a Marathi training course even though it was practically not useful in classroom teaching. He suggested that training is required for security and promotion in job.

There was a lack of training in handling a linguistically diverse classroom at primary and upper primary level, even though they mentioned it as one of the major problem of teaching.

Teachers had many complaints against the students coming from disadvantaged background. They found it difficult to teach standard language to students because most of the students were using non-standard varieties like Mymensighia and Bangla at home. For example one of the teacher said she was unable to communicate with the students for a long time because they wouldn't understand her use of BOHI-KITAP (notebook) while students would use the word Khata for the same.

Some teachers were unhappy with the new guidelines of SSA about learning. They were particularly opposed to the idea of not failing students in exams and sanctions against physical punishments to students. In their view, these measures negatively affected the quality of learning of the students because now they don't care for studies. It implied that teachers relied more on their authority over students for learning outcome.

## **IV Summary of Findings**

The project aimed at examining the extent to which primary school system in Assam is responsive to the socio-linguistic diversity of school going children given the multilingual nature of population. The project was conducted in phased manner and relied on both secondary and primary data using a combination of quantitative and qualitative techniques for different objectives. Primary data collection started with a sample survey of 33 primary schools in Sonitpur district followed by interview of school teachers (n=48) and students (n=60). Detailed case studies of four schools representing Assamese and Bodo medium of instruction was also carried out. Some of the major findings can be summarised under the following heads

### **1. Primary Schools in Sonitpur:**

- a. Assam is a multilingual state and many languages are recognized by the state government for educational purpose.
- b. Assamese is the major language of instruction in all the government schools of Assam. Apart from Assamese, Bodo, Bengali, English and Hindi medium schools are also functioning in Sonitpur district.
- c. Majority of surveyed school (80%) had more than two languages taught at the primary level.

### **2. Teachers in government schools:**

- a. Teachers sample consisted of a mix background of teachers but the majority of identified themselves as Assamese. However, a substantial majority of teachers (76%) use more than one language outside school but not inside the school premises.

- b. Teachers complained of lower economic background of students as the major impediment to their language learning abilities.
- c. The teachers are aware of the diverse background of students but while teaching they tend to assume a linguistically homogenous classroom. There is no training received by teachers to handle a linguistically diverse classroom, even in case of trained teachers

**3. Students and their language learning:**

- a. The results suggest that the majority of the surveyed schools (66%) have heterogeneous population of students in terms of linguistic diversity. While only one third of the total number of surveyed schools had linguistically homogenous students population.
- b. Students use more than one language in their social setting. Majority of the students use more than two or three language in their everyday interaction outside class.
- c. Students do not have access to literature at home other than school textbooks and religious texts.

These findings based on Sonitpur, therefore, affirm the understanding that primary level schooling in Assam is faced with a major challenge of dealing with a linguistically diverse school- going-population. Even though the state has arranged for teaching and learning of at least three languages and provided for medium of instruction other than Assamese, yet, a close examination of classroom situation suggest that the school system is ill-prepared to handle the same in an effective manner.

## **V PROGRESS**

The project was successful in realisation of its primary objectives. Remoteness of the host institution caused some problem in timely completion of the project due to delay in delivery of instruments.

## **VI Publications & Conference Proceedings**

Goswami, N. Costs, security and discipline: Gendering the debate on school choice, *Indian Journal of Gender Studies*. 22 (2)

Goswami, N. presented a paper, Issues of identity and education in the state of Assam, in the national conference, Interrogating Indigeneity, Citizenship and the State: Perspectives from India's North-East, organized by the Department of Sociology, Tezpur University, Tezpur, Tezpur, 7-9 March, 2013.

Goswami, N. presented "Linguistic diversity and school education in Assam" at National seminar on "Education for what and for whom" organized by OKDISCD, Guwahati, April 10-12, 2013.

Principal Investigator  
Dr Nirmali Goswami  
Assistant Professor  
Department of Sociology  
Tezpur University, Sonitpur  
Assam 784 028



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Annexure - III

UNIVERSITY GRANTS COMMISSION  
BAHADUR SHAH ZAFAR MARG  
NEW DELHI - 110 002

**STATEMENT OF EXPENDITURE IN RESPECT OF MINOR RESEARCH PROJECT**

Name of Principal Investigator Dr Nirmali Goswami  
Deptt. of PI Department of Sociology  
Name of University Tezpur University  
UGC approval Letter No. and Date F No 6 - 52/2012 (HRP) August 30, 2012  
Title of the Research Project A micro study of media of instruction and languages taught in primary schools of Assam

5. Effective date of starting the project January 2013

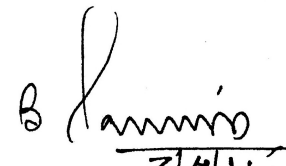
6.a Period of Expenditure 01/07/2012 to 31/03/2014  
.b Details of Expenditure See below

S. No.	Item	Amount Sanctioned (Rs.)	Expenditure Incurred during July 2012- March 2014 (Rs.)	Balance (Rs.)
1	Books and Journals	15000.00	14372.00	628.00
2	Equipment	40000.00	39640.00	360.00
3	Contingency including special needs	15000.00	15000.00	00
4	Field Work/Travel	10000.00	10000.00	00
5	Hiring Services	15000.00	15000.00	00
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>95000.00</b>	<b>94012.00</b>	<b>988.00</b>

7. If as a result of check or audit objection some irregularly is noticed at later date, action will be taken to refund, adjust or regularize the objected amounts.

8. It is certified that the grant of Rs. 95000.00 (Rupees Ninety Five Thousand only) received from the University Grants Commission under the scheme of support for Minor Research Project entitled "A micro study of media of instruction and languages taught in primary schools of Assam" vide UGC letter No. F No 6 - 52/2012 (HRP) dated August 30, 2012, of which Rs. 94012.00 (Rupees Ninety Four Thousand Twelve only) has been utilized till March 31, 2014, for the purpose for which it was sanctioned and in accordance with the terms and conditions laid down by the University Grants Commission.

  
PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR

  
FINANCE OFFICER  
2/4/15  
Finance Officer  
Tezpur University

  
REGISTRAR  
Registrar  
Tezpur University

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Annexure - V

**UNIVERSITY GRANTS COMMISSION  
BAHADUR SHAH ZAFAR MARG  
NEW DELHI - 110 002**

**Utilization certificate**

Certified that out of the grant of Rs. 95000 (Rupees Ninety Five Thousand only) received from the University Grants Commission under the scheme of support for Minor Research Project entitled "**A micro study of media of instruction and languages taught in primary schools of Assam**" vide UGC letter No. **F. No 6 - 52/2012 (HRP) dated August 30, 2012**, Rs. 94012.00 (Rupees Ninety four thousand twelve) has been utilized during July 2012 to March 2014 for the purpose for which it was sanctioned and in accordance with the terms and conditions laid down by the University Grants Commission. The unspent amount of Rs 988.00 has been refunded to the UGC. *via demand draft no 376151*

**PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR**

**FINANCE OFFICER**  
Finance Officer  
Tezpur University

**REGISTRAR**

Registrar  
Tezpur University

**INTERNAL AUDITOR**  
Internal Audit Officer  
Tezpur University