

**Interlingual Code-Switching as a Sociolinguistic Phenomenon
amongst the Misings of the Brahmaputra Valley : A Study.**

A Thesis submitted for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

by
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Dedicated to

my mother

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that Mr. Rajeev Kumar Doley has prepared the thesis entitled *Interlingual Code-Switching as a Sociolinguistic Phenomenon amongst the Misings of the Brahmaputra Valley : A Study* for the Ph.D degree of IIT Guwahati under my general supervision and in strict conformity with the rules laid down for the purpose. The work is the result of his own investigations, and it has not been submitted either as a whole or in part to any other university/institution for a research degree.

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Statement

I hereby declare that the matter embodied in this thesis is the result of investigations carried out by me in the Department of Humanities & Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology Guwahati, India under the supervision of Dr Krishna Barua.

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Abbreviations Used

AAU	Assam Agricultural University
AGP	Asom Gana Parishad (a political party in Assam)
BA	Bachelor of Arts
BSc	Bachelor of Science
CERN	Acronym for European Council for Nuclear Research retained from its earlier French name “Conseil Européen pour la Recherche Nucléaire”
CP	Complementizer
CS	Code-Switching
EL	Embedded Language
ET	English Translation
F	Female
IGNOU	Indira Gandhi National Open University
L1	Language 1 (Mising)
L2	Language 2 (Assamese)
L3	Language 3 (English)
L4	Language 4 (Hindi)
M	Male
MAC	Mising Autonomous Council (a self-rule body within Assam)
MBBS	Bachelor of Medicine and Surgery
ML	Matrix Language
NEFA	North East Frontier Agency
No.	Number
Q	Question
Sl. No.	Serial Number
SC	Scheduled Caste
SH	Statistical Handbook
ST	Scheduled Tribe
TRI	Tribal Research Institute, Tejgadh, Gujarat
WBM	Water Bound Macadam
WPT	Welfare of Plains Tribes

Abstract

A significant component of human life today is socio-cultural diversity which in turn leads to a diversity in speech. In multi-ethnic societies, it is a natural process that the speakers of one language get in contact with those of other languages and consequently acquire their characteristics. This acquisition leads to code-switching between the acquired languages. The speakers move in and out of these languages in a single conversation.

There are mainly two types of code-switching : inter-sentential and intra-sentential switching. An intra-sentential switch takes place within a sentence while an inter-sentential switch occurs beyond the boundaries of a sentence. The former is studied mainly for its grammatical structure and the later is often studied for its social features. Code-switching may occur between different languages or between different varieties of the same language.

Code-switching is used, among others, as a verbal strategy that reflects the interpersonal and inter-group relations and their maintenance in the society at large. Speakers use it as linguistic tools to meet the requirements of different situations and purposes. In general, it is used to achieve two things: (a) fill a linguistic/conceptual gap, or (b) for other multiple communicative purposes.

There are two approaches to the study of code-switching : (a) *Structural approach* that deals with the morpho-syntactic patterns underlying the grammar of code-switching, and (b) *Sociolinguistic approach* that is primarily concerned with its social meanings and motivations.

The objective of the present work is to study the language behaviour of the Misings living in the Brahmaputra valley of Assam with a focus on their use of code-switching during oral communications as a sociolinguistic phenomenon. The study

specifically addresses the social meanings and motivations associated with the use of code-switching between the Mising and Assamese languages by the ethnic Mising speakers with their fellow Misings. It also attempts to find out if any other languages are involved while making such communication apart from these two languages. The work covers the Misings living in various parts of Assam, particularly, in the districts of Dhemaji, Lakhimpur, Sonitpur, Tinsukia, Dibrugarh, Sibsagar, Jorhat, and Golaghat. It also covers a cross-section of the target group living and settled in cities and towns of Assam in order to find out the differences, if any, between the code-switching use of the urban dwellers and that of the rural dwellers.

The bilingual practice of the Misings is the manifestation of a more than three hundred years old socio-cultural contact between the Misings and the Assamese-speaking societies of Assam. The major factors leading to the emergence of this language behaviour are : (a) a rigorous Assamese-Mising acculturation; (b) pursuit of education; and (c) outreach of modern communication systems. Today it is an essential feature of the language behaviour of the Misings.

The Misings (also spelt as *Mishing*; exonym *Miri*) are one of the major ethnic groups of Assam recognized as a “scheduled tribe” by the Constitution of India. They mainly inhabit the Brahmaputra valley of the state, scattered in pocket areas in between the districts of Sonitpur in the west and Dhemaji in the east on the north bank and Golaghat in the west and Tinsukia in the east on the south bank of the river. A good chunk of the population has also settled in the towns and cities of the state. As per the 1991 Census of India, they share 0.04% of the country’s population and their language which originates from the Sino-Tibetan Language Tree is recognized as one of the top twenty non-scheduled languages with 3,90,583 speakers.

The data are analyzed in the light of the Markedness Model of Carol Myers-Scotton which views linguistic choices as negotiations of self-identity and desired relationships with others. It is centered on the notion that speakers make language

choices primarily to meet their own goals. The choices can be *marked* or *unmarked* according to the prevailing set of rights and obligations in any given situation.

The findings of the study reveal that code-switching serves both as an index and a verbal tool to the Misings. As an index, it identifies their self-perception and their multi-dimensional identity as members of a specific group or groups. As a tool, code-switching is used amongst the Misings to step in or out of their presumed identity.

The Mising-Assamese code-switching or use of Assamese words, clauses and sentences in the Mising language has become so common among the speakers that it can well be regarded as a trait. On the surface, this is just an interpersonal activity between the Misings during conversations, but this is found to be an effective linguistic strategy frequently used by the speakers.

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CHAPTER I

The Matter and the Means

[This introductory chapter is in three parts. The first part gives a conceptual account of the study of sociolinguistics. It also apprises of the objective, approach and scope of the study. The second part gives a review of literature and works done by different authors and researchers in the concerned fields, i.e., code-switching in general and the bilingualism of the target group, Misings of the Brahmaputra valley in particular. The third part gives an account of the methodology used for examining the vital aspects of the study including the factors leading to the emergence of code-switching, analysis and verification of the field findings, and language shift process.]

1.1.1 Language and Society

Language is a powerful emblem of social behaviour. Normally, language is used to express ideas and transfer information which means that it establishes a system of links between individuals, i.e., the speakers and the hearers. Individuals form societies and therefore, language connects societies while connecting individuals. It is interesting to realize that while sending information, the speakers send vital social messages through language, such as, who they are, where they come from, who they associate with and even what their intentions are. Therefore, language plays an important social role while transmitting information between individuals and societies.

Ferdinand de Saussure's statements that language is primarily a "social activity" and "language is socialized at every level, from the production of phonemes to the

interpretation of complex meaning” in his work *The Course in General Linguistics* published posthumously in 1916, gave a new outlook to the study of language (Ferdinand de Saussure 2006, 2). It discovered the inseparable relationship between language and society. According to Krishnaswami, Verma and Nagarajan (1992, 13), “language is essentially a social phenomenon since language lives in the minds and tongues of its users”. Language, therefore, reflects a wide range of human behaviour both at the interpersonal and inter-group levels. It is being viewed and studied from different perspectives and the frontiers of the subject, therefore, are continuously and steadily moving forward. One of such frontiers is ‘sociolinguistics’, the study of language in relation to its users who live in society.

The studies of the relations between language and society carried out mainly in the second half of the twentieth century gave birth to the field of academic research called sociolinguistics. This relatively recent discipline investigates the use of language in society, particularly in order to determine what the possible reasons for ‘language variation’ are and hence to understand more about the process of ‘language change’. In 1952, Haver C. Currie published a paper titled “A projection of sociolinguistics : The relationship of speech to social status” (reprinted in 1971). Gradually the term ‘sociolinguistics’ began to take root in the field of research and in the early 1960s conferences on sociolinguistics were being held and articles on properties of language started to appear where many researchers included the social factors in their linguistic analysis (Coulmas 1997, 1). Since then researchers have been increasingly dwelling on the social organization of language behaviour. Today sociolinguistics has become a recognized branch of social sciences and a distinctive field of academic research with an increasing scope of study.

Labov defines sociolinguistics as a study which takes into account “the distribution of language difference throughout the society and necessarily preserves the data on the age, sex, education, occupation, and ethnic membership of the speakers studied” (Labov 1966, 25). He emphasizes the centrality of social context and cognitive processes while talking of sociolinguistics.

Bright describes it as “the study of patterned co-variation of correlation which exists between diverse linguistic and social structures” (Bright 1968, 160).

Fishman prefers the term “sociology of language” to “sociolinguistics” when he describes it as the study of the characteristics of the speakers as they constantly interact and change within a speech community (Fishman 1971, 5).

According to Trudgill, sociolinguistics “is that part of linguistics which is concerned with language as a social and cultural phenomenon”. He says that a study of language totally ignoring its social context will inevitably lead to “the omission of some of the more complex and interesting aspects of language and to the loss of opportunities of further theoretical progress”. He further states that “language is a very variable phenomenon, and that variability may have as much to do with society as with language” (Trudgill 1995, 20–21).

The consensus, nevertheless, is that sociolinguistics mainly deals with the following aspects :

- (a) language in relation to society;
- (b) the way language is used in different social situations; and
- (c) the pragmatic meanings that language conveys.

Sociolinguistics codes the social function of a language; it shows the realities of human speech and how a dialect of a given language can often describe the age, gender, ethnicity, level of education, and socio-economic status of the speaker. The use of language symbolically represents fundamental dimensions of social behaviour and human interactions. “The ways in which language reflects human behaviour can often be complex and subtle because the relationship between language and society affects a wide range of encounters – from broadly based international relations to narrowly defined interpersonal relationships” (Wolfram acc. 2001, 1).

The primary concern of sociolinguistic research and scholarship is to study correlations between language use and social structure. The sociolinguistic enterprise raises fundamental questions about the nature of relationship between social phenomena and linguistic variation. “Sociolinguistics is concerned with describing language use as a social phenomenon and, where possible, it attempts to establish causal links between language and society, pursuing the complementary questions of what language contributes to making community possible and how communities shape their languages by using them” (Coulmas 1997, 2). While dealing with language and its users, Ferdinand de Saussure refers to “langue”, a set of abstract rules and conventions, and “parole”, the concrete manifestation in the actual performance of the individual. “In order to study langue – the dimension of language shared by all its speakers – one has to study parole, since parole and langue always interact with each other” (Krishnaswami, et al. 1992, 15). There is a great deal of ideological commonness between ‘sociolinguistics’ and ‘sociology of language’. Fishman (1971) used both the terms to refer to examine “the interaction between...the use of language and the social organization of behaviour.” Hudson (1980) defines sociolinguistics as “the study of language in relation to society” and sociology of language as “the study of society in relation to language.” But it is imperative that a distinction is made between the two terms depending upon their focus of interest. The study with a focus on society is sociology of language while the one that focuses on language is sociolinguistics (Krishnaswami, et al. 1992, 14). However, sociolinguistics is considered to be the meeting ground for linguists and social scientists where a group of scholars seek to understand the social aspects of language and others are primarily concerned with the linguistic aspects of society. Therefore, there are as it were two centres of gravity known as ‘micro-sociolinguistics’ and ‘macro-sociolinguistics’. The former sees sociolinguistics from a language-centred perspective (which others call narrow) while the later views it to embrace a wide range of social aspects apart from linguistic. “These represent different orientations and research agendas – micro issues being more likely to be investigated by linguists, dialectologists, and others in the language-centered fields, whereas macro-issues are more frequently taken up by sociologists and social

psychologists” (Coulmas 1997, 2). It is, however, generally agreed that both perspectives are indispensable for a full understanding of language as a social phenomenon. In general terms, “micro-sociolinguistics investigates how social structure influences the way people talk and how language varieties and patterns of use correlate with social attributes such as class, sex and age. Macro-sociolinguistics, on the other hand, studies what societies do with their languages, that is, attitudes and attachments that account for the functional distribution of speech forms in society, language shift, maintenance, and replacement, the delimitation and interaction of speech communities” (Coulmas 1997, 2). Sociolinguistics today also includes studies that border on discourse analysis and pragmatics in that they analyze how the language choices that speakers make in conversation are indicators of negotiations of social identity and intended social relationships.

There is a growing interest among researchers to find that sociolinguistics can provide a richer empirical basis for linguistic studies. Linguistic theory and language use go side by side and one is meaningless without the other. Further, knowledge in language use is important for understanding linguistic forms and the function and scope of language. There is also a growing awareness among researchers that linguistic insights can be used in finding solutions to some of the important problems related to the language users, such as, education, language planning, bilingualism and biculturalism, multilingualism and multiculturalism, and social unity and integration.

In a social set up, people are drawn from different linguistic, socio-cultural, economic, religious and geographical backgrounds. In such a society, members with different language behaviours, socio-cultural habits and religious beliefs live together. Therefore, it is natural for the members as well as for their traits to get in contact with one another. As speech is among the prime qualities of human beings, language is one of the first to be affected. Under such a set-up, therefore, it is a natural process that the speakers of one language mix with those of the other languages and consequently acquire them. Cultural contacts and contacts in other

fields, such as, profession, business and social gatherings also largely contribute to this acquisition. This acquisition leads to bilingualism and multilingualism. And the use of bilingualism and multilingualism leads to code-switching between the acquired languages. Code-switching is referred to as “the use of two language varieties in the same conversation. It can occur between speakers, or between sentences in the same speaker’s turn, or within a sentence” (Myers-Scotton 2006).

1.2.1 Objective

One of the aims of the study of sociolinguistics is to examine the state of language use in society. Since speech is one of the complex attributes of mankind – complex because it reflects the human mind which is complex – it needs a closer scrutiny for understanding the deeper meanings that go into language use. The level of complexity acquires an ascending trend when it moves from the interpersonal level to the inter-group level. In a heterogeneous society, the mediums of communication not only carry the surface meanings of the utterances, but also various behavioural aspects indicative of the socio-cultural practices prevalent in that society.

The Indian society is one of the most heterogeneous societies of the world with a host of different communities living together. The “Indian Population is polygenetic and is an amazing amalgamation of various races and cultures.” (WebIndia 2007). SIL Ethnologue (2005) lists 415 living languages in India out of 6,912 worldwide (Gordon 2005). The 1991 Census of India recognizes 1,576 classified “mother tongues” and twenty two “languages” of which the “languages” are scheduled as official languages in the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution. Later, Manipuri and Bodo were included in the Eighth Schedule following which now the number of “languages” has increased to twenty four.

North-east India is known as the meeting point of diverse communities, faiths and cultures. It is home to more than one hundred sixty six separate tribes speaking distinctive languages and dialects. “Some groups have migrated over the centuries from places as far as South-east Asia; they retain their cultural traditions and values

but are beginning to adapt to contemporary lifestyles. Its jungles are dense, its rivers powerful and rain, and thunderstorms sweep across the hills, valleys and plains during the annual monsoons” (IGNCA 1999). Assam is one of the seven states of this region referred to as “seven sisters” out of the total twenty eight states of India (India has also six union territories and one national capital territory). The state shares 2.4 percent of India’s total geographical area and 2.59 percent of the country’s population (Economic Survey of Assam 2003–2004). Although Assamese is the official and “scheduled” language of the state (Talukdar 11, Census of India 1991, 5), there are a number of other languages, dialects and mother tongues spoken by different ethnic groups living in the state. Among these, the prominent “scheduled” languages spoken in the state are Bengali, Hindi and Nepali while the “non-scheduled” languages spoken here are Bodo, Deori, Karbi, Lalung, Mising, and Rabha (Census of India 1991).

One of these ethnic groups of the state is Mising, also spelt as ‘Mishing’ by some writers. But the former is officially used as accepted by the Mising Agom Kebang (Mising Language Society). The name Mising is also called ‘Miri’ by non-Misings which the native speakers regard as an exonym. Tabu Taid, a pioneer of the subject, states on the nomenclature, “Till recent times, the Misings were commonly referred to as the ‘Miris’. Although the word MIRI is generally supposed to have been derived from an Adi-Mising word ‘miri’ (‘i’ representing here a high central vowel sound, converted to a high front vowel sound in the word MIRI by non-Mising speakers), it is clear that it is an exonym, i.e., a name used by groups other than the community so named. The growth of ethno-centric sentiments has gradually led to the replacement of the exonym, MIRI, by the autonym, MISING .” (Taid 1998, 137).

The Misings form one of the major ethnic groups of Assam recognized as a “scheduled tribe” by the Constitution of India (Das 2001, 24). They share 0.04% of the country’s population (Census of India, 1991, 5). The same census reports that the Mising language is one of the top twenty non-scheduled languages of the country with 3,90,583 speakers (Ibid. 6). In absence of similar census reports after that, the

latest figures are not available. However, according to an estimate made by SIL International in 1998, the population of the tribe is over 4,00,000.

According to Nomal Pegu, another pioneer in the field, the Misings migrated from the upper courses of the river Huang-Ho and Yangtse-Kiang in the North-west China and entered India around 2000 B.C. and finally landed in the Brahmaputra valley of Assam between the thirteenth century and the fourteenth century A.D (Pegu, N. 1998, 34). As they settled down in the valley, their culture, language and ways of living encountered those of the valley which occasioned an intermingling of socio-cultural, linguistic and religious practices. This intermingling resulted in a cross-over of elements of the stronger culture and language to the weaker one making it a bicultural and bilingual society. On the language front, the main medium of communication amongst the members of this community today is a sort of blend of the Assamese and Mising languages. But this blend is short of being called a linguistic amalgamation as the languages are used distinctively with switches back and forth.

The primary objective of the present work is to study the bilingual behaviour of the Misings of the Brahmaputra valley with a focus on their use of code-switching as a sociolinguistic phenomenon. The study specifically addresses the socio-psychological meanings and motivations associated with the inter-lingual code-switching between the Mising and Assamese languages practiced by the ethnic Mising speakers with their fellow Misings during conversations. It also attempts to find out if any other languages are involved while making such communications.

1.3.1 Approach and Scope

The study of code-switching, that is, use of two or more languages in conversation, has developed in two directions : structural and sociolinguistic. The structural approach deals with its grammatical and syntactical aspects while the sociolinguistic approach is primarily concerned with the social meanings and motivations associated with code-switching and the discourse functions it serves. Although these approaches

are complimentary to each other, they are distinctive in their research fields. In this context, Myers-Scotton suggests that “Researchers on CS fall into two groups, (a) those interested in the social motivations for and/or the functions of CS, and (b) those interested in characterizing or explaining the grammatical structure of CS, e.g., what are the constraints on employing two language varieties in the same clause?” (Myers-Scotton 2007, 1). Further, Boztepe says that “The structural approach tries to identify the structural features of morphosyntactic patterns underlying the grammar of code-switching, whereas the sociolinguistic approach builds on this in its attempts to explain why bilingual speakers talk the way they do” (Boztepe 2005, 3).

The present work studies the speech behaviour of the Misings through the sociolinguistic approach in order to find out the social and motivational values of bilingualism. It covers the Misings of the Brahmaputra valley living mainly in the districts of Dhemaji, Lakhimpur, and Sonitpur in the north bank and Tinsukia, Dibrugarh, Sibsagar, Jorhat, and Golaghat in the south bank of the Brahmaputra. The study also covers a cross-section of the Mising population living in the urban areas of Assam.

The study deals with a significant spectrum of human behaviour, that is, speech and its concomitant social implications. In this context, it involves a community that forms a sizable chunk of the Assamese population living in the Brahmaputra valley, given that their language practice remains unexplored and untapped even today. Therefore, it is viewed that the chosen area has high potential for conducting research.

1.4.1 Review of Literature

A significant rise in the interest in code-switching amongst researchers was witnessed in the last quarter of the twentieth century. Prior to it, it was treated just as an insignificant part of sociolinguistics. As Auer (1998, 1) states, “Code switching used to be a matter for a few specialists in the 1950s and 1960s, of peripheral importance for linguistics as a whole.” In 1948, Hoijer in his work *Linguistic and*

Cultural Change had established the pair of concepts “phonemic alternation” and “phonemic alteration” which were considered synonymous with those of code-switching and borrowing (Hoijer 1948, 336). The initial synthesis on code-switching was made by Jacobson in 1952 in his work done with Fant and Halle entitled “Preliminaries to speech analysis : The distinctive features and their correlates” (Alvarez-Caccamo 1998, 30). In this work Jacobson refers to the phenomenon of “switching code” based on Fano’s project of 1950 entitled “The information theory point of view in speech communication” and the 1949 work of Fries and Pike entitled “Coexisting Phonemic Systems” (Ibid. 30). Weinreich in his 1953 work “Languages in Contact : Findings and Problems” deals with the aspects of bilingualism, its socio-cultural and linguistic conditions and effects, borrowing, linguistic substratum and superstratum, inferior and superior languages, standard language and dialect, and language teaching and learning. He describes that two or more languages are regarded to be in contact if they are used alternately by the same person and when this occurs, each language gets exposed to some degree of interference by the other(s) (Pulgram 1953, 429). The first explicit mention of “code-switching” was made by Hans Vogt in his 1954 work *Language Contacts* (Vogt 1954, 368). But here he, like other linguists of the time, treats code-switching as a psychological phenomenon and not as a linguistic one.

The interactional and intergroup dimension of code-switching was initiated by John Gumperz through his works on social dialectology in India, namely, “Some remarks on regional and social language differences in India” (1957), “Dialect differences and social stratification in a North Indian village” (1958), “Speech variation and the study of Indian civilization” (1961), and “Hindi-Punjabi code-switching in Delhi” (1964). Here Gumperz attempts to establish that code-switching implies aspects and qualities which are beyond linguistic or psychological. It has significant interpersonal and socio-cultural implications. Gumperz looks at languages, dialects or styles as subsystems within the overall speech repertoire of an individual or a social group. He finds the concept of linguistic repertoire necessary to describe code-switching in the verbal behaviour of a bilingual person or community. He also points

out that grammatical rules can be applied to language varieties used by bilinguals and multilinguals. Further, he introduces the notion of “code-switching style” later renamed by Poplack (1980) as “code-switching mode” (Alvarez-Caccamo 1998, 34). Blom and Gumperz’s work “Social meaning in linguistic structures : Code-switching in Norway” published in 1972 and Poplack’s paper of 1980 entitled “Sometimes I’ll start a sentence in Spanish Y TERMINO EN ESPANOL : Toward a typology of code-switching” gave a new direction to the study of code-switching as a sociolinguistic phenomenon. Auer highlights the social as well as linguistic functions of code-switching in his works “On the meaning of conversational code-switching” (1984), “Bilingualism in/as social action : A sequential approach to code-switching” (1991), and “The pragmatics of code-switching : A sequential approach” (1995). Code-switching is viewed as a communicative strategy and linguistic advantage by Tay and Adendorff in their papers respectively “Code switching and code-mixing as a communicative strategy in multilingual discourse” (1989) and “The functions of code switching among high school teachers and students in Kwa Zulu and implications for teacher education” (1996).

The code-switching research took a significant turn with a series of publications coming from Myers-Scotton. While some of her publications including *Social Motivations of Codeswitching : Evidence from Africa* (1993) deal with the social meanings of code-switching, her other works such as *Duelling Languages* (1993 with a second edition in 1995) and *Contact Languages* (2002) are about the grammatical aspects of intra-sentential switching. Her 2006 book, *Multiple Voices, an Introduction to Bilingualism* considers both sides of code-switching. While introducing her Markedness Model for treatment of the socio-psychological motivations for code-switching, she exhibits with examples from Africa that code-switching is far beyond compensating language deficiency when seen from the sociolinguistic perspective. It is indexical of significant social implications and functions.

1.4.2 Code-switching research in India : Code-switching research in India is relatively a recent phenomenon although skeletal works in the field were done in the 1960s and 1970s. India is known as one of the largest bilingual and multilingual societies of the world and therefore it is a largely potential site for research in this field. It will be worthwhile to take a look at the linguistic information of India according to the 1991 census (such reports have not been published after 1991) :

Number of rationalized mother tongues	- 1576
Number of languages	- 114
Number of scheduled official languages	- 18
National average of bilinguals	- 19.44%
National average of trilinguals	- 7.26%

(Census of India 1991, 5).

Although a significant part of the Indian population is bilingual and multilingual, as seen from the above table, language mixing or switching is one of the “least researched areas” in the country (Chengappa, et.al. 2004, 68).

Gumperz’s “Hindi-Punjabi Code-switching in Delhi” (1964) is considered as one of the earliest specific empirical works in bilingualism and code-switching in India. In this paper, Gumperz analyses cases of linguistic intermingling between the Hindi and Punjabi languages during conversation among the Punjabi-speakers living in Delhi.

Sridhar and Sridhar in their paper “The Syntax and Psycholinguistics of Bilingual Code-mixing” published in 1980 use the terminology of “guest language” and “host language” to describe code-switched utterances. While examining the Kannada–English language mixing, they argue that intrasentential code-switching is a case where guest elements, which have their own internal structure, occur in the sentences of the host language, obeying the placement rules of the host language or the matrix language. In this work, they focus on the intrasentential code-switching with their

research target as to see how and why a speaker changes languages in a single sentence.

Joshi in his paper “Processing of Sentences with Intra-sentential Code-switching” published in 1982 gives an account of the constraints in intra-sentential code-switching citing examples of the Marathi–English language mixing in a generative framework. In this paper Joshi presents a formal model for characterizing intra-sentential code-switching the main features of which are (a) treating the two grammars (languages) asymmetrically; (b) there is no third grammar; (d) the constraints on the switchability are on “closed class items”.

Shrivastava and Ramaswami dwells on the impacts of bilingual learning in the mindset of different groups in society in their paper titled “Effect of bilingualism, SES and sex on convergent and diverge thought process” presented in the UGC National Seminar on *Psycholinguistics in Multilingual Society* at Utkal University, Bhubaneswar in 1984.

Pandaripande examines the Hindi–Marathi bilingual elements in his 1992 paper “Language shift in India : Issues and implications”. However, he calls it language convergence rather than code-switching.

Chidambaram’s paper “A Socio-linguistic Study of Code-switching Among the Cochin Tamils” (2000) describes the language behaviour of the people from various districts of Tamil Nadu who migrated to Cochin city of Kerala. This flock of people comprises mainly the *Coolie* workers and railway platform shopkeepers whose mother tongue is Tamil but have learnt Malayalam for their occupational purposes. The paper also examines the social intimacy as well as distance between the speakers and the hearers and the impact that the relationship aspects cause on their language behaviour in general and code switching in particular.

Annamalai in his book *Managing Multilingualism in India : Political and Linguistic Manifestations* (2001) gives a picture of the political and linguistic dimensions of multilingualism in India. The author establishes here that acquisition of multilingualism takes place through two processes : first, formal schooling and second, socialization at home and at the work place. The former process of language acquisition becomes a tool of power as is the case with English and dominant languages in the regions, and the later strengthens solidarity and identity. The use of multilingualism covers social, economic and political purposes. Therefore, although code-switching constantly takes place among languages, it does not imply that the weaker languages will eventually merge with the stronger languages. While explaining the origin and dynamics operating within the multilingualistic scenario in India, Annamalai points out that language hierarchy arises out of wrong language policies which mainly aims at preservation of linguistic identities rather than language growth. The book finally explores the groups studying the grammatical neighbourhood of languages, and looks at the lexical insertion, language factor and linguistic determinants of language mixing.

Chengappa, Daniel and Bhat (2004) investigates the “similarities and differences in the code-switching behaviours of aphasics and neurologically normal Malayalam–English bilingual speakers” in their paper titled “Language Mixing and Switching in Malayalam–English Bilingual Aphasics”. They takes into consideration the lexical, syntactic, morphological and phonological aspects of language-switching habits of two groups of subjects, viz., “neurologically normal individuals” as the control group and “aphasic subjects” as the experimental group (Ibid. 68–69).

1.4.3 Code-switching research and the Misings : Although code-switching practice has been prevailing amongst the Misings for about three centuries now, the term is altogether new to them. This is mainly because of the fact that neither the users nor the scholars are aware of the scholastic potential of this language behaviour. The practice is merely viewed as a matter of habit and filling of linguistic vacuum. Linguistic vacuum refers to the gap in a speech variety created by absence

of representing words to convey the desired feelings/ideas in that variety. Approached empirically, this practice of switching code back and forth between Mising and Assamese by the native Mising speakers, is an important aspect of their speech behaviour which has significant sociolinguistic implications. An account of the works done so far on the Misings and their language is given below. This includes research papers as well as non-research publications.

The earliest mention of the Misings as Miri is found in the writings of the saint-scholar and socio-religious reformer Srimanta Sankardeva (1449–1568) who is believed to have written his literary and poetic works during 1516–1568 (Pegu, N. 2000, 2-3). Socio-political and cultural references of the Misings are also found in the Chutiya chronicles, and the “Ahom Buronjis”, chronicles of the Ahoms who ruled Assam during 1228–1826. The Persian chronicles written by Shihabuddin Talish who accompanied Nawab Mir-Jumla when he invaded Assam in 1662, and Muhammed Cazim who compiled the annals of Aurangzeb’s reign, extensively refers to the “political, economic and social life of the Miri-Mishmis of the north-east frontier of India” (Doley, D. 1998, 15). But specific studies on the Mising tribe and language began only in the second quarter of the nineteenth century. The year 1837 saw the first ever printing of some Mising words (sixty in number) in Nathan Brown’s article “Comparison of Indo-Chinese Languages” published in “Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal” (Pegu, P. 2003, 23). William Robinson wrote the first ever grammar of the Mising language and published it in the same journal in 1847. J.F. Nidham wrote “Outline Grammar of Shaiyang Miri Language as spoken by the Miris of that clan residing in the neighbourhood of Sadiya” (Shaiyang or Sayang is one of the sects of Mising) in 1886. In 1890, Rajani Kanta Bordoloi brought out a novel *Miri Jiyori* on a Mising subject and entirely on a Mising socio-cultural background. This book which is regarded to be the first full-fledged novel in the Assamese language, gives a picturesque depiction of the Mising society, culture and to some extent language. J. Herbert Lorrain’s *Dictionary of Abor-Miri Language* appeared in 1910 followed by Sonaram Panyang Kataki’s “*Miri Duwan*” and “*Miri Jatir Buronji*” published in 1915 and 1935 respectively. In fact, *Miri Duwan* is the first

book on Mising language written in Assamese (Kuli, 1998, 155). This is followed by Kamal Chandra Padun's *Miri Path* of 1958 and Bibhison Pegu's *Miri Dowan or Mising Agom* of 1963. The scholarship on the Mising language took a new turn with the formation of the Mising Agom Kebang (Mising Language Society) in 1972 which spearheaded a fresh revolution encouraging people to write and research in the Mising language. Consequently, a number of books, journals, articles and magazines written in Mising, Assamese and English began to appear. Tabu Taid, Nahendra Padun and Bhrigumoni Kagyung brought out an illustrative proposal advocating Roman script for the Mising language in "Mising Agom Léga:pé Roman Abíg" (Roman Script for the Mising Language), the maiden work of the kind, in 1980 which received an enthusiastic response from the Mising intelligentsia. Tabu Taid dwells upon the spelling system of the Mising language in his 1982 work *Mising Bhashar Banan Paddhati* and on the lexicography of the language in his 1984 work *A Dictionary of the Mising Language*. Nahendra Padun deals with the sound system, grammar and word division of the language in his works *Mising Bhashar Dhani* and the *Mising Bhashar Lakhyan* respectively both of which appeared in 1989. An empirical study on the morphology of the Mising language was carried out by Basanta Kumar Doley in 1996 in his thesis entitled "A Morphological Study of the Mising Language". The work addresses Mising dialectal variations and phonology apart from various aspects of morphology. Peter Pegu in his book *A History of the Study of Mishing Language* published in 2003 gives a decade-wise analysis on the growth and evolution of the Mising language from 1836 when Nathan Brown, an American Missionary, arrived at Sadiya to preach Christianity, till the year 1985.

1.5.1 Methodology

The interpretation of interpersonal interaction and the use or choice of a given language or another in such interaction is a complex field of study, because this occurs under different situations, with different participants and on different topics. Any speech or utterance so made has some "message" or implication" in it (Myers-Scotton 2006). Therefore, the choice of language bears significant social meanings depending upon the behavioural environment of the concerned society. A number of

factors influence and motivate the choices that speakers make during speech interaction. In order to interpret these factors and analyze the social values associated with the language change in regard to the target group, the Markedness Model of Myers-Scotton (1983, 2006) is employed.

1.5.2 Markedness Model : The Markedness Model views linguistic choices as negotiations of self-identity and the desired relationships with others which speakers exercise taking into account the context and the prevailing social norms. Introduced by Myers-Scotton in 1983, the Markedness Model “is more centered on the notion that speakers make choices because of their own goals” (Myers-Scotton 2006). It means that by changing language in course of a conversation, the speaker tries to meet his/her goal(s) which the listeners or other participants interpret. Therefore, the speaker makes his/her choice of code as per the reaction of the listeners. Here, “‘code’ is just one of the cover terms for ways of speaking, so it can refer to separate languages, dialects, or styles” (Myers-Scotton 2006).

The Markedness Model establishes “a principled procedure that both speakers and listeners use to judge any linguistic choice that they might make or hear as more or less “marked”, given the interaction in which it occurs” (Myers-Scotton 2006). Members of a society develop from experience and observation a sense of identification that there is a continuum of choices for a particular interaction type under a given setting. These choices are referred to as “unmarked”. Their communicative competence involves structures that are innate, and stored and assembled in the course of language use.

Unmarked choices : Unmarked choices of language are those that are more or less expected as medium of communication in the same setting, with the same participants and on the same topic. In this context, Myers-Scotton refers to a “Rights and Obligations set” as part of the normative expectations for each type of interaction. This represents a set of indexical rights and obligations of the members of a society established by the prevailing social norms. “In regard to language”, she

says, “the unmarked choice is the linguistic reflection of any specific Rights and Obligation set” (Myers-Scotton 2006). For example, for bilinguals in France, the unmarked choice to use in a government office is French, not any other languages that they speak. But for most Spanish–English bilinguals in the United States particularly the recently arrived ones, the unmarked choice to use with elderly relatives at family gatherings is Spanish (Source : Myers-Scotton 2006).

The “unmarked choice” when made by a speaker, does not create any ripples in the linguistic wave of the society because it is the expected choice. This choice is determined by the established community norms and behaviour based on cultural values. These cultural values are normally set by members of the family, social circles, mainly by the dominant members of the society. For example, if the teacher is seen bowing while wishing “good morning” to seniors over and over again, the students too will, in course of time, develop a similar habit. This is an example of influence by “symbolic domination”.

What counts as an unmarked choice may vary a great deal, depending on the context and participants. As already mentioned above, there is always a continuum of language for a given context on the basis of which choices are considered unmarked (appropriate in that context) or marked. Further, social norms may change over time and are open to negotiation in any new conversation or new context and they may also change from place to place or people to people. Therefore, unmarked choices are dynamic in nature and amenable to change as per new requirements.

Marked choices : Marked choices are those that are not pre-known or predictable in the given Rights and Obligation set. Under this principle, making a choice is a negotiation of Rights and Obligations between the speaker and the listener(s) for a given interaction. This means that the speaker making a marked choice is calling for a new situation, for a new Rights and Obligation set to be in effect for the concerned interaction. “Thus, a choice that is marked in interaction X would be unmarked in interaction Y, the one that the speaker wishes to be in effect. Generally speaking, a

marked choice is a negotiation about the speaker's persona (who the speaker is) and the speaker's relation to other participants. Thus, making a marked choice is a negotiation about either the solidarity or power dimension (or both)" (Myers-Scotton 2006).

In the same work, Myers-Scotton gives an example of different choices that involves styles within one language. A young man meets his girlfriend's father for the first time. This is an important occasion as, after all, the father is an older person with status as the parent of his girlfriend. Also, the father is potentially a very important person in the young man's life, i.e., a potential father-in-law. In most cases, the unmarked choice would be relatively formal, something along the lines of "It's a pleasure to meet you, sir". Instead, the young man's greeting is only, "Hi there!" This is a marked choice because this choice of language is not normally expected under such a situation or in a Rights and Obligation set prevailing in the society.

The young man in the above example is not making the choice that the expected Rights and Obligations set would call for, that is, special respect for age and parenthood. He is making a marked choice and by doing this, he is giving a sort of signal that he does not see this meeting as anything different from a first encounter with any anyone else. He is also implying that the father is not someone he recognizes as a special person or having a higher status.

The rational aspect of the Markedness Model is that speakers make choices not because the choices are more unmarked or more marked, but they do with a sense that the choices will bring them the best results. For this purpose, they make assessments, they "weigh the relative costs and rewards of speaking one language rather than another" (Myers-Scotton 2006). Here, 'rational' means that the speaker makes mental calculations involving his/her goals and memory regarding other interactions and experiences. This may not necessarily mean that the choice so made is the best choice. What makes choices rational "is the premise that the speaker makes *cognitive calculations* that take account of how the speaker views available

evidence that indicates likely outcomes of choices, but the speaker also considers his or her own values and beliefs. So rational choices are subjective, with the emphasis on mental calculations about getting the best outcome” (Myers-Scotton 2006).

The Markedness Model applies to all kinds of language choices that speakers make under different situations and with different communicative intents. An illustrative investigation on its application to the languages choices of the target group of the present study is given in Chapter IV.

1.5.3 Collection of Data (a) Primary : For the purpose of finding specific facts from the field, the following sociolinguistic methods were used :

1. Interview (semi-structured): As the topic is on language behaviour, interviews were conducted in the two-way communication method. Under this, initially questions were asked but at a later stage, new questions-answers were achieved interactively. The interviewees included different age groups, gender and from different occupational, educational and economic backgrounds. The recorded interviews were later written out and translated into English and used for the purpose.
2. Participatory Observation: In order to collect first-hand information about the language behaviour of the Misings in various situations, group discussions were organized drawing people from various backgrounds. In such discussions, the participants were made aware of the topic and the purpose and the movement of language was observed as a participant observer.
3. Non-participatory Observation: Under this method, the proceedings of a discussion or meeting were observed without making the participants aware of the topic and the purpose. The language behaviour of various individuals and groups was studied during meetings, social gatherings, festivals and discussions of both formal and informal nature.

The data and information were collected by traveling across the Mising inhabited areas of the Brahmaputra valley and visiting a number of villages and towns/cities. For the purpose of specific data collection and case studies, three villages were taken from different parts of the Mising inhabited areas, two from the north bank (one from the eastern most district of Dhemaji and the other from the western most district of Sonitpur) and one from the south bank of the Brahmaputra. Two cities, one the capital city of Assam and the other a major city in upper Assam, were taken to get an account of the language behaviour of the urban dwellers. The villages and cities are :

Villages:	Village Gali	Village Bhalukaguri Kutum
	Sub-Division – Jonai	Sub-Division – Gohpur
	District – Dhemaji, Assam	District – Sonitpur, Assam
	Village Gomari	
	Sub-Division – Golaghat	
	District – Golaghat, Assam	
Cities :	Guwahati	Dibrugarh
	District Kamrup, Assam	District Dibrugarh, Assam

Apart from the above villages and cities, a number of other villages and towns were also visited. While collecting data in the field, sufficient care was taken to get a representative cross-section of the Mising populace. The persons interacted with included individuals of different age groups, sex, economic backgrounds, literates, semi-literates, illiterates, cultivators, job holders, executives, and unemployed. An extensive survey was carried out to find facts related to the language use of the dwellers of these villages and cities vis-à-vis their population ratio, percentage of other linguistic groups, number of educational institutions, occupation, and religion. Four group discussions were organized in the villages and two in the cities, and more than eighty persons were interacted with or interviewed.

(b) Secondary : Apart from the field works, relevant information were collected from various printed materials and audio-visuals available in Assamese, Mising and English. For this, libraries of educational institutes, community centres, research centres and government agencies were used.

1.5.4 The threat perception and the possibility of displacement of the Mising language on account of the use of code-switching, is examined in Chapter IV in the light of the three-phase formula of language-shift propounded by Brenzenger (1997).

1.6.1 Conclusion : In bilingual or multilingual societies, the ability to speak more than one language is regarded as an important skill. People with such skill speak one language at home and another at the workplace and yet another during interaction in the wider social circle. These languages in the repertoire of the speakers may also be simultaneously used in a single conversation. “These various languages are usually acquired naturally and unselfconsciously, and the shifts from one to another are made without hesitation” (Wadhaugh 2002, 95). Such speakers do not necessarily have equal competence in all the languages in their repertoire, rather the degree of competence is varying depending upon their education level, association and learning. “The differences in competence in the various languages might range from the command of a few lexical items, formulaic expressions such as greetings, and rudimentary conversational skills all the way to excellent command of the grammar and vocabulary and specialized register and style” (Sridhar 1996, 50). Linguists have found it not all easy to frame grammatical rules on bilingualism partly because of the irregularity in use of the languages involved and partly because the languages have their own different grammatical systems. In this context, Ronald Wadhaugh (2002, 2) says, “It is certainly something different from, as is much more considerable than, the kinds of knowledge we see described in most of the grammars we find on library shelves, no matter how good these grammars may be.” However, such grammatical strictures shall be more applicable to the structural approach to bilingualism. Since the present study deals with the social insights of language shift during conversation, the analytical devices used are more sociolinguistic than structural.

The literature survey in Section 1.4.3 above, shows that the bilingual practice of the Misings is an unexplored area for researchers. It is observed that almost all Misings are by and large bilingual and resort to code-switching during oral communications and to some extent in written communication. This practice that has become an essential quality of their speech behaviour, is associated with various aspects of social, cultural and psychological speech strategies which the speakers often make during interactions. While considering the case of the Misings, the present work attempts to find out through an empirical investigation the answer to the question as to why speakers shift languages during speech interaction.

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CHAPTER II

Code-Switching and the Misings

[The chapter is in three parts. The first part is a conceptual and contextual study on code-switching and bilingualism. The second part gives an introduction of the target group, the Misings including a historical survey of their origin, migration and settlement in the Brahmaputra valley. The settlement of the Misings in the valley served as a turning point to this otherwise nomadic tribe in that it brought about a permanence to their living and also a major socio-cultural and linguistic conglomeration in the valley. The third part deals with the origin, growth and the present scenario of their language.]

2.1.1 Code-switching and Bilingualism

Linguistic diversity is a vital component of human life in the society. In bilingual or multilingual societies, speakers of one linguistic group quite often use phonemes, clauses and even independent sentences of other language(s) active in the social circle. Such speakers symmetrically produce utterances in which they switch in and out from one language to another several times in speech. According to Crystal (1987), code or language switching occurs when an individual alternates between two languages during his/her speech with another bilingual. A bilingual may be said to be one who is able to communicate, in varying degrees, in a second language. This includes those who make irregular use of a second language, dormant bilinguals

(who know a second language but have not used it for some time) and those who have considerable skill in a second language. In such code-switching, different forms take place, such as, phrases from both the languages succeeding each other, alteration of sentences, and switching for a longer narrative and return to the matrix language.

John Gumperz defines code-switching as “The juxtaposition within the same speech, exchange of passages of speech belonging to two different grammatical systems or subsystems” (Gumperz 1982, 59). He describes code-switching as discourse exchanges which form a single unitary interactional whole, “Speakers communicate fluently, maintaining an even flow of talk. No hesitation pauses, changes in sentence rhythm, pitch level or intonation contour mark the shift in code. There is nothing in the exchange as a whole to indicate that speakers don't understand each other. Apart from the alternation itself, the passages have all the earmarks of ordinary conversation in a single language” (Ibid. 60).

According to Shana Poplack, “Code-switching refers to the mixing by bilinguals (or multilinguals) of two or more languages in discourse, often with no change of interlocutor or topic. Such mixing may take place at any level of linguistic structure, but its occurrence within the confines of a single sentence, constituent or even word, has attracted most linguistic attention” (Poplack 1980, 1). She discusses two grammatical constraints on code-switching: (a) a free-morpheme constraint which states that a switch cannot occur between a lexical form and a bound morpheme unless the former has been phonologically integrated into the language of the latter, and (b) the equivalence constraint rule which states that the word order immediately before and immediately after a switching point should exist in the two languages to make it possible for a switch to take place. The two languages involved can then be interchanged freely (Poplack 1980, 581-618).

Carol Myers-Scotton observes that, “In many of the world's bilingual communities, fluent bilinguals sometimes engage in code-switching by producing discourses which, in the same conversational turn or in consecutive turns, include morphemes

from two or more of the varieties in their linguistic repertoire” (Myers-Scotton 1997, 217). She defines code-switching as “the use of two language varieties in the same conversation, not counting established borrowed words or phrases from one variety into the other. These two varieties can occur in a number of structural configurations, but there are two general types, inter-sentential CS, which is most often studied for its social features, and intra-sentential CS, which is more studied for its grammatical structure.” (Myers-Scotton 2007).

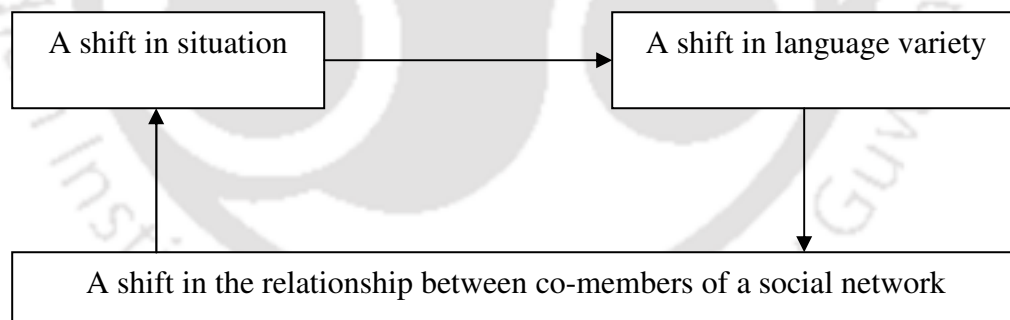
Peter Auer refers to code-switching as the “alternating use of two or more languages within one conversation” (Auer 1998, 3). His *Bilingual Conversation* published in 1984 gives a new dimension to the definition of code-switching situation. He states that code-switching situation is not a predetermined set of norms functioning solely as a constraint on linguistic performance, but it is an interactively achieved phenomenon. In bilingual conversation, “whatever language a participant chooses for the organization of his/her turn, or for an utterance which is part of the turn, the choice exerts an influence on subsequent language choices by the same or other speakers” (Auer 1984, 5).

Cook (1991) gives a perspective of the degree of use of code-switching by bilinguals in normal conversations by outlining that code-switching consists of 84% single word switches, 10% phrase switches and 6% clause and sentence switching on an average. As Gysels (1992) states, code-switching implies some degree of competence in the languages being used even if bilingual fluency is not stable. “It may be used to achieve two things: (a) fill a linguistic/conceptual gap, or (b) for other multiple communicative purposes” (Gysels 1992, 41, 56).

It is evident therefore, that change or shift of speech variety during conversation has a number of socio-psychological aspects associated with it apart from its surface value. In a multi-speech community, every well-formed member of the society has at his/her disposal a repertoire of linguistic choices from which he/she selects for use the appropriate stock depending upon the situation, topic of discourse or networks of

socio-cultural relations. A modern society has several speech networks. “Exponents of sociolinguistics maintain that the ability to use one’s language correctly in a variety of socially determined situations is as much and as central a part of linguistic ‘competence’ as the ability to produce grammatically well-formed sentences. What we do actually produce is a rule-governed realization of a complex network of situationally and culturally determined choices” (Krishnaswami et.al. 1992, 42-43). These choices are determined by various factors, as shifts in situation require shifts in language varieties. This activity involves the social and psychological behaviour, mood and relative social positions of the participants (addresser and addressee); the distinguishing features of the socio-cultural setting; and the topic of discourse.

The categories of shifts are interrelated to each other. A shift in situation may require a shift in language variety. A shift in language variety may signal a shift in the relationship between co-members of a social network, or a shift in the topic and purpose of their interaction, or shift in the privacy or locale of their interaction. This may be represented diagrammatically as :



(Source : Krishnaswami, et.al. 1992, 43)

2.1.2 There are generally two types of code-switching, i.e., inter-sentential switching and intra-sentential switching. Inter-sentential code-switching is a change of language or variety between independent sentences but in the same conversation. The extent of a switch in such a switching can be one sentence or many more in an extended discourse. The inter-sentential code-switching is more often studied for the

social features and motivations associated with the switching. The following examples will make the idea clearer :

Example 1

Setting : On a busy city highway, a flying officer of the Indian Air Force is stopped at a police check post on the Western Express Highway in Mumbai. The road is scheduled to be taken by a VVIP motorcade shortly. The policeman on duty stops the car driven by the officer (in civvies) with his friend in the other front seat, and interrogates him. (English portion of the speech is in italics and the English translation of the Hindi speech is in brackets) :

Policeman : *Aap kahan se ayen hein, yeh koun hein?* (Where are you coming from, who is this man?)

(The Pilot Officer shows his identity card)

Policeman : *You are a Pilot.* Thik hei, jao. (Okay, go).

(Observed by the author on 23 October 2003 in Mumbai)

Example 2

Setting : A study conducted on bilingual teaching and learning amongst the English-Spanish bilinguals in the United States of America reports the following code-switching in a class-room situation. The class consisting of the teacher, parents and children discuss their families in a semi-formal situation as they sit on the rug in a semi-circle. (English in italics and English translation of Spanish in brackets) :

Teacher : *How about you, Teresa?* ¿Quién vive contigo en tu familia en tu casa?
(Who lives with you in your home)?

Pupil : *My mother, my father, my brother.*

Parent : *No tienes hermano, no tienes hermano tú*
(You don't have a brother, you don't have a brother).

Teacher : *Quieres un hermano pero no hay* (You want a brother but there isn't one). *Would you like to have a brother? What about a sister?...*

(Source : Quintero 2006, 80.)

Example 3

Setting : Movies serve as the picture gallery of a society and its people of a particular age. They present a vivid audio-visual depiction of the environs and lifestyle of the people of the age. Among the things reflected in films, the speech behaviour of the people of the age is representative of many an important aspect of basic human qualities. Therefore, a movie is the mouth piece of the socio-cultural practices and beliefs of the age that it represents. In such a depiction of the contemporary verbal interaction, the following Hindi–English code-switching occurs in a Hindi film song:

Hero : Dil mera churaya kyon, zab ye dil todna hi tha
Hum se dil lagaya kyon, hum se mooh modnahi tha
Why did you break my heart
Why did you fall in love
Why did you go away, away, away
Dil mera churaya kyon

English Translation: Why did you steal my heart, if you had to break it
Why did you put your heart to mine, if it had to turn back
Why did you break my heart,
Why did you fall in love,
Why did you go away, away, away
Why did you steal my heart

(Source : Hindi film “Akele Hum Akele Tum”)

In the above examples, the speaker/singer moves out of L1, makes specific expressions in L2 and moves back to L1 for other expressions, mostly to conclude the speech. These language alternations take place in independent sentences, that is, inter-sententially.

2.1.3 An intra-sentential code-switching is a change of language within the boundaries of a sentence. It includes bilingual constituents within a clause which is

called an intra-clause switching. But such a switch is regarded to be a specific sub-type of intra-sentential code-switching itself.

Example 1

Setting : The office chamber of the head of an institution. The boss tells one of his subordinate officers that it is his (the officer's) duty to own the responsibility of a mistake found to have occurred in the section of which he is the head.

Boss : Bhoor tu apunar *section-ot hoise and you are the head of the section.*
Train accident hole, Lalu Prasad-e dayittya grohon kori resign dibo
lage buli koi. Hei buli teun nije train khon solai accident ghotaisile
neki ?

English : The mistake has occurred in your section and you are the head of it.

Translation: When a train accident occurs, Lalu Prasad (the Railway Minister of India) is held responsible and has to resign (people demand his resignation). Does it mean that he was driving the train himself and caused the accident ?

(Observed by the author on June 12, 2007 at Tezpur University)

Example 2

Setting : A roadside city bus stop in the morning. The number of city buses plying on the roads is very few as the private bus owners' association is observing a *chakka bandh* (closure of wheels). A number of college-going boys and girls are stranded at the bus stop unable to board the few overcrowded government-operated buses. One of the girls calls up her brother who is a student of another city college and who normally goes to college on his motor-bike. She asks her brother to drop her at college and the following Assamese-English code-switching takes place in their conversation. (English in italics and English translation of the Assamese speech in brackets) :

Sister : Tumi muk *college*-ot *just drop* kari ahilei hobo, *while coming back* moi *manage* kori lom (It'l be alright if you just drop me in college, while coming back, I'll manage).

Brother : Thik ase, tumi rastat *friend*-or gharot humai *late* koribo nuwariba, kintu. Jodi kora, *I'll fly off*. (Alright, but you won't drop in on your friend on the way and be late. If you do so, I'll leave you there and go off).

(Observed by the author at Ganeshguri, Guwahati on February 9, 2003)

Both inter-sentential and intra-sentential types of code-switching may occur in the same discourse although they may vary in terms of the degree of social meaning that the change of code denotes. From structural point of view, the intra-sentential or intra-clausal switching facilitates a clearer analysis of the constituent units of the concerned sentence or the clause. This is because, the participating languages find themselves closer to each other within a sentence or a clause and thereby their functional unity is more cooperative to each other. Further, within a sentence, the control of the complementing clause is ensured over the functions of the other units of the sentence, may be in a different language. In an inter-sentential switching, on the other hand, the sentences are the units studied and they may not consist of equal structures as the system of structural construct may vary when language changes. However, since the present study directs its attention to the sociolinguistic side of code-switching, it examines the social meanings and motivations that are associated with the change of language in a single conversation taking into account both inter-sentential and intra-sentential switches.

2.1.4 In bilingual or multilingual societies, code-switching is used as a communicative strategy; as verbal devices for serving various purposes and passing diverse messages of speakers. Although the choice of language in such expressions seems individual, it carries a variety of symbolic social meanings. The language varieties used in the code-switching often express the socio-psychological values associated with the in-speech change of language. The bilingual speakers take

advantage of this notion when they speak one variety rather than another in the same speech. Myers-Scotton suggests that these values mostly come from two general sources, “(a) the settings or situations in which a particular variety is habitually used in the community; and (b) how different persons use the varieties so that their use comes to reflect relationships of power or solidarity” (Myers-Scotton 2006, 28). While using different languages or varieties, bilinguals or multilinguals produce a chain of codes, such as, from L1 to L2 and again from L2 to L3 and it goes on depending upon the repertoire of the speakers. This linguistic chain is the reflection of a chain of social relations already existing in the society. Language choice is done during conversation mainly to meet the requirements of different verbal situations because speakers know that certain topics are handled better and more appropriately in some language than in another in a particular situation or context. But, this knowledge of the functions of different languages is acquired from the social environs in which the speakers have been living. It is interesting to note that in many cases, the speakers are unaware of the implications that their choice of language is making.

Sometimes, the ability to switch codes controls the ability to switch roles. In bilingual or multilingual settings, code-switching is regulated by stylistic considerations apart from the topic of discourse. “Some speakers acquire the habit of speaking of topic X in language A partly because that is the language in which they are trained to deal with the topic, and partly because language B may currently lack as exact and as many terms for handling topic X as language A has” (Krishnaswami, Verma & Nagarajan 1992, 46). In such contexts, the speaker will use words, clauses and even sentences of language A even when their equivalents are available in language B. Some of the formulaic expressions in some language are so deeply embedded in some societies that they become part of their trait.

Example 1

Setting : The front sitting room of RD’s in-laws’ household. RD comes from the wash basin after breakfast and he is slightly in a hurry to go out. He quickly uses a

part of his dress for drying his hands rather than looking around for a napkin when his sister-in-law comes to him with a napkin in her hands :

Sister-in-law : Aap apna haat *dress* pe kiyon poonch diya? (Why have you dried your hands with your dress ?)

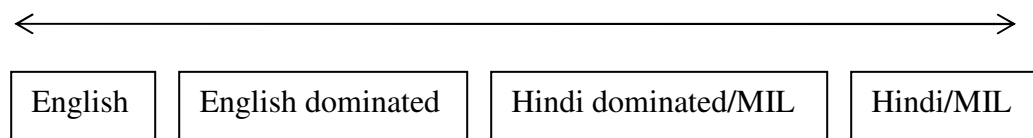
RD : Kiyon ki, tumne *napkin* diya hi nahin. (Because, you didn't give a napkin.)

Sister-in-law : *Old habits die hard.*

(Observed by the author on September 26, 2003 in Guwahati)

In this example, two things emanate from the sister-in-law's switch-over from Hindi to English. First, the sister-in-law is trained to understand the meaning and use of the popular English proverb "Old habits die hard". Therefore, it is a habitual practice for her and also in her circle to use it in such a situation. Second, she uses it because she thinks it is the most effective way to convey her message to the addressee (to remind her brother-in-law of his habits in a teasing manner). Here, there is a fear that the message may get distorted or lose its original effectiveness if said in Hindi, the language in which the conversation originated.

2.1.5 In multilingual societies like that in India, the speakers in some places have a wider repertoire with a number of linguistic choices in hand. In the present day Indian society, English is frequently used in formal situations to refer to technical and higher educational topics while Hindi and other major Indian languages are used for informal and personalized statements. In between these two extremes, we find different degrees of mixtures:



Gumperz notes the "code-switching styles" of Hindi and Punjabi spoken in Delhi. The use of code-switching between Hindi and Punjabi in Delhi gives rise to mixed

styles of speech which illustrates how languages can “seem to merge” in stable bilingual communities. “One striking linguistic aspect of the code-switching situation is the fact that we find few of the strictures against structural borrowing commonly reported in the linguistic literature. Interference extends to all levels of the grammar – morphemic, morphophonemic and phonological – as well as to lexicon. It almost seems as if the two languages were gradually merging” (Gumperz 1964, 1123).

In case of simultaneous bilingualism where two languages are acquired in infancy, both are represented in the human faculty in the same way. But in case of multilingualism in which more than two languages are acquired at the school level, like the children in many parts of India, the representation is situation and topic centric. Normally, the medium in which the child acquires knowledge of different subjects dominates his mind while discussing those topics. For example, if the mother tongue of a child is Assamese and he learns geography through English medium, his overall linguistic dominance during discourse on the topic will be English although he begins his talk in Assamese. Generally, children in India receive school or higher education in one language and learn one or two other languages as major Indian languages. Accordingly, his/her repertoire includes two or three systematically acquired languages and a few more that he acquires from his contacts with other groups in the society. Therefore, he/she will have a number of linguistic choices during a discourse which he uses as demanded by the situation or topic of discourse.

2.1.6 : Bilingualism and multiculturalism facilitate and support the thinking and communication faculties of the users. The learning and use of two or more languages by a person involves certain important stages of language learning. The two major aspects of the bilingual development process are the notion of code-switching and the notion of inter-language. Use of bilingualism and code-switching may give birth to an inter-language, that is, a new language in between the two languages. This inter-language may be a kind of pidgin or creole or a dialect consisting of speech

passages of the languages involved. In 1981 Pit Corder created a visual model to portray the inter-language notion with three overlapping circles as shown in Figure 2.1 below (Corder 1981) :

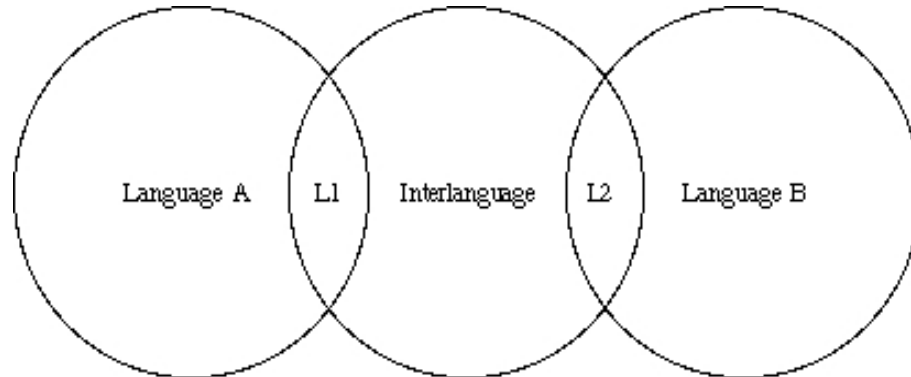


Figure 2.1

Luisa Duran adapts Corder's model and gives a fresh symbol with only two overlapping circles to give a summary of different aspects of inter-language notion as shown in Figure 2.2 (Duran 1994, "Appendix II").

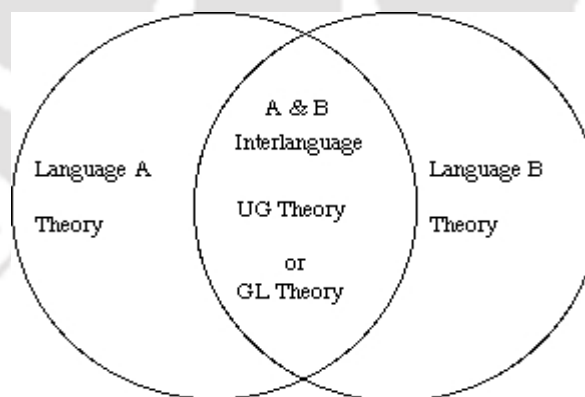


Figure 2.2

The above symbols explain the representation of Language A, Language B and an inter-language created as a result of use of these languages. The use of code-

switching, and other cross-linguistic phenomena contribute to the growth of such an inter-language which come up with elements of the systems and subsystems of both the languages. This might create a new phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics which have similarities and dissimilarities on different levels with Language A and Language B. (Details given as Appendix III).

In a bilingual and multicultural environment, “one language might help the other, and sometimes both together may create a new idea, image, thought, behaviour, outlook, organization, and adaptation, and thus move culture to new adaptive places in the dynamics of cross-cultural life” (Duran 1994, 7).

2.1.7 The issue of varying definitions

The definition of use of two or more languages in a single speech interaction is varying among researchers. “As with any aspect of language contact phenomena, research on CS is plagued by the thorny issue of terminology confusion. Not all researchers use the same terms in the same way, nor do they agree on the territory covered by terms such as *code-switching*, *code-mixing*, *borrowing*, or *code-alternation*.” (Boztepe, acc. 2006). Distinctive conceptual views have been put forth by different groups of authors in relation to these terms. For example, Myers-Scotton (1993), Milroy and Muysken (1995), Gardner-Chloros (1991), use code-switching as a cover term to refer to the phenomena of change of languages or dialects in the same conversation, be it between different languages or between the dialect varieties of a single language. This is a part of what Gumperz (1982, 59) means by his definition of code-switching as the juxtaposition of speech passages belonging to different grammatical systems or subsystems, in the same speech interaction. But other authors, such as, Kachru (1983), Singh (1985), Sridhar & Sridhar (1980) like to use the term code-switching in relation to inter-sentential switches only. Instead, they prefer to use the term *code-mixing* to refer to intra-sentential switches. “The reason is that only *code-mixing* (i.e., intra-sentential CS) requires the integration of the rules of the two languages involved in the discourse. But as far as the structural constraints are concerned, the intra- vs. inter-sentential distinction can equally well distinguish the two types of switches. So it largely remains as a matter of individual preference,

but at the same time it creates unnecessary confusion.” (Boztepe, acc. 2006). According to this group of authors including Pfaff (1979), the term *code-mixing* is more appropriate than *code-switching* to be used as an umbrella term to refer to the aspects of conversational language change including code-switching and borrowing. Yet another researcher Peter Auer (1995) and his associates prefer to use the term *code-alternation* as a hyponym to replace *code-switching* for this purpose. But this term which denotes longer stretches of language change in a speech, may not represent all elements represented by the term *code-switching*.

Researchers are again divided in differentiating the terms, code-switching and borrowing. While Poplack, Wheeler, and Westwood (1987), Sankoff and Poplack (1981), and Sankoff, Poplack, and Vanniarajan (1990) say that the noun forms or single words inserted into a sentence from another language may be taken as borrowing while the longer stretches of passage are code-switching. “They propose morphosyntactic and phonological integration of foreign words into the recipient language as criteria for establishing the status of such single words.” (Boztepe acc. 2006). On the other hand, researchers, such as, Bentahila & Davies (1983), and Myers-Scotton (1993a), recognize single-word change and multiple-word change of language as two forms of code-switching rather than seeing them as distinct processes. While quoting Eastman (1992) in this context, Boztepe (2006) says that if we want to understand the social and cultural processes involved in code-switching, it is crucial to “free ourselves of the need to categorize any instance of seemingly non-native material in language as a borrowing or a switch” because for such pursuits, the “efforts to distinguish code-switching, code-mixing and borrowing are doomed” (Eastman 1992, 1).

However, for the purpose of maintaining a terminological uniformity in the present study, the term *code-switching* is used to mean all forms of language alternation including inter-sentential alternations, intra-sentential or intra-clausal switches and single word switches. Since the concentration of this work is on finding the social meanings and motivations of code-switching, focus is cast on the *why* factor rather

than the *how* factor of this bilingual or multilingual practice of speakers. However, occasionally as required, the term *borrowing* is used to refer to certain single words used in L1 from L2 or L3 or vice versa, but without a significant role in the grammatical system of the sentence.

2.2.1 The Misings

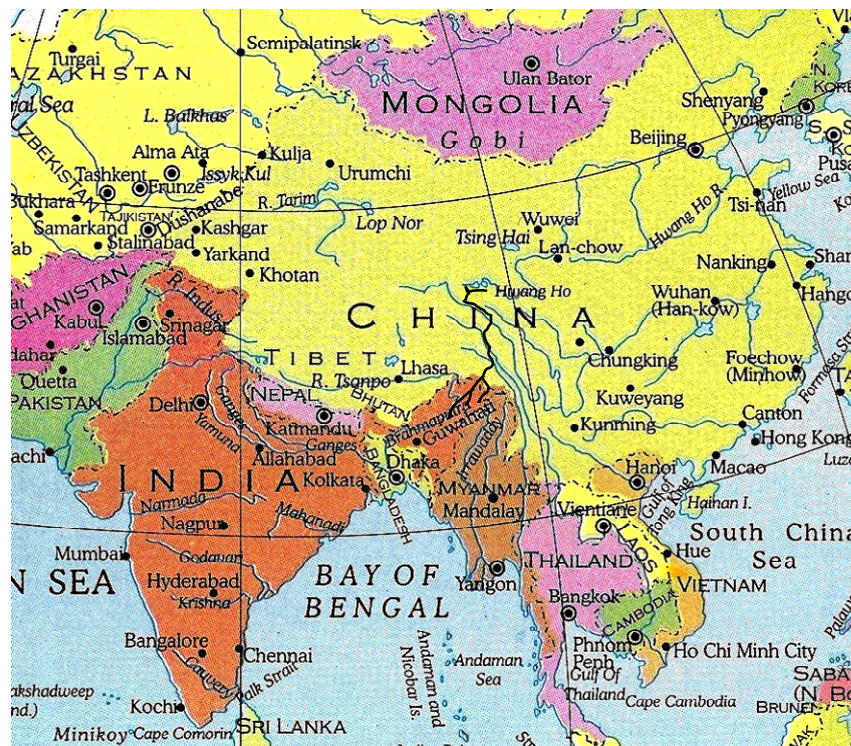
The history of origin, migration and settlement of the Misings is based mainly on their oral tradition. While giving a description of the universe and its creation, *Mibu A:bangs* meaning “verses of the priest” says that the universe consists of one earth and two other ethereal worlds, namely, *Régi:-Régam*, *Dong-Among* and *Ui-Among*. (Padun 1974). *Régi:-Régam* refers to the heaven or the Kingdom of Gods, *Dong-Among* to the earth, and *Ui-Among* to the purgatory or the Abode of Spirits. In terms of Mising cosmology, *Régi:-Régam*, *Dong-Among* and *Ui-Among* together form the celestial configuration of *Kéyum* or the Universe. *Régi:-Régam* and *Dong-Among* remain within the orbit of the solar fraternity whereas the *Ui-Among* exists outside the host of the solar panorama and is shrouded in clouds of eternal darkness.

According to Mising legends, when God created the *Kéyum* (Universe), there was no man, no matter, no soil, no water; neither was the sun nor the moon, "Mi kamangai, Mimang kamangai, Do:nyi kamangai, Po:lo kamangai, Among kamangai, Asi kamangai" (Pegu, NC 1956). Celestial emptiness engulfed the space with foggy mist and obscurity, and an ocean of haze prevailed infinitely. God created heaven and called it *Ki:li Kanggey* (Pegu, Peter 1997). Also, God brought forth five generations, in steady succession, of the divine family in *Ki:li Kanggey* to rule, administer and proclaim the Kingdom of Gods in heaven. They were called *Ka:si*, *Siyang*, *Angbo*, *Bomuk* and *Muxéng*, seniority in that order. The sixth generation, viz., *Sédi* with his cohort *Mélo* came down to the earth in person with body and soul from heaven and caused human inhabitation on *Dong-Among* or the Earth. Man on earth is the progeny of *Sédi Ba:bu* and *Mé:lo Na:né* (*Sédi*-father and *Mé:lo*-mother). *Sédi Ba:bu* was thus the first father and *Mé:lo Na:né* the first mother of human beings on earth, according to *Mibu A:bangs*.

The Misings belong to the Indo-Mongoloid group of the Indian population. They migrated from the upper courses of the river Huang-Ho and Yangtse-Kiang in North-west China and entered India around 2000 B.C. and finally landed in the Brahmaputra valley between the thirteenth century and the fourteenth century A.D. (Pegu, Nomal 1998, 34). On entering India through the north-east frontiers bordering China, they occupied a chain of lofty mountains stretching over the Subansiri, Siang and Lohit districts of present Arunachal Pradesh, formerly known as NEFA (North East Frontier Agency) much before they came down to the Brahmaputra valley of Assam (www.mishing.com). These lush mountainous ranges of Arunachal Pradesh were previously called the hills of Aka, Dafla, Abor, Miri and Mishmi (henceforth referred to as *Adamm Hills*) and the early historians knew the overall population of these Hills as "Miri-Mishimis". The Mughal historian Mohammed Casim recorded in 1799, "Uttarcul begins at Gowahutty, which is the boundary of His Majesty's territorial possessions, and terminates in mountains inhabited by a tribe called Meeri-Mechmi" (Casim 1799). Here, His Majesty referred to was the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb in Delhi. This region of *Adamm Hills* lies within the broad geographical division of the longitude from 92' 0" degree East to 96' 5" degree East and the latitude from 26' 0" degree North to 30' 0" degree North.

The history of the origin and migration of the Misings to the *Adamm Hills* or the present Arunachal Pradesh is still under investigation and research. A few available records of the nineteenth century publications make us believe that, besides those who entered through Northern Hills, another group of the Mising origin had entered the Assam valley through Kachin Hills crossing the Irrawadi river in the Burmese territory. In any case, their dwelling in North-west China in the distant past may now be taken as an established fact. Dr. Suniti Kumar Chatterjee mentions in his *Kirata-Jana-Kriti* of a tribe in Eastern India called *Kirata*, known for their expertise in archery and hunting, was found to be a conglomeration of several small clans including the Misings (Chatterjee 1952). Dr. N. C. Pegu (1998) has estimated the time of migration of this *Adamm* conglomeration from North-West China to the

Arunachal valley to be as early as two thousand years before the Christian era. The cultural affinity of the Mising community with that of ancient Chinese traditions has convincingly been compared by Peter Pegu (1998, 16) and Dr. N. C. Pegu, (2000, 37) collecting reliable information from different sources including the works of Parker (1908), Garnet (1968) and Fitzgerald (1942) who are known for their outstanding contributions to the history of ancient China. They have drawn parallel lines between the two nationalities in respect of many of their old customs as well as beliefs. These include ancestral worship as religious practices, transformation of human soul into divine entity, marriage and sexuality, performance of festival and ceremonies for propitiation bumper crops, construction and patterns of houses, mono-syllabic character of their language, rearing of animals and their use in sacrificial feasts. This apparently confirms the oneness in culture and social systems of the two ancient communities.



Shows the early migration of the Misings

Figure 2.3

There is no recorded document on the journey taken by the Misings from North-west China to the Siang valley. However, based on legends, *Mibu A:bangs* and existing folklores, Dr. N.C. Pegu (2000, 38) has drawn a probable route of the migration, considering accessibility and topographical conditions that existed during the period in the region. He says, "However, going by the meaning and imagination of prevailing legends of the community a probable route of the journey has now been traced out." From the mountainous outskirts of Langzhou, Yangdeng and Mine in the North-west China, they had moved eastward crossing the Yangtse Kiang river and settled down for a longer period at the foothills of the Bayan Hara valley where the Yalum Kiang river begins its course. In Sino-Tibetan languages the river names are normally tagged with the word 'kiang'. The pronunciation of 'k' in kiang is typically accented in their tongues, which many foreigners often replace with the sound of 'j', as *kiang* with *jiang*. For example, the Tibetan portion of the river Brahmaputra before entering the Indian territory, is called Yarlung Zangbo Jiang. The big rivers in the eastern Tibet and southern part of China have likewise been named as Nu Jiang, Lancang Jiang, Yinsha Jiang, Yalong Jiang, Min Jiang and Tua Jiang (Atlas 1997, 64). In Mising folk tales, the Yalum Kiang or Yalong Jiang is called Yalum Siang. It is said, the valley was abundant with precious metals like valuable stones and beads of different colours (Pegu, Dr. NC, 2000, 38). And they procured large numbers of these precious stones, gems and colourful beads from the valley and preserved them and handed them down from one generation to another as rare specimens. In Mising, these relics are called Pongku Tadok or Dokné Tadok and are used only in certain occasions like weddings and religious functions. Further down the river Yalum Kiang, they moved southward and then towards the west. They crossed the rivers Yalum Kiang, Yangtse Kiang, Mekong (Lancang Jiang), and Chaviruna. The Chaviruna was found to be swift and gashing at that time, the water was running fast down the mountains. It was not suitable for navigation, not even for rafting. As a result they could not cross the river. But at a place called Deken where the borders of three countries, viz., China, India and Burma met, a few of them could pass through with great difficulty by some tricky means, like cutting a tall tree and making it fall across the river where water was running between two narrow ridges. Yet, many

others were left behind. Those who could cross the river went further southward climbing high hills and rugged mountains to reach southern Tibet. They lived in the Tsangpoo valley for many centuries and afterwards through the Doshing La Pass they entered the Siang valley (Pegu, Dr. NC, 2000, 39). Those who failed to cross the river, they proceeded further down to the valley and dwelt at a place called Moying in the Sino-Burma border.

These tales of the exodus of the Misings from mainland China are based on popular legends that have been told and retold through generations and are still quite popular among the Mising story tellers. This folklore sees the Misings pitching up a village on the bank of the Chaviruna river and dwelling there for quite a few years. Consequently, after having learnt the art of crossing the river conveniently in dry seasons, they had set up villages at the other side of the river too, occupying the surrounding areas for cultivation and dwelling purposes.

Significantly, the Chaviruna banks remained as a parting point in the long run, as one section went further up towards Tibet yet another section was reluctant to follow them, who subsequently spread over their population to the Kachin tracts through Yunnan valley and settled there for many years. Thus, a small complement of the migrating lots from the Mising mass is believed to have entered Assam through Patkai Hills crossing the Chandwin river. The *Naras* and *Samugurias* who ruled a tiny strip of Assam in southern Brahmaputra for some time in the past are believed to be the early Mising immigrants to this country through the Patkai ranges. The *Naras* had field encounters with the *Dihingia Raja* in 1524 AD (Acharya 1965). R.C.R Cumming has recorded their entry as another group of the tribe, "Miri intruders entered Assam from the south side of the Brahmaputra river crossing Patkai Hills from Upper Burma." (Pegu, P. 2003). He also mentions that herds of Miri migrants had otherwise been streaming down from the northern hills. The fact that the archeological findings of cultural tools such as jadeite, gneiss, dolerite made of local rocks, limestone and bones found in Abor Hills and Mishmi Hills were similar to the findings in Yunnan valley has also drawn this point home. Dr. A. H. Dani (1970)

states that "the prolific use of jadeite further strengthens the link with Yunnan, in fact with the discovery of a specimen in the Mishmi Hills, the cultural contact of this region with Yunnan can hardly be doubted". Further, Dr. S. K. Bhuyan (1974, 43, 466) also says that the *Naras* had originally come from the Mogaung, Bhamo and Moying divisions of Upper Burma lying between Assam and Ava. In Mising caste classification, the *Naras* or *Noros* are included in the Moying sect of the community.

There are no written or oral records about the origin and migration of the Misings earlier to North-west China. There is no dependable source to fix a place as well as a time as to from where and when this migratory folk had flocked down to North-west part of China. There is no record even about their arrival in and departure from this region. However, Fitzgerald (1942, 6, 9) in his "China: A Short Cultural History" says that there were numerous small kindred races who lived in the hilly terrains of northern China. Prof. Garnet (1968, 48) also mentions that barbarians, or unassimilated or partially assimilated people surrounded the Chinese. As the Chinese had many types, there were many cultures which developed more or less independently of each other (Swain 1980, 215). They were later identified as Shan and Tibeto-Burman categories. These tribes were known by different names, some of whom were collectively called Lolo, Hmeng, Lutse, Amodapa, Miao, Lisu etc. (Bell 1968, 107). Within the Miao again there were a number of small sub-tribes, who proclaimed themselves as independent units of the Miao group. The Miao tribes whom Prof. Fitzgerald located in the upland plateau, further north to Hwang Ho river in the Archaic period (3000 BC–2852 BC) were originally unassimilated people, living a life of primitive existence.

As the northern boundary of China was not well protected by physical barriers, the people suffered frequent Mongolian attacks. Mongolian nomadic tribes ransacked life and property of the neighboring people, looted and carried away valuables and provisions. Such marauding continued till king Shih Huang Ti constructed a big boundary wall, popularly known as "Great Wall of China", in 246 BC covering 6400 kilometers from east to west running from Po Hai, the North-western arm of the

Yellow Sea to a point deep in central Asia. On account of numerous divisions and racial disunity Miaos were not socially or politically organized as a unified force. Prof. Parker (1908, 27) observes that "A feeling of duty to their people had decided them to avoid bloodshed, and to migrate further in towards central China rather than go to war". As a result, they could not apply any resistance to the onslaughts of Mongol nomads. Many of them moved out of the province to the central region and then slowly to north-western territory of the country. In due course of time, they moved to the sub-Himalayan plateau and settled down in Arunachal Pradesh as well as in Assam.

The Misings are believed to be one of the racially disintegrated branches of the Miao main stream (Pegu, Peter 1998, 27). No wonder, villages of this Miao and Lisu tribes whom Prof. Fitzgerald spotted in northern territory of China more than two millennia before the Christian era are found in Arunachal Pradesh even today in the Mishmi Hills and the hills bordering Myanmar with whom R.K. Patir, the former Chief Secretary of Arunachal Pradesh, interacted a number of times during the last quarter of the twentieth century (Patir 1999, 56-57, 59-60). This leads to the conclusion that the Miaos and the Misings were birds of the same feather in the distant past.

On the other hand, scanty accounts on the sojourn of *Adamm* people around Indo-China border during pre-historic period can be traced from Greco-Latin bibliographies as well. Dr. Dambarudhar Nath has quoted E. B. Taylor who has given an account of Ptolemy's mention of a tribe known as "Asmeraoei" in his records, which was later identified as Mising misnomers (Nath 1998). Similarly Dr. Dimbeswar Doley (1998, 23) held that the composite tribes of Misings such as Abors, Daflas, Miris, Mishmis and Akas of the north-east region of India were known by the names of Meridionales, Meridiem, Asmira, Abarimon, Abali, Orxulao etc. in Greco-Latin literatures in the past. Dr. Doley has specifically made mention of Pliny and his *Natural History*. Pliny, a Roman historian of the early Christian era, completed compiling *The Natural History* in 77 AD just two years before his death. *The Natural History* consists of 37 books and the 7th book featured human history.

Ptolemy was a Greek astronomer as well as a Geographer who lived in the second century of the first millennium. Therefore, it goes without saying that works of Pliny and Ptolemy relating to history and geography respectively would contain description of the events prior to the Christian era which, in turn confirmed, as mentioned in their works, that the Misings were in the Indian soil much before the dawn of the Christian calendar.

Some references are found in the great Indian epics particularly in the Mahabharata about recruitment of soldiers from the “cina” section of the eastern community by king Bhagadatta of Pragjyotishpur who fought war against the Pandavas (Pegu, Peter, 1993). The *Cinas* are believed to be from the *Adamm* composition of human stock (Nath 1998, Doley, Dr. Dimbeswar 1998, Pegu, Peter, 1993). They are also believed to have participated in the war (ibid.)

2.2.2 Entry to the Brahmaputra Valley : The history of entry of the Misings into the Assam valley from the hills of Arunachal Pradesh is not free from controversies. Many contemporary writers on the subject including Sonaram Panyang Kataki Gam (1935), Dr. Nomal Chandra Pegu (2000) and Dr. Dimbeswar Doley (1998) have estimated the period around the Ahom invasion of Assam in the early thirteenth century AD.

But a few individuals like Bagadhar Medok (1997) have different opinions. Medok has strongly and unilaterally stated that the migration of the Abutani tribes (or the Mising contingent) from hills to plains and the settlement in the plains began at least a millennium before the Christian era. He holds that there was a separate district administration, *Bomjé Kébang*, howsoever insignificant, of the Mising villages bordering Naga Hills much before the Ahoms came to the country. According to his argument, the Ahoms entered Assam through the Patkai hills into the plains between Nagaland and Miriland, in the south bank of the Brahmaputra and had established a small kingdom sometime in 1228 A.D. According to him, the Misings of the south bank of the river had, for the first time, saw the Ahoms (Medak 1997, 48-49). To

some extent, Sir Edward Gait had also agreed to this point, as he said that during the Ahom reign, there were a number of local chiefs in the hills and also in the plains. He recorded, "Sadiya Khowa Gohain was shortly afterwards attacked by a chief of one of the neighboring hill tribes. The latter was defeated and slain. Yet, another local chief who had been inclined to give trouble thereupon made his submission" (Gait 1992, 84). These chiefs were believed to be of the Mising villages. These lead to the fact that the actual time of their entry to the Brahmaputra valley remains inconclusive.

However, it has been established that the Misings were one of the countable ethnic groups in the Assam valley during the Ahom rule. Once, Swargadeo Pramatta Singha (1744–1751) had invited artistes from all parts of his kingdom as well as from all sections of the people for a performance. The Misings who were dwelling on the banks of the Disang and Dikhou rivers too were invited for a Miri-dance.

It is believed that the descent of the upland tribes downhill for pursuing a new lifestyle in the Assam valley occurred in driblets. They did not come down to the plains in one stroke. In fact, the downhill trend has been a historical process in Assam since time immemorial. There were many outlets and gateways at the foothills of the northern border including the Balipara Tract, Bordalani Subway, Silapathar Gateway, Murkong Selek Check Post, Sadiya Exit Point and Patkai Range through which the Abors, Daflas, Akas, Miris and Mishmis climbed down to the valley for bartering forest products and edibles with the dwellers of the plains. During the Ahom rule as well as the British regime, these influx points had free access for incoming and outgoing travelers. Akas and Daflas came down from the Balipara Tract, Miris through Bordalani subways along the Subansiri river, and the Silapathar Gate was used by Miris and Abors. They also used Sadiya route crossing Saikhowa Ghat for entry into the Assam plains. The pioneering migrants took the Patkai Ranges from Upper Burma. These highlanders who came down through different routes at different points of time and settled in the plains recognized themselves as 'Mising' but the local people used to call them 'Miri'.

2.2.3 Contact with the Plains People : As the Misings began to settle in the plains of the Brahmaputra valley, the process of social intercourse began through political alignments or compulsory submission. The Sadiya entrants established political relations with the Sutiya kings in 1513 AD whereas the Balipara entrants had attacked the authority and ransacked many villages and took hold of Nariya Raja's territories in 1646. Although there were instances of attacks and revolts against the ruling authorities, over the period of time, the Misings had served the crown as valiant soldiers in the defence setup, as diplomats and also as government officials in different capacities in the Sutiya as well as in the Ahom kingdoms. Captain J. F. Michell's report of 1883 read, "The Assamese army appears at this time (1660) to have been largely recruited from the Nagas and the Miris, and it is evident that they were quite able to hold their own against the well trained armies of Hindustan" (Michell 1883, 30).

The king Jaydhwaj Singha had not only created an archery unit consisting of Mising soldiers in the royal military, but also recruited officials from them for administrative duties. Sadiya was placed under one Sadiya Khowa Gohain by king Jaydhwaj Singha and a new post of Chief Officer called *Miri Barua* was created in 1656 AD who would oversee the welfare of the community (Pegu, Peter 1995). During Swargadeo Chakradhwaj Singha's rule, a prospective Mising person was appointed as Miri Sandikoi and his descendants enjoyed the Governorship of Sadiya (Goswami, HC). Dr. S. K. Bhuyan explicitly noted, "Enterprising tribal who could show their mettle in any deed of valour or bore marks of future eminence were admitted in the Ahom fold and become, to all intents and purposes, equal in rank and status to the order of Ahom. Some family names of Ahom bear traces of this infusion like Naga Patar, Miri Sandikoi etc" (Pegu, Peter 1995).

The Misings have been referred to as 'mediator' or 'agent' or government representatives in a number of Assam histories pertaining to medieval and modern periods. Sir Edward Gait called them 'go-between', Robert Needham Cust named them 'mediator' and R.C.R. Cumming referred to them as 'interpreter'. William

Robinson had discovered potential qualities in them, worthy to put them in the rank of 'emissaries' like '*katakis*', messengers, and interpreters who would be able to deal with other tribes in the region. In the Chapter "The Miris" in his *An Account of Assam* (1841), Robinson wrote referring to the Misings as "It is hoped, government will shortly avail themselves of such means as will best insure these advantages; and probably none would better answer the purpose than a friendly embassy (like Miris)" (Robinson 1841, 358). Their adaptability to amphibian dwellings as in the hills as well as plains and their fluency in the languages spoken by the inhabitants of both these geographical locations gave them advantage to be interpreters and emissaries. The administration took advantage of these skills and inducted many of them in the civil services as *Katakis*.

During the British regime also, the Misings were deployed as interpreters, messengers and mediators. Lt. E.J.T. Dalton, Junior Assistant Commissioner of Assam, in his "A Visit to the Hills in the Neighborhood of Soobanshiri River" in 1845 expressed his preference to have a Mising *Kataki* as an accompaniment, who would help him not only in carrying things but also would work as his interpreter (Dalton 1845). Sonaram Panyang, the author of *Miri Jatir Buranji* was appointed as a local ambassador or *Kataki* to the neighbouring highland countries, particularly to the Abor, Dafla and Mishmi territories on a part time basis (Pegu, Peter 2000, 45). Malina, a Mising youth from Sesserimukh village was engaged by Noel Williamson, Assistant Political Officer, Pasighat as *Kataki* to the British administration.

Even in the recent past, when Bimala Prasad Chaliha was the Chief Minister of Assam (1957-70), a delegation consisting of Mukhyanath Patir, Bhavakanta Doley, Bibhishan Pegu, Ananda Chandra Pegu, and Lalit Chandra Pegu, was deputed to NEFA (Arunachal Pradesh) as Government representatives to dialogue with the Adis of Along, Pasighat and some other places to defuse a tension that prevailed between Assam and NEFA in 1964.

While performing their job as mediators, interpreters and emissaries, the Misings had to come in contact with various languages and cultures, particularly, that of the people in the plains of the Brahmaputra valley and that of the NEFA hills. This occasioned a cross-cultural acquisition leading to the intermingling of linguistic practices among others. Adaptability being one of their inherent qualities, the Misings began to get adapted to the language, culture and even religious beliefs of the people around them.

2.2.4 Population and Demography : According to the 1971 census, the population of Mising tribe was 2,59,551 which constituted more than 16% of the total tribal population of Assam which again was more than 12% of the total population of the state. The latest figure is not known in absence of census report giving community-wise break-up of population. However, a recent unofficial count conducted by the Takam Mising Porin Kebang (All Mising Students' Union), Mising Mimag Kebang (Mising Revolutionary Organization) and Takam Mising Mime Kebang (All Mising Women Organization) has put it at 12,57,596 living in 1724 scheduled villages (i-CARD, 2003). The Mising population is found in the upper half of Assam spreading over the districts of Dhemaji, Lakhimpur, and Sonitpur in the North Bank and Tinsukia, Dibrugarh, Sibsagar, Jorhat, and Golaghat in the south bank of the Brahmaputra. A sizable Mising population is found in the eastern districts of Arunachal Pradesh also. With the proliferation of education among the Misings and a good number of them being inducted to government and public jobs, a large number has settled in cities like Guwahati, Jorhat, Dibrugarh, Sibsagar, Dibrugarh, Tinsukia, Tezpur, North Lakhimpur, Dhemaji and other towns of Assam; as well as Pasighat, Oyan and a few other towns in Arunachal Pradesh. The present study covers the population living on the north and south banks of the river Brahmaputra in Assam. The following map shows the present demography in Assam :

Base Map Source - mapsofindia.com

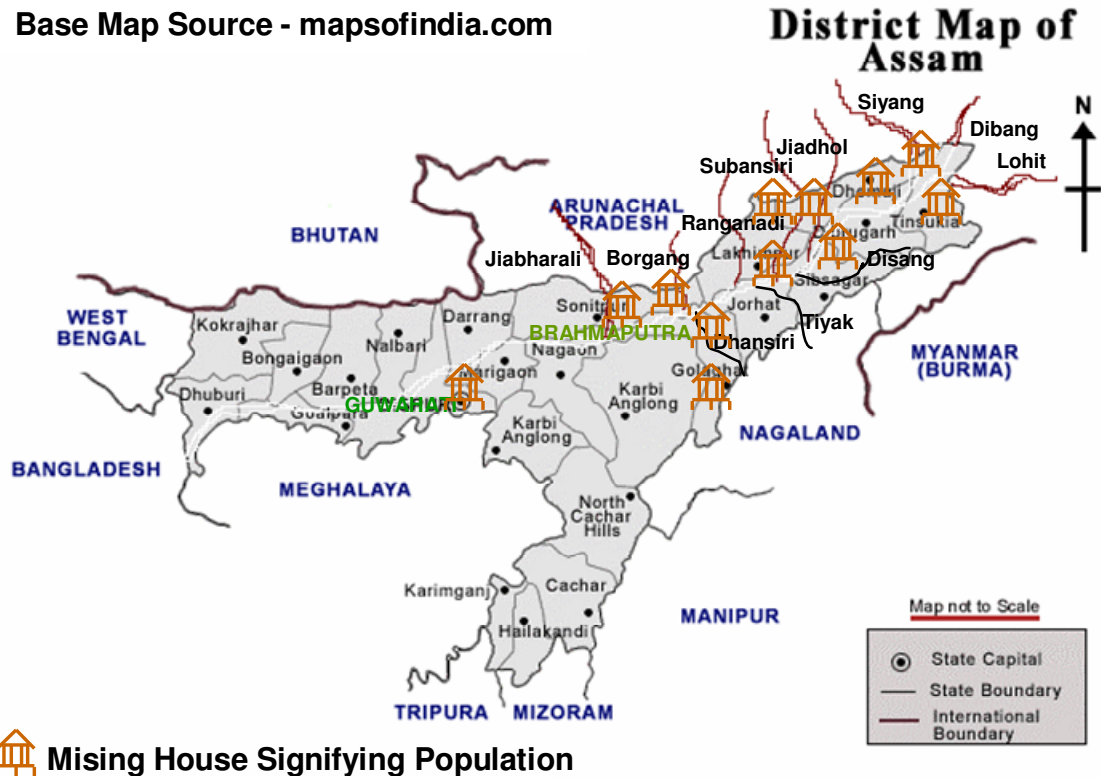


Figure 2.4

2.3.1 The Mising Language : The Mising language belongs to the Tibeto-Burman language family which originates from the Sino-Tibetan language tree. The Sino-Tibetan languages may be divided broadly into two groups, Tibeto-Burman and Sino-Shyamese. Sino-Shyamese descendent languages are spread over China, Burma, Thailand, and the range up to Cambodia (Padun 1989, 434). One of these languages Tai came to Assam in 1228 AD with the Ahom migrants. The Tibeto-Burman languages may be divided into four groups – Tibetan, Himalayic, Assam-Burman, and North Assam (Padun 1989, 434 from LSI and Dr. SK Chatterjee).

A : Tibeto Group

1. Western Tibeto : Monga, Rish, Goshom, Baltic, Spekar, Parig, Shyam, Leh, Ladakh and Spiti.
2. South Tibeto : South Himalayan, Sherpa (Nepal), Denjonke (Sikkim), Lohuk (Bhutan, Bhutja).

3. Mid Tibeto : Dobash and Gotjang.
4. South-East Tibeto : Tahsien, Lu, Chiku, Nagan, Sunkayan, Dergeh, Nangsen.
5. North-East Tibeto : Mathju, Chagonlu, Uporish, Romash, Gulug Sune.
6. North Tibeto : Boyang, Tha.

B : Himalayic Group

1. Pureh : Newar, Mongor, Gurung, Dhamang (Murmi), Sunwar, Rang (Lepsa), Tato.
2. Mixed Eastern : Kanawari, Kanashi, Manshat, Buna, Rankuch, Chaodanchi, Royanchi.

C : Assam-Burman Group

1. Bodo : Kachari, Mech, Garo, Rabha, Tripuri, Konch; Naga – Ao, Angami, Shema, Tangkul, Shongtem, etc.
2. Kuki Chin : Meitei or Manipuri, Lusai; Kusun Lolu – Lulu, Kusun or Singphu.
3. New Burman : Mayasma, Bayasma, Arakan.

D : North Assam Group

1. Aka or Hrussu : Aka, Misi-aka, Hill Miri, Bangni.
2. Dafala or Nishi : Nishi, Apatani, Sulu, Bangru.
3. Abor or Adi : (a) Padam, Minyong, Pasi, Pangi, Simong, Arsing, Bori, Karko, Tangam, Milan (b) Galong, Ramu, Bokar, Pailib.
4. Miri or Mising : Sayang, Oyan, Pagro.
5. Mishimi : Tarao, Miju, Idu.

The North Assam Group has been named based on the geographical location of the linguistic groups rather than on the language variety. The linguistic groups consisting of Aka (Hrussu), Dafala (Nishi), Abor (Adi), Miri (Mising), and Mishmi call their languages as ‘Tani Agom’ or Human Speech.

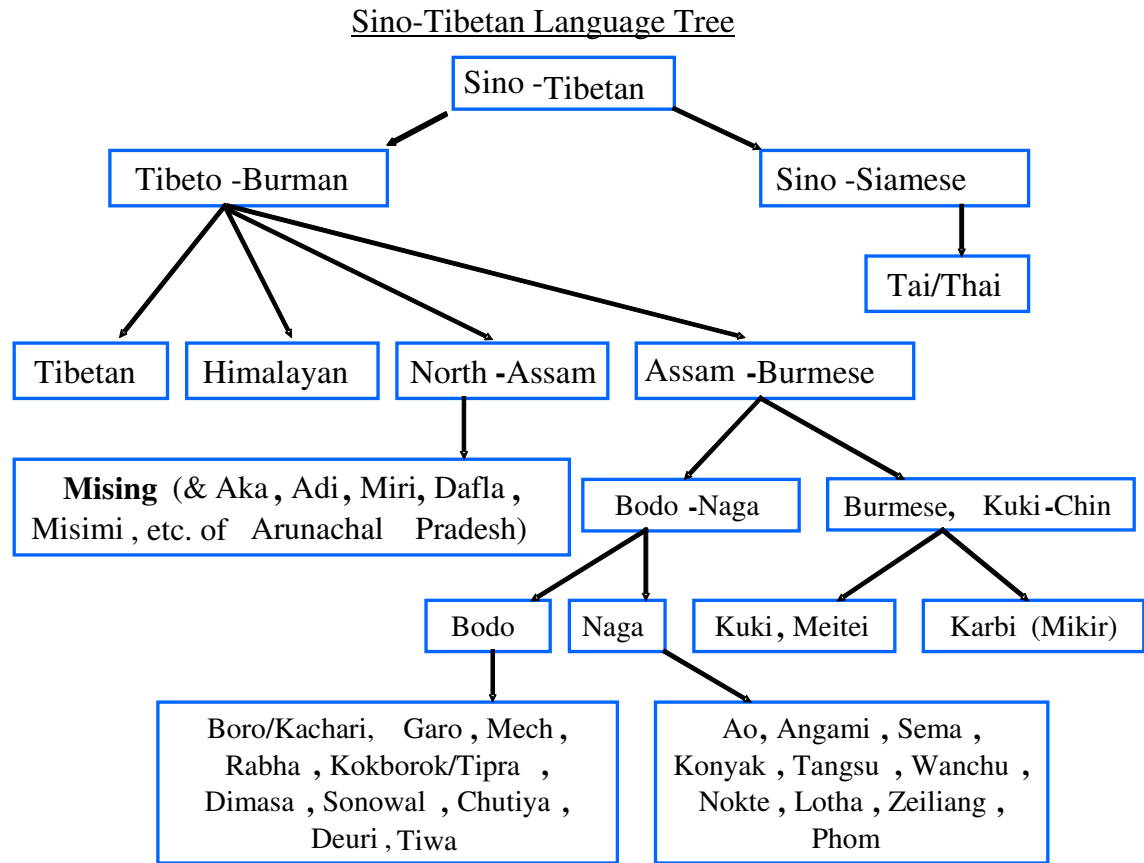


Figure 2.5

The Mising language comes from the North Assam Group which has six speech varieties : Pagro, Sayang, Delu, Dambug, Moying and Oyan. There is a great deal of mutual rapport between the Adi (Abor) and the Mising (Miri) speeches. “Therefore, Adi and Mising may, with good reasons, be considered as two dialects of the same language – which, in fact, prompted J. H. Lorrain to produce the work *A Dictionary of Abor Miri Languages*, 1910 ” (Taid 1995, vii). It is important that a Mising sub-group Bihia or Samuguria use broken Assamese as their speech. However, they use the Mising forms of the words while referring to relationship addresses, names of deities, some names of foods and tools. It is not known when and under what circumstances they abjured the Mising language and adopted Assamese as their speech. There are very little differences among the Mising sub-dialects and one

group can easily understand the other group. J. F. Needham said “although each clan possesses many different words to express the same meaning, they are so accustomed to mix one up with the other that it is real difficulty to ascertain for certain what word should be used for a particular thing by a particular clan.” (Padun 1989, 437). But each group has its distinctive accent and intonation.

Today, the Mising language is one of the top twenty “non-scheduled languages” of India which is 0.04% of the country’s total population (E-Census India 1991).

2.3.2 General Features of the Mising Language

Jitmol Doley (2004) has identified seven general features of the Mising language.

1. Orthographically the language is phonemic in nature in that alphabets represent the sounds rather than the meaning of the words.
2. Most words have one syllable or two syllables, but prefixes and suffixes can be added to alter pronunciation and meaning.
3. The word order of a sentence is subject-object-verb.
4. Absence of independent affirmative and negative words, they are determined by suffixing “yé” and “ma” respectively to the verbal roots.
5. Three basic tenses corresponding to past, present, and future.
6. Each verb consists of two syllables, first indicates meaning and the second shows the tense, e.g., (gí + dung = gidung; “gí” signifies the act of going, and “dung” continuity).
7. Absence of aspirated sounds.

While making a closer investigation into the language, the following features are identified as representative qualities of the Mising language :

1. According to Tabu Taid (1995, xii), the Mising language has seven vowels and seventeen consonants adopted by the Mising Agom Kebang (Mising Language Society) on the basis of the sound system of the language. Among the seven vowels, five are usually represented by the customary vowels of the Roman script while the sixth and seventh vowels “ é ” and “ í ” are for mid-central and

high-central emissions respectively. These signs were changed from “c” and “v” during the seventeenth biennial session of the *Mising Agom Kebang* (Mising Language Society) held in 2005 at Bormukoli, Jorhat. The two-letter combinations “ng” and “ny” representing the velar and the palatal-nasal sounds respectively, typical of the Mising tongue, are also included in the alphabet. Although these alphabets are composed of two letters each, they are treated as single alphabets.

Vowels : Short o, a, i, u, e, é, í; (changed from c and v to é and í in 2005).

Long o:, a:, i:, u:, e:, é:, í: [the *colon* (:) signifies a long sound]

Consonants: k, g, ng, s, j, ny, t, d, n, p, b, m, r, l, y, w, h.

Each vowel has two varieties of sound, that is, short and long. The long-sound vowels are represented by a colon (:) put after the letters. Both the long and short sounds have independent phonetic status and are prominently used in the language. “Even two words with same spelling make the meaning vastly different with short and long pronouncement of a vowel” (Pegu, Peter, 2003). For example, the word “pato” used with short-sound vowel means “to cut” while the same word with a long-sound vowel “pa:to” means “have got”.

Tabu Taid (2004, xiii) states that the “Mising alphabet makes use of the Roman types, but follows the Panimian model in separating the vowels from the consonants”. Although aspirated sounds are absent in the Mising tongue, /h/ is included in the alphabet for occasional use in loan words containing the /h/ sound or aspirated sound. “However, it is realized in morpho-phonemic situations involving a glide from /u/ to other vowels” (ibid).

2. The existence of diphthongs and polyophthongs is another vital component of the Mising language. A closer investigation will require for enumerating these combinations. Peter Pegu (2003) says in this regard, “Prominence in terms of rising and falling of tune and the nature of inherent sonority of the vowel sounds of which they are composed of needs scientific experimentation before

any remark is passed in this point”. However, these combinations are observed to be present in common words, such as, “koum” (three households), “aum” (three), “aidag” (good), “aima” (bad) “aín” (gold), etc. In some cases, the diphthongs themselves make meaningful words, such as, “ ía” (bamboo), “ ío” (nephew), “éi” (hello), etc. Peter Pegu (2003) also observes the presence of three-vowel and four-vowel combinations which he calls triphthongs and quadriphthongs respectively. For example, triphthongs : “oué” (mother), “oia” (darling), “aíé ” (own) etc. and quadriphthongs : “oiao” (youngest), “kouau” (small boy), etc.

2. The number of consonant sounds in the Mising language is sixteen although the seventeenth consonant “h” is included mainly for loan words. Peter Pegu has identified the following consonant sounds based on their acoustic quality produced by muscular actions of the lips and tongue and their alphabetic representatives :

Plosive : three types of plosive sounds are heard in the Mising speech. These sounds attached to different muscular regions are : bilabial “p” and “t”, dental “t” and “d”, and velar “k” and “g”.

Nasal : two nasal sounds are found : bilabial “m” and alveolar “n”.

Lateral : there are two lateral orientations of sounds, alveolar “l” and palatal “j”.

Fricative : the fricative chords of the language are denoted by “s” and “r” for alveolar and post-alveolar sounds respectively.

Culminate: two culminate sounds are identified : bilabial “w” and palatal “y”.

Digraph : “n”, “g” and “y” are sometimes used for diagraphs. The language has two nasal diagraphs very often used to represent a single sound like “ng” in “ngom” (me) and “ny” in “donyi” (sun). For all practical purposes, “ng” and “ny” are considered as single letters or phonemes.

(Pegu, Peter 2003)

4. The Mising language, like the Indo-Aryan languages, has helping verbs or verb-turned adverbs. They take position before verbs, such as, “bí apin dola dung” (He is eating rice). Here “dung” (is there) is the main verb and “dola” (eat) helps to indicate the auxiliary action of the subject qualifying the verb. The helping verbs are normally formed adding “la” or “na” to the main verb, such as, “asi tí:la” (drinking water), “agom lula”, (talking), “ajéng anna” (nagging) etc.
5. The combination of consonants in the formation of words is mostly bilateral and the consonants are preceded and succeeded by vowels as in “appun” (flower). Generally, Mising words do not begin or end with two or more consonants as is the case with English in words like “staff” or “sport”. In Mising, the union of consonants occurs in the middle of the word and the last syllables culminating in two or more consonants are always followed by a vowel, as for example, the word “tadpo” (melodious), “kampo” (white), “kangkanné” (the beautiful).
6. Unlike the English language where a number of words end with “ng” like “going”, in case of the Mising language, many words begin with the diagraphs “ng” and “ny”. For example, “ngo” (me), “nya:nyi” (aunt), “ngomug” (a fish variety) etc. Also a good number of words begin with the letter “y” which is least in other languages.
7. The post-positional suffixes play an important role for declension of nouns. For example, the suffix “é” is affixed to indicate nominative case as in the sentence “Taniy-é agom-ém ludo” (Man makes speech). Here “é” indicates nominative case, and “ém” accusative case. Similarly, in “Édé kitabdé ngok-ké” (This book is mine), “ké” indicates possessive case, in “Édém kai-mé bito” (Give it to elder brother), “mé” is the dative case, and in “ajon-a sop gíto” (Friend, come here), “a” is the vocative case, and in “Ba:bu kolok murkong koto” (Ask money from father), “kolok” is the ablative case.

8. As a result of the age-old socio-cultural contact with the Assamese-speaking societies, a number of Assamese words have entered the Mising vocabulary. Some of them have been conveniently *missingised* according to the Mising tongue. For example, some Assamese words ending with “a” have been *missingised* by adding “ng” to them, such as, “bengena” (brinjal) has become “bengenang”, and “dingora” (drum-shaped implement for catching fish) has been missingised as “dingorang”. Due to the absence of aspirates in the Mising language, words like “hisab” (calculation) and “ghatoi” (one who mans the river harbour) have become “isab” and “gatoi” in Mising.

2.4.1 Conclusion

While code-switching is an acquired process of using speech passages of one or more foreign language(s), it is used as a verbal tool for fulfilling the strategic communicative purposes of the speaker(s). The age-old code-switching practice of the Misings living in the Brahmaputra valley catapults significant socio-cultural values that are inherently associated with the groups with whom they have established various human relations. Code-switching provides a speech continuity, particularly in those languages where inability of expression exists. While reaping socio-linguistic benefits from code-switching, speakers use it as a means of emphasizing points, conveying attitude and other emotives, expressing respect and solidarity or affiliation to a particular group of people.

It is important to note that these socio-cultural contacts of this otherwise nomadic tribe who had been migrating through mountains and hills all the way from south-west China over centuries, have given them a settlement not only in living but also in their social psychology. “What this means for most of us is that we participate in, and practice a type of verbal syntactic shape-shifting, frequently changing terms of speech and expression to accommodate the fluctuating needs of discourse within different social and cultural interactions. Often an unconscious act, code-switching is used for many purposes, including protection, identification, recognition, approval, and control.” (Quorum 2007).

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CHAPTER III

Catalysts and Circumstances

[The chapter deals with the factors leading to the emergence of code-switching among the Misings. The main factors are acculturation, education and modern communication. The first part of the chapter gives a conceptual description of acculturation followed by a stage-wise study of the process of acculturation vis-à-vis that of the Misings. The second part gives a description of the role of education in the emerging process of bilingualism. Lastly the chapter gives a picture of how the proliferation of media communications inspired the Misings, particularly the younger generations, to adopt the lifestyle that is in vogue.]

3.1.1 Code-switching apparently involves two or more languages. When a speaker switches from one language to another in course of his/her speech, it is a prerequisite that he/she has some command over the languages in which the switch takes place. For societies where the acquisition of second language or third language is a normal and systematic process which is common in many parts of the world today, particularly, in Africa, Australia, Europe, Asia, and South America, the switching is triggered by certain necessities or motives of the speaker. According to Crystal (1987), the chief reasons which may drive a speaker into code-switching are *first*, a speaker may not be able to express himself/herself in one language so switches to the other to compensate for the deficiency. As a result, the speaker takes help of the other language for a while. This type of code switching tends to occur when the speaker is upset, tired or distracted in some manner. *Second*, language

switching also commonly occurs when an individual wishes to express solidarity with a particular social group. A sort of rapport is established between the speaker and the listener when the listener responds with a similar switch. Such switching may also be used to exclude others from a conversation who do not speak the second language. *Third*, the alteration of language occurs when the speaker wishes to convey his/her attitude to the listener. Where monolingual speakers can communicate these attitudes by means of variation in the level of formality in their speech, bilingual speakers can convey the same by code switching. Crystal (1987) also suggests that where two bilingual speakers are accustomed to conversing in a particular language, switching to the other is bound to create a special effect.

The above observations suggest that code-switching is used as a socio-linguistic tool by bilingual speakers. Now, it is of utmost importance to find out as to how and under what circumstances do people start using this tool. The following discussion enumerates the factors that lead to this linguistic behaviour.

3.2.1 Acculturation

Acculturation is a process in which members of a cultural group adopt the beliefs and behaviour of another group. It is usually in the direction of a weaker group adopting the habits and language patterns of a dominant group. However, acculturation can also be reciprocal in that the dominant group may also adopt some behavioral or linguistic patterns typical of the weaker group.

According to Redfield, Linton and Herskovits (1936,149), "Acculturation comprehends those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups".

Winthrop (1991, 82-83) defines acculturation as the "process of systematic cultural change of a particular society carried out by an alien, dominant society".

King and Meghan (2005) describes acculturation as the process of the intermingling of cultures. It may be between two or more cultures depending upon the multifarious nature of the concerned society and often with one culture that acts dominant over the others.

From various definitions of the term, it is evident that acculturation is a cultural process through which individuals of a foreign or minority culture learn and adopt partially or entirely, the artifacts, customs, and beliefs of a standard or dominant culture. Such learning and adoption result from the contact of societies with different cultural traditions. Sometimes, as it is true with many communities in different parts of the world, acculturation leads to assimilation. "The process by which these individuals enter the social positions, as well as acquire the political, economic and educational standards of the dominant culture is called assimilation. These individuals, through the social process of assimilation, become integrated within the standard culture" (Thompson 1996, 112). Assimilation of one cultural group into another may be evidenced by changes in language preference, adoption of common attitudes and values and loss of separate political or ethnic identification. However, acculturation does not necessarily lead to assimilation in all cases.

The earliest account of acculturation is believed to be in Plato's "Laws" written in 348 BC, in which he had argued that man had a tendency to imitate strangers and a tendency to travel, both of which introduced new cultural practices (Wikipedia 2006). He feared that these practices might lead to distortion of the original culture and therefore suggested that they should be minimized to the degree possible. The first known use of the word "acculturation" is in J. W. Powell's 1880 report from the Bureau of American Ethnography on changes in Native American languages (Oxford Dictionary 1989). In 1883, Powell explained that "acculturation" referred to the psychological changes induced by cross-cultural imitation (Wikipedia 2006). Studies on acculturation and assimilation evolved during the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century when great numbers of immigrants, mostly from Europe, arrived in the United States. Studies on minority groups already living in the United States, as to their rate of assimilation, became another area of focus. Explanations, as

to why groups assimilate at different rates, have largely been the underlying reasons for acculturation and assimilation studies (Thompson 1996, 113).

Acculturation is a gradual process and comprises those changes in a culture brought about by another culture which result in an increased similarity between the two cultures. “This type of change may be reciprocal, however, very often the process is asymmetrical and the result is the (usually partial) absorption of one culture into the other” (Kroeber 1948, 425). Kroeber connected the process of diffusion with the process of acculturation by considering that diffusion contributes to acculturation and that acculturation necessarily involves diffusion.

Before we go into the details of the acculturation of the Misings, it will be worthy to keep in mind three phases of their socio-cultural life. First, the Misings were earlier hill dwellers; second, they migrated to the plains along the river courses crossing quite a distance; and third, they settled in the plains of the Brahmaputra valley in the midst of several cultures that were already existing prior to their arrival. During the Ahom regime, a number of Misings were appointed as *katakis* and during the British period also they were appointed as interpreters and emissaries. While performing these duties, quite often they had to play the role of moderators and interlocutors and in the process, they came in contact with several cultures and languages, such as, Assamese, Boro-Kacharis, Mikirs etc. apart from their cognate languages in the northern hills. The process of cultural interaction may be viewed “in terms of the growing relationship between the macro (tribal isolated village), middle (regional economy, culture and polity) and micro (mythology, beliefs, worship, ideology and caste) levels” (Mipun 2000, 55).

According to Ronald Taft (1957) the first stage of acculturation or social assimilation is cultural learning. Acquisition of language, in particular, is facilitated by contact which is enhanced by multiple reference groups and by presumption of knowledge even if incorrect. This learning eventually leads to the acquisition of other behavioral qualities in an individual or a social group.

In order to analyse the process of acculturation in case of the Misings, we may take help of the four-fold theoretical framework promoted by John Berry (1980). This theory organizes the acculturation constructs into four generic types depending on the relative importance of the first-culture (F) and the contact culture (C). The framework involves the two issues of retaining a group's cultural identity and its positive relations with the dominant society, while defining the level of acculturation:

- (1) [-F+C] the first culture is abandoned and the contact culture is favoured (assimilation);
- (2) [+F-C] the first culture continues and the contact culture is disfavoured (rejection);
- (3) [+F+C] both the first culture and the contact culture are favoured (integration); and
- (4) [-F-C] both the first culture and the contact culture are disfavoured (deculturation).

While migrating all the way from North-west China to the plains of the Brahmaputra valley, which took a time stretch of about four millennia, the tribe naturally came across various stages/ages of human evolution, primitive way of living to the medieval, and in the process lost a good deal of their original traits. The focus in this chapter will be on the change of their cultural and linguistic behaviour after they arrived in the Brahmaputra valley between the Thirteenth and the Fourteenth century AD (Pegu, Dr. N.C.1998, 34).

After the Misings settled in the Brahmaputra valley, they came in contact with a number of societies, particularly, the Ahoms and the Sootiyas. They had to associate themselves with these societies under various situations and circumstances. "But in spite of such early politico-social and economic association of the tribe with the plains society, the Miris maintained almost an alien attitude towards the society and political authority of the plains to a considerably late period" (Nath 1998, 46). In

absence of any record, it cannot be established as to how exactly was the Misings' relationship with the Sootiyas in cultural intercourse. But the Mising oral tradition and the Ahom chronicles say that a section of the tribe lived at Sadiya on the border of the Ahom and Sootiya territories and had social and economic contacts with each other. This section of the tribe was known as 'Chutiya Miri' and also as 'Sadiya Miri' (Nath 1998, 46). It is presumed that since the Sootiyas were one of the early dwellers of the north-eastern hills, they knew the Misings and vice versa. Sankardeva, the Vaishnavite reformer of Assam whose teachings considerably influenced the Misings at a later stage, was the first to make a mention of the Misings (Miris) as one of the tribes of the plains of Assam (Bhagavata, Book II, V. 181). It is evident that till the time of Sankardeva, the tribe remained aloof from the main cultural arena of the Brahmaputra valley. "The behavioural pattern of the Miris made the Assamese chroniclers to have treated the tribe in their records as outsiders till at least the 17th century" (Nath 1998, 47). The reasons for this aloofness could be (a) their social and cultural self-esteem; (b) alien and sovereign feelings; and most importantly (c) their assertive behaviour and lack of submissiveness. During the Ahom rule in the Seventeenth century, some villages of the plains faced attacks and raids from the Misings. Some Ahom kings took appeasement measures while others sent expeditions against them in order to dominate them and stop such raids. In 1665 AD, when the Misings were defeated during the combined attack with Deori Sootiyas and Duflas (Nishis) against some villages in the north bank of the Brahmaputra, they opted to flee to the hills rather than submit to the authorities of the plains (Nath 1998, 47-48).

From this account, it may be concluded that till this period, the Misings did not reconcile with the socio-political and cultural pursuits of the plains societies and thereby they did not accept themselves as part of the subject population of the Ahom regime. Till this stage the position of the Misings was "+F-C" as per the above theoretical framework which signifies that the Misings favoured and retained their original culture and rejected the contact culture.

Towards the end of the Seventeenth century, the Misings began to reconcile with the plains society. There were some significant factors that led to this stage :

(a) The Ahom rulers began to show a conciliatory outlook towards the Misings. In the early days of the Ahom rule, King Suhungmung alias Dihingia Raja (1497–1539), a Mising called Taosungleing Kungring was allowed to sit among high nobles in the court. During the rule of King Pratap Singha, one Bakala Bargohain adopted a Mising boy as his son and was later made a *Sandikoi* who then came to be known as ‘Miri Sandikoi’. A member of this family subsequently became the Sadiyakhowa Gohain (Nath 1998, 48). Later, the Misings were inducted into the civil and military services and were given important positions, such as, *Miri Barua*, *Miri Sandikoi*, and *Kataki*. It is also said that the Mising fraction of the Ahom soldiers rendered great services to the Ahom army particularly in subduing the rebellious neighbouring tribes, such as the Nagas. They also played a significant role in the Ahom victory over the Kacharis and the Jayantiyas (Bhuyan 1930, 94). Therefore, among other things, the Ahoms began to have a friendly and accommodating feeling about the Misings since then.

(b) Towards the end of the Seventeenth century and beginning of the Eighteenth century, the Ahom kings had adopted a policy to build an integrated society of the Mongoloid tribes by the process of “Ahomisation” (Nath 1998, 49). To this end, through their emissaries (which included the Misings), they contacted almost all the mongoloid clans in and around their kingdom for a cultural amalgamation. This helped to a great extent in the socio-cultural and even religious transformation of the Misings in the subsequent periods.

(c) With passage of time, their contact with the plains people increased necessitated by various circumstances of day-to-day life. Gradually, the Misings too began to change their attitude towards the socio-cultural practices of the plains people whose socio-political system was dominant. With this changing attitude, a sense of acceptability began to loom large in their minds.

(d) The British succession over the Ahoms and their take-over of power following the agreements in the Yandaboo Treaty of 1826, brought about a significant change in the Assam valley. The British faced little resistance or no resistance from the Misings in the process of their political integration in the Brahmaputra valley. The entry of the British in the valley brought a psychological solidarity among the inhabitants of the valley.

This stage of the Misings served as the beginning of social and cultural interaction with the plains people which later led to further acquisition of their language, lifestyle, and religious beliefs.

But although the Misings began to interact and to some extent accept the socio-cultural practices of the plains people, they did not altogether shun their ethnic culture and language. This was a cultural crossing that may be represented by the symbol “+F+C” in John Berry’s theory (1980) which means that the concerned tribe continued their first culture and also favoured the contact culture.

The other two stages of the theory, viz., “-F+C” and “-F-C” are not relevant to the acculturation process of the Misings except that one clan of the Misings ‘Samuguria’ or ‘Bihiya’ went too far from their original language and adopted Assamese as their dialect. This again is not a full-fledged Assamese but a broken and intonated Assamese dialect with a number of Mising words in it. It is not known when and under what circumstances, they departed from the Mising language and accepted the Assamese as their language. But it is important to note that this linguistic departure did not carry the cultural traits along. They still follow all the cultural and religious practices of the mainstream Misings. This can be regarded as a linguistic cross-over without cultural involvement.

3.2.2 Effects of Acculturation : (a) Society : The socio-cultural transformation of the Misings resulted in a commotion in the whole social system of the tribe. *First*, the nomadic life of the tribe came to an end and a permanent nature of living was

adopted by the Misings. Groups of Mising families built their houses together in clusters like the villages of the plains, on fertile riverine lands where they could cultivate various crops. It was mainly due to the fact that the Misings settled on lands on river banks, they had to often shift their bases from one place to another in order to escape from the ravages of floods. Gradually, villages and societies grew up giving birth to a new social identity. Although the main occupation shifted from hunting to cultivation, hunting remained a favourite hobby of the population, particularly those living in forest areas, till the 1970s. With the cessation of forests, today it is no more practiced. *Second*, a new organized family life evolved among the Misings. A patriarchal system of family administration that was prevailing in the plains, evolved in them according to which the head of the family was the eldest male alive - be it a father, a grand father or a great grand father. All decisions of the family were taken by him and no member of the family did anything without his concurrence. His wife performed the role of approving authority in petty things related to the womenfolk. Normally, the eldest members of the family were relieved of major works, such as, cultivation and harvesting which were performed by the sons/grand sons and daughters-in-law/grand daughters-in-law. The daughters/grand daughters of the family did not have much role to play in the running of the joint family except that they helped their mothers and sisters-in-law in various works, such as, cooking, weaving and in the paddy fields. One of the major changes was that the tribe gave up the primitive method of cultivation (farm equipment) and adopted the ox-pulled equipment called *Nangol* and *Moi* for tilling and levelling the soil which were already being used in the plains.

Among the Mising social traits which did not take a turn and are still practiced are: (1) *Rígbo* – this is a typical social system of the Misings under which a family, when it finds that the manpower in it is insufficient to complete a work in time, calls for a *Rígbo*, a collective help. At least one or two members from each family in the village take part in it. As a mark of acknowledgement, the host family serves rice beer *Apong* and food to the helpers. (2) ‘Kébang Ba:nam’ – under this system, a family or an individual appeals to the village society to give a decision to a vexed problem or

an issue or an act which in the opinion of the petitioner is wrong. The village society under the village headman enquires into the matter and gives an unbiased decision in a typical manner. This system still exists in many parts of the Mising-inhabited areas although, now-a-days, some cases are taken to a judicial court for a verdict.

(b) Culture : Till the middle of the Seventeenth century, the Misings followed a sort of culture which could be called a 'static culture'. Herds of Mising people had settled in various places in the plains and they were already coming in touch with the other societies there, but they, for many hundred years, followed the cultural practices that came with them from the hills. Till this stage, they seemed to have disfavoured cultural cross-over either way. It was only in the last part of this century and beginning of the Eighteenth century that they began to accept and adopt the cultural practices of the neighbouring societies. As it happened, a series of changes took place in their cultural heritage. The following are apparently the major changes that took place in the Mising culture :

(i) Dress : The dress is one of the items of the Mising culture heavily influenced by acculturation. The transformation of dress culture in the basic wears is shown in the following tables :

Table 3.1 (Men's Wear)

<i>Type of Wear</i>	<i>Before Acculturation</i>	<i>After Acculturation</i>	<i>Observations</i>
In the lower part of the body	<i>Gonyap</i>	<i>Gonro Ugon</i> from Assamese <i>dhoti</i>	It is not exactly the Assamese dhoti. It is shorter and with normally a thicker/broader strip.
In the upper part of the body	<i>Mibu Galuk</i> hand-stitched, without buttons	<i>Mising Galuk</i> with scientific stitching and buttons	Although now-a-days, it is stitched as a shirt, it retains the original qualities in look as well as in nature.

Table 3.2 (Women's Wear)

<i>Type of Wear</i>	<i>Before Acculturation</i>	<i>After Acculturation</i>	<i>Observations</i>
To cover the part from breast to knee	A self-woven piece of cloth called <i>Gapa</i> or <i>Galé</i>	Two pieces - <i>Ege</i> and <i>Gasor</i> from Assamese <i>Mekhela</i> and <i>Sador</i>	Although the Ege-Gasor is copied from Mekhela-Sador, the former has distinctive features, such as, a thick strip in the lower border with woven-along flower lines running in triangles.
To cover the part above the breast and below the neck	Did not have any dress	Blouse	This piece of dress entirely crossed over to the Misings from the plains culture.
Round the neck	Pendants made of beaks of birds, tusk	Pendants and necklaces made of gold and silver.	Although modern golden ornaments are worn heavily during auspicious occasions like marriage, the Mising bride and bride-groom also wear traditional ornaments particularly in the rural areas.

Apart from the above basic dresses and ornaments, in the modern times, the Mising males have adopted the dresses, such as, trousers, shirts, coats, sweaters, and shoes with socks and ladies have adopted churidars, saris, skirt-tops, modern shoes and ornaments like rings, chains and earrings. However, the Misings are still maintaining some of their original self-woven products, such as, *Gadu* (Miri Jim), *Tapum Gasor*

(Eri Sador), *Ri:bi-Gaséng* (Mising sador), *ségréng, gapa, gare* etc. which are today popular among the non-Misings as well.

(ii) Musical Instruments : As B. B. Pandey (Pandey 1994, 41) has categorized in case of the Adis of Arunachal Pradesh, the musical instruments of the Misings can also be divided into three groups, viz., Wind, Solid & Drum, and String.

Table 3.3

<i>Type of Instrument</i>	<i>Before Acculturation</i>	<i>After Acculturation</i>
Wind	Dérki Tapung, Kétpong Tapung, Éjuk Tapung	Muruli, Penpa, Gunggang
Solid & Drum	Lé:no-Marbang (Ame-Bali)	Doomdoom – Lu:pi (Dhool – Taal)
	Hand-made Yoksha (sword with iron blade rings) used normally	Mechanically made Yoksha (sword) used only occasionally/ceremonially
String	Dendun (made from reeds), Dumpag (made from bamboo), Ke:kung Tapung	<i>Gogona</i> . Also modern string instruments like guitar and violin.

(iii) Food Habits : Before acculturation, the chief foodstuff of the Misings were meat of animals and fowls, fruits and all those items that they found fit to eat as nomadic tribes. After acculturation, their favourite and stable food came to be rice. It is supported by a curry of meat, fish or vegetables prepared from plants and herbs available in the garden or nearby jungles. The acculturation process has considerably changed their food habits. Now it is almost similar to that of the non-tribals in the plains. “Before acceptance of Hinduism, the Misings ate pig, fowl, beef, and drank spirit and beer, and had no caste notion about the preparation of food (Hunter 1879, 343). After adopting Hinduism, the following main changes have taken place in the food habit of the Misings :

Table 3.4

<i>Type of Food</i>	<i>Before Acculturation</i>	<i>After Acculturation</i>
Drink	Indigenously prepared rice beer called <i>Apong</i> was the only favourite drink for themselves as well as for guests.	They offer tea and coffee apart from <i>Apong</i> . City dwellers also drink/offer to guests foreign liquors like whisky and brandy.
Main food	Animal and bird meat (fire-roasted or boiled), fruits and <i>ali</i> (a variety of sweet potato borne underground by a variety of creepers).	Cooked rice with curry is the main food. Having converted to Hinduism, beef taking is now regarded as a taboo. Pork is still the favourite meat for majority of the Misings, except those who had adopted Vaishnavism as their religion. Unlike their earlier practices, eggs, milk and oil are included in their diet.
Post-food mint	Was not prevalent in the early days. Later a bark called <i>li:lang</i> was chewed as a post-food mint.	They use <i>Tamul-paan</i> (betel-nut) as post-food mint.

Apong, the popular rice beer and original liquid food *ti:nam* of the Misings, still continues to be the favourite drink and people take it with a great enthusiasm and fervour even after a massive acculturation.

(iv) Houses : In ancient times, the Misings lived in long stilted houses with a hollow interior without partitions. All members of the family lived there. Now-a-days, most of them still live in such houses, but with certain need-based modifications. Many of them particularly the well-off families have *pucca* houses made of cement and concrete beside the main stilted house (*Karé Okum*). Even in their stilted houses, they make partitions in order to have privacy particularly for the sons after marriage. A Mising household comprises a cowshed (*Guhali*), a paddy godown (*Kumsung*),

and a pig enclosure (*Yégum*). Among these, the *Guhali* for keeping cattle has come from the plains culture.

(v) Tools and Implements : Before settling down in the plains of the Brahmaputra valley, the main cultivation of the Misings in the hills was *Jhoom* which they cultivated with tools and implements like *Kuyab* (spade), *Ígíng* (axe), and *Yoktung* (cutting equipment). They used *Ígín* (funnel-shaped carrier bag made of bamboo or cane) for carrying seeds. The ox-driven ploughing and surface-levelling by *Moi* (bamboo-made leveller) have come from the plains culture. The traditional way of husking paddy is *donam ínam* on a wooden *ki:par* and with *igi:*, still continues, but now in many Mising villages rice mills are used for this purpose which is a result of adoption of modern machines and equipments. Among other tools and implements that came from the plains are fish nets (*ésab*), household utensils like earthen urns, metallic dishes and bowls (*arém-bati*) and modern crockery.

(vi) Marriage : Acculturation has largely influenced the marriage systems particularly, the wedding system of the Misings. In earlier times, *Yamné Dugnam* (elopement) and *Sola La:nám* (forceful marriage) were the traditional systems of marriage. Now-a-days, Mising parents as well as boys and girls prefer to get married in formal wedding rather than their traditional *Yamné Dugnam* and *So:la La:nám*. It is in the wedding, most of the rituals are followed as per the Hindu tradition. The dresses of the bride and the groom reflect a complete mixture of tradition and borrowing. The groom wears a dhoti *Gonro Ugon*, traditional Mising shirt *Mibu Galuk*, a *Dumér* on his head and bracelets while bride wears the two-piece dress *Ege-Gasor*, a middle piece *Kekrég*, necklaces, earrings and bangles. The *Ugon*, *Dumér* and *Ege-Gasor* are characteristically borrowed from the Assamese *dhoti*, *gamocho* and *mekhela-sador* respectively, but these items have distinctive Mising features. What can be described as direct borrowings are the exchange of finger rings, the wedding songs and the blessings of the priest.

(vii) Religion : With the emergence of Vaishnavism in the Fifteenth century, like any other tribes in the Brahmaputra valley, the Misings came under its direct influence. “They did not accept it totally in the beginning; but gradually incorporated some of its beliefs and practices into their own system of religious functions. Recitation of devotional songs written by Sankardeva, use of ‘Chaki’, offering of betel-nut etc. have become a part and parcel of Mising rituals” (Doley, Durgeswar 1998, 77). Some Misings also became disciples of *Satras* (religious monasteries of Vaisnavism) and subsequently after attaining some degree of initiation in *Nam Kirtan* (devotional songs composed by Sankardeva and Madhavdeva), they became priests named *Bhakats* and *Sattulas*. The Misings did not completely give up their traditional rituals either. As a result, a mixed ritualistic practice continued. While as traditional practice, they would sacrifice chickens, pigs during religious functions called *ui*, as influenced by the new religion, candles called *chakis* and *dhoops* sticks would be lit and the worshippers would be blessed by the *Sattula* in the name of Hindu Gods Rama, Hari and Krishna citing hymns from the religious books Kirtan and the Bhagabat Geeta. However, side by side the Misings continued to perform their customary rites also essentially during religious functions and festivals like *Dobur*, *Po:rag*, and their agrarian festival *Ali Aye Ligang*.

(viii) Language : With a large number of Assamese cultural and religious practices crossing over to the Mising society, the Mising language was one of the first to be affected. Some Assamese words and morphemes have become integral parts of their oral expression. For example, after adopting the new agricultural equipments, the words, *Nangol-Junwali*, *Moi*, *Esari* etc. came into the Mising language and they are now unavoidable parts of expression.

(ix) Political set up : The Misings did not have an organized political set up in the ancient time. In fact they are among those communities which did not have a king or a kingdom. When they came down from the hills and settled in the Brahmaputra valley, they came in touch with the Sootiya, Ahom and the Kachari kingdoms.

During the British rule, they learnt systematic governance and after India's independence, they took up key governmental positions.

Although no kingdom existed for the Misings at any point of history, they had village councils called *Do:lung Kébang* to settle disputes and give decisions concerning the village people. Prior to acculturation, the *Mibu* or the Priest was regarded to be the headman and the villagers used to obey his pronouncements. The concept of the village head *Gaonburha* came from the plains Assamese set up and since then he is regarded to be the head of the village council.

3.3.1 Education

It is an acknowledged fact that education is the key to change. Over the years, education has played the pivotal role in bringing about revolutionary changes in the general perception about the things they see and the things they are with. It means that education has taken mankind from a realm of mythical beliefs to the world of facts where see-observe-experiment-conclude is the mantra for believing. This mantra applies to the entire range of things that human beings are associated with, from the celestial system of the outer world to the speech system of a linguistic society. It has completely transformed the human mind from its ethereal stage to the real stage. In a nutshell, the world is what it is today because of an organized teaching-learning system.

As for other ethnic groups, for the Misings, education began when they started learning how to survive and how to overcome various hurdles that they quite often faced as a nomadic tribe. In acquiring such skills and applying them in the struggle for survival in various situations, a culture grew to train the younger by the older, to hand down the skills to the younger generations by the older ones. This system may be called the pre-literate education when people learnt orally and through imitation. Story-telling was a popular way of education that came from one generation to the next. In the process, a number of oral stories came down from the older generations to the newer ones which may now be treated as oral literatures. “When cultures

began to extend their knowledge beyond the basic skills of communicating, trading, gathering food, religious practices, etc, formal education, and schooling, eventually followed.” (Wikipedia 2007).

From the first half of the nineteenth century, the Misings, as it was true with many other ethnic groups of Assam, began to go to schools to receive formal and systematic education. Earlier certain religious lessons were taught by the priests which they obeyed in letter and spirit. After independence, the government incorporated special provisions for education of the tribal population in India including financial assistance and reservation of seats for pursuing higher education in various branches of knowledge. As a result, the Misings too got the benefits of education which encouraged the younger generations in the society to go to schools and colleges.

3.3.2 Although education brought about a complete reformation of the individual and the society, the following are the direct general results of education on the Misings :

1. Before the introduction of formal education, the main sources of knowledge for the Misings were practical encounters and the oral stories told by the elders. For example, for gathering the knowledge on the difficulties faced while climbing lofty mountains, either they had to go and climb themselves or to wait for somebody who was already experienced in the field to tell about it. Therefore, the acquisition of knowledge was very slow and incidental. But the introduction of formal education provided them with ready materials for learning through reading as well as practice on various fields of knowledge to be acquired phase-wise as one goes up on the ladder.
2. When primary and secondary education reached the Mising villages, the medium of instruction was mostly Assamese with English as one of the languages to learn. As the students proceeded to acquire higher education, particularly to receive technical education, the medium became English. As a

consequence, such students had to learn at least three languages – their mother tongue (i.e., Mising), Assamese and English. As the knowledge was acquired through Assamese and English, while expressing them, they required the same languages. In their expression while translating their ideas, the use of Assamese or English words, clauses and even sentences, became part of their speech.

3. As education is a means to foster the development and prosperity of the individual, society and on a larger platform humanity, it taught the Misings to ponder and realise who they were, where they were and with whom they were. It motivated them to live in harmony with their fellow beings for peace and prosperity. It taught the Misings to think and act in systematic and scientific manner, replacing their primitive way of thinking and acting which required more effort and brought less results.
4. As one of the purposes of education is to develop an individual to his/her full potential, the enlightenment of education motivated the Misings to aspire for progress and betterment. The children, in particular, got into the world of systematic knowledge and began to get shaped accordingly as “Education is perceived as a place where children can develop according to their unique needs and potentialities.” (Schofield 1999).
5. With various branches of learning being pursued, the Misings got enlightened about the value system, globalization, and the new technology. They also became aware of their rights and duties as individuals, citizens and as human beings.

3.4.1 Modern Communication

Communication is a general term that covers a wide spectrum of concepts, such as, transportation of people and goods, conveying of messages, speech communication, transmission of daily news to the masses, linkages between individuals and nations, etc. According to eminent sociologist Hockings (1977), society itself is a structure of interconnecting communication networks. The impact of modern communication on

the process of acculturation of the Misings may be examined under the heads (a) surface communication, and (b) mass media communication.

3.4.2 Surface Communication : It has been gathered from the oral stories told by the elderly persons that there was hardly any road communication in the Mising inhabited areas prior to the 1950s, if we look at it with the modern understanding of the term. According to eighty one year old Madhab Pegu of village Gali, the roads in the Mising inhabited areas prior to the great earthquake, (he refers to the high intensity earthquake of 1950 which devastated a large part of North East India), cannot be compared to those of today. By the term *lamté*, the Mising equivalent of *road*, they used to refer to the foot lanes coming up naturally as a result of continuous use by men and animals. Only recently they could first see the modern black-topped roads built with gravel and bitumen through the process of WBM. The poor condition of road communication in the area is also evidenced by the writings of Robinson (1841, 332) and Hunter (1879, 291-92) that during the British regime, Sadiya, Dibrugarh and North Lakhimpur were considered to be developed centres in upper Assam, but the British administration had to face untold problems in implementing administrative programmes due to poor road communication. Rivers were used as an alternative means of transport communication to reach interior areas in Lakhimpur district (undivided, i.e., present Lakhimpur, Dhemaji, Dibrugarh and Tinsukia) were by rivers. In this regard, Hunter writes in his Account "... besides these roads, the rivers form the only other means of communication. The large rivers detailed in a previous section of this Statistical Account, are open throughout the year, and thirty-five other minor streams are navigable during the rainy season" (Hunter 1879, 377). No mention of the Jonai area of the district is found in the Account as it was not covered by the communication system except by rivers till then.

The communication between towns and villages by road in Assam is relatively a recent phenomenon. The interior areas of upper Assam, particularly the riverine areas where usually the Misings inhabit, saw road connectivity only after the Chinese

aggression of 1961–1962 as it was true for other parts of the state also. Soon after this aggression, surface communication in Assam (present North Eastern Region) began to improve. This was partly for enhancing army mobility to facilitate army personnel to reach the Indo-China Border areas and partly for various rural development schemes undertaken by the government. Today, 70% of the rural areas of upper Assam are connected by motorable roads, 27% by railways, and all major cities and towns are connected by airways.

With the improvement of road connectivity and availability of buses, trains and other modes of communication, the Misings who were mostly rural dwellers, got an opportunity to mix up with the people of the outer world. This facilitated them to develop their contact with the non-Misings in various means of trade and commerce, socio-cultural activities, and even marriage. As a result, their attitude and behaviour towards the Assamese-speaking societies began to change and began gradually to be attracted to the practices of the dominant culture.

The railways were introduced in the Lakhimpur district (undivided) relatively at a later stage of its existence in India. The Chinese aggression of 1961–1962 again played the eye-opener's role in bringing the railways to the foothill areas. In this regard, Jatin Mipun (2000) gives an account, "The 154 kms stretch of railway track from North Lakhimpur to Murkongselek passes through the Mishing populated areas. But the construction of railway track from North Lakhimpur to Gogamukh was completed only in 1964 and from Gogamukh to Murkongselek in 1965. And the railway from North Lakhimpur to Murkongselek was practically opened only in February, 1966". The lone meter gauge railway track in the north bank of the Brahmaputra between Rangapara Junction and Murkongselek in Jonai, connects the northern foothill areas of Assam and parts of Arunachal Pradesh, with the rest of the country.

The following are the main impacts of improved road communication on the Misings:

1. The primitive means of communication were replaced by modern modes. Prior to availability of road and rail communication, the main ways of communication and transport used to be messengers, boats and elephants. Roads and rails brought about their replacement with Post & Telegraph, motor vehicles and railway-trains causing a commotion in the communication system towards faster and wider frames.
2. The accessibility of these areas by rails and buses enabled the traders to cover them in their marketing network zones. Many of the traders established themselves in places like Gogamukh, Dhemaji, Silapathar, Jonai, Pasighat and Along resulting in their gradual growth as commercial centres. This process catapulted a relationship between the trading community, mostly Bengali and Hindi speaking, and the locals occasioning an opportunity for closer interaction among themselves.
3. The economy of the interior areas saw an unprecedented change with the availability of surface transport. The timber and other locally produced commodities like rice, mustard, jute etc. could now be transported to bigger towns for a higher selling. The growth of commercial centres near their villages enabled the Misings to learn about market economy and entrepreneurship. This facilitated them to sell a variety of their home products ranging from agricultural products like rice and mustard to domestic possessions like fowls and animals. As a result, they began to grow surplus amount of products for selling in the market.
4. One of the significant changes that took place was the change-over from the barter system of exchange of goods and materials to modern buying and selling system with money as the medium.
5. The erstwhile Assam (present North East India) is blessed with enormous natural resources. The outreach of the road and rail network to this region enabled discovery of the valuable resources remaining untapped till then. With the abstraction and utilization of the resources, mainly forest resources, the local people began to take a better responsibility towards national economy and assessing the national resources.

The improved road and rail communication system has not always served in the positive according to the general feelings of the local people. It has been a boon as well as a bane to the otherwise isolated group of people. In this context, Elwin says in relation to NEFA, “Roads, of course, can be a curse as well as a blessing to the tribal people. In some places, they have been the means of corruption and exploitation. They have brought new diseases, moral decline and cultural decadence. They have made it easy for the money-lenders, the rapacious merchants, the liquor-vendors, the lawyers’ tent to penetrate deep into the hills and forests. They can bring money in, but they can take money out. They have helped to destroy the handloom industry by the import of cheap bazaar cloth; they have brought vulgar and inferior goods to the very doors of the people” (Elwin 1964, 74-75). The effects of the improved surface communication which are generally regarded by the local people as culturally intruding are given below :

1. The outreach of the road and rail network to the interior tribal-inhabited areas diluted the sanctity of the local culture and beliefs. Flocks of people from different parts of the country as well as from neighbouring countries began to immigrate to the tribal areas. These people brought in with them their ethnic culture and language. Consequently, the once mono-cultural and mono-lingual society turned into a multi-cultural and multi-lingual society.
2. The new plural society consisting mainly of the speakers of the Bengali, Bhojpuri, Rajasthani, Nepali, Manipuri, Boro Kachari, Assamese and Mising languages, created ripples in the local society and a sort of confusion in the speech communication system.

Notwithstanding the above, there are other observations also that may be considered a significant inter-cultural development. As the local Misings and members of the newly arrived ethnic groups were getting mixed up with each other on various occasions, a cordial relationship grew among them. In some cases, the relationship went beyond the boundaries of ethnicity and traditional practices. A number of members even entered into inter-caste marital relationship and in the process a few members of the new groups assimilated themselves with the Misings, e.g., the

Agarwalla family of Jonai. The members of this otherwise Rajasthani-origin family have completely assimilated with the Misings and they are using none of their original traits except the surname. They are recognized as any other Misings and of late some members of the family have begun to use *Agam* (Agarwalla + Mising) as the surname for their children.

3.4.3 Mass Media Communication : The term “mass media” is referred to as a means of communication envisioned and designed to convey information from the source to the masses. It covers the print media as well as the electronic media and encompasses a large audience within a nation state or beyond. “It was coined in the 1920s with the advent of nationwide radio networks, and mass circulation of newspapers and magazines, although mass media was present centuries before the term became common” (Wikipedia, 2007).

As per a survey conducted in 2003, the media penetration in India is far above in the urban areas than the rural areas. Figure 3.5 shows the inroad of various means of the media to the urban and the rural areas of the country.

Table 3.5

Name of Media	All India	Urban
Print	25%	46%
Terrestrial television	53%	80%
Cable and satellite television	20%	46%
Radio	22%	25%
Cinema	7%	11%
Internet	1%	3%

Source : Wikipedia 2007 (Acc. December 1, 2007)

The two premiere news agencies of India, Press Trust of India (PTI), and United News of India (UNI) play an important role in disseminating news items to the masses. PTI was formed as a non-profit cooperative of Indian newspapers on August

27, 1947 after it took over the operations of the Associated Press of India and the Indian operations of Reuters, soon after India's independence on August 15 of the same year. UNI began its operations on March 21, 1961 although it was registered as a company way back in 1959.

Prasar Bharati, the broadcasting corporation of India, comprising Doordarshan (television) and All India Radio, was established on November 23, 1997 following a popular demand that the broadcasting agencies should be given autonomy as in many other countries.

The proliferation of television and other modes of communication like radio, and newspapers largely affected the Misings as it has done to other linguistic groups of North East India. The newspapers and radio reached the Mising villages in the early years of the second half of the Twentieth century mostly in the 1960s while television reached the Mising families in the 1980s particularly after the Asian Games of 1982 held in Delhi. However, Mising families residing in the urban areas could avail themselves of this advanced mode of communication in the 1970s.

Today, at least 60% of the Mising population has access to radio while about 35% have television sets and around 40% Misings read newspapers, magazines, souvenirs and other printed materials. About 3% of the Misings are computer literate most of whom are settled in cities or towns like Guwahati, Jorhat, Golaghat, Sibsagar, Dibrugarh, Tinsukia, Tezpur, North Lakhimpur, Dhemaji, Silapathar and Jonai. (As per data reports).

Use of such modern modes of communication has considerably influenced the lifestyle, culture and language of the Misings particularly that of the younger generation. According to the general opinions of the local people, it has brought in both positive as well as negative things to this now adaptable community. The following are apparently the remarkable effects of mass media on the Misings in general :

Effects regarded advantageous (by the local Misings in general) :

1. With the accessibility of mass media communication, the once isolated tribe, Misings could count themselves as a part of the national audience of radio and television and thereby share news and current affairs of the country and abroad.
2. The accessibility to newspapers, magazines and television supplied the literate, a sense of self assessment both at the individual and the group level. This gradually changed their attitude and mindscape and exhorted them to mould themselves on the ones they read or saw. Such enlightenment brought them up to a stage of systematic thinking and planning.
3. Before the availability of media communication, the main ways of acquiring knowledge for the Misings were folk tales and stories told by the elderly members of the family or the community which had the possibility of distortion and manipulation at every level. The media brought them systematically told and written pieces of information at an incomparably faster mode.
4. Through the media, the Misings can now get the first hand information about the various developmental schemes and measures taken by the government for the general public, particularly like the welfare schemes for STs and SCs. On earlier occasions, such information was usually transmitted to them through the concerned local officials who used to do this as per their convenience and necessity.
5. One of the significant influences of the media on the youths of India, is on their lifestyle. In this regard Princess says, “With regards to their dressing and personifications of themselves, mass media has affected the lives of people in many ways... Men want a hairstyle like “Radhe Bhayya” in the hit movie *Tere Naam*. Bindis, blouses, and bangles define the concept of beauty for girls in small towns - influenced by the looks of the *saas-bahus* in the umpteen TV serials beaming into their drawing rooms on various satellite channels” (Princess 2006). Pricess quotes Chandraprakash Dwivedi, a village politician to have said, “Now village girls want to dress like Rani Mukherjee

in *Bunty aur Babli* -- this within four weeks of the release of the film.” The Mising youths are no exception in this transition with the slight difference that such influences are appropriated by them at a slower pace.

6. Another important aspect of lifestyle influenced by the media is the speech and body language. They like to imitate their favourite idols on films and televisions. They would use the linguistic changes as are used in the Hindi films and television programmes such as “sorry”, “bye, bye”, “OK”, “my God”, “I see”, etc. Many of the words would be used by them, particularly by the illiterates and semi-literates, even without knowing their exact meanings. Apart from the use of these borrowings, the educated also alternately use speech passages of Assamese, Hindi and English in their conversations or while conducting a quiz or hosting a musical programme as a compère.
7. The traditional costumes of the Misings have been overtaken by the dresses in vogue. The conventionally woven *Ege-Gasor*, *Gapa-Gare*, *Ri:bi-Gaséng*, *Kegrég* etc. are being replaced by the more comfortable and work-friendly ‘Churidars’ for women, and the *Gonro Ugon* and *Mibu Galug* by trousers and shirts for men. The wooden footwear ‘Khorom’ or *Panoti* have been replaced by shoes and sandals. However, some of the traditional female dresses of the Misings such as *Mising Ege-Gasor*, is still popular even amongst the non-Misings. Although, such dresses are normally woven with modifications as per market demand, they retain distinctive features of the *Ege-Gasor*.

Effects regarded culturally intruding :

1. With the availability of newspapers and other printed materials at the doorsteps, the Misings have become too dependent on the media for information, entertainment, ideas, opinion and many other things that they are concerned with. For example, an information on a matter of public-interest received in the conventional manner, i.e., word of mouth, is taken to be true and genuine only if it is evidenced by a newspaper or radio/television news coverage.

2. The mass media is tremendously affecting the psyche of the younger people, particularly the female members, in their attitude towards beauty and perfection. The most popular means of making an advertisement of new products, particularly those intending to reach a large consumer market, is through sexually arousing behaviours. Unfortunately, these behaviours are taken as exposures of beauty by the executors as well as the performers consisting mostly of younger female members. Young Mising girls are also enthusiastically attracted to the fashion world which is evidenced by the fact that fashion shows are often held during students' introduction sessions in Guwahati and other towns of Assam for which they devote more time and energy on beauty pursuits rather than to the acquisition of knowledge during their college days.
3. The dress of the post-modernism period has remarkably affected the erstwhile popular Mising traditional dress culture. Today, Mising girls would wear *Churidars* and skirts while Mising boys would wear Jeans pants and T-shirts. A sizable chunk of the younger generation, does not know of their traditional dress wears nor do they have any interest in knowing them.
4. The television, films and video games contain various scenes of horror, violence and sexually implicit materials. The children in the villages are still relatively away from the clutches of the films and video games, but those in the cities are seriously affected.
5. The present culture is sometimes called post-modern culture or media culture. This has seriously affected the work culture of the Mising villages. This is evident from the sight of groups of people gathered in a household or a roadside shade spending a day-long time listening to cricket commentaries. This is a malady to the families living in the urban areas also as seen from the fact that many employees take casual leave or students bunk classes to watch cricket matches. Large amounts of time are spent in a range of other media related activities, such as, browsing the internet, watching TV serials, and talking on the mobile phones on non-urgent works. V. Pope (2002) states on the world context that "Our cultural experiences are affected by the

development of systems of mass communication. A current research shows that we spend from 18 to 35 hours per week watching TV, for example. It is 'normal' to spend 3–4 hours per day in the company of a TV set”.

6. Because of the immense popularity of this culture, the traditional folk cultures are getting eclipsed which are now reduced to ceremonial cultures displayed on occasions only while the so called popular culture is being practiced daily. The media revolution has also contributed to the disintegration of the ethnic norms.
7. Pope's (2002) definitions of the general effects of mass media on the society and culture today are found to be relevant to the Misings as well. They are :
 - (a) Because popular culture and media images dominate the age, they dominate our sense of reality. The world is now 'intertextual' (images, copies, simulations and so on are so global that there are no authentic originals any more) The result is that popular culture has replaced art and 'high' culture and the contrived and the simulated has replaced the reality of experience and history. How and what we consume has become more important than what and how we produce.
 - (b) Postmodernism is about style. Pastiche, collage, bricolage (the mixing and re-using of images, signs and symbols) are emphasised at the expense of content or substance.
 - (c) Time, space history and place have become less secure - more confused. The forces of global communications and networks are eroding national cultures. This causes tension and uncertainty.
 - (d) Postmodernism is sceptical about absolute truths, artistic, scientific, historical or political, so a secure sense of time and place is becoming more difficult to sustain. Once secure theories are now open to question and doubt”.

Like any other human creation, the mass media too have both positive and negative aspects attached to them. The interpretation and utility of these means largely depend upon the way the interpreters and users treat them. According to Goodman (2007),

“the world is a conflict between good and evil” and the “media constantly presents the binary opposition of good vs. evil”. Now these means are left for the choice of their creators to use them in either way.

3.5.1 Conclusion : Interactions among various linguistic/ethnic groups have, in fact, always been a significant feature of social life. Contact among various societies over time result in change of culture and language. Contacts may have distinct results, such as the borrowing of certain traits or linguistic words, phrases etc. by one culture from another, or the relative fusion of separate cultures. Early studies of acculturation reacted against the predominant trend of trying to reconstruct cultures of presumably isolated societies. Such works were found faulty for implying that various cultural groups enjoyed an unchanging, pre-contact period. Such studies of contact called attention to resulting social and individual psychological disturbances. Studies today often call attention to the development of one complex world system, in which some societies dominate others economically, politically, socially and linguistically. Many cultural theorists also observe the ways in which cultural groups resist domination and often working against acculturation.

For the Misings, acculturation coupled with education played the prime role for changing their mindset from a mono-cultural stage to a bi-cultural stage of living. Ever since acculturation began in the Eighteenth century, the cultural cross-over has been continuing with an increasing trend not only from the Assamese-speaking communities of Assam, but also from other cultures. This is reflected prominently in their use of dress, ornaments, music, implements, religious pursuits and language behaviour. With access to the modern day markets, they are increasingly adapting to the demand of the day. For example, the conventional costumes *Ege-Gasor* and *Gapa-Gare* are less used by the office-going Mising women who prefer the more comfortable and work-friendly *Churidars*. The male costumes *Gonro Ugon* and *Mibu Galuk* have been almost replaced by pants and shirts although sometimes the latter is seen used as an outer jacket. The wooden footwear *Panoti* or *Khorom* has been completely replaced by shoes and various leather and rubber sandals. This already

dynamic culture has been given a rapid acceleration towards modernism by the outreach of modern communication which is causing a revolutionary change to the Misings, particularly, the youngsters. Today, it is very difficult to differentiate between a non-Mising and a Mising working in a multinational company in terms of language, skill and other aspects of human behaviour.

In many cases, a sort of syncretism prevails in the Mising culture where the subordinate group, the Misings, have taken up elements of the dominant Assamese culture and language to fit their own tradition. At the same time, this fitting of cultural and linguistic elements cannot be called an assimilation, because, the involved elements still maintain their original qualities nor can it be called an intercultural because the elements do not altogether form a new culture. Here it may be called *misisingisation* of such elements. For example, *Pitang* which comes from the Assamese word 'Pitha' is a food item normally used during festivals like Magh Bihu or Bohag Bihu. Although the word and the process of making it are borrowed from the Assamese tradition, the *Pitang* is typical of the Mising culture and food habit now – round flat Roti-like item made of ground rice powder, thicker and smaller in size than the Roti. Its source is the Assamese *Ghila Pitha*, a kind of pan cake made of rice flour and molasses or *Til Pitha* a flattened and rolled snack made with the powder of rice called *Bora Rice* and sesame seeds and served during festivals like Bihus. Significantly, the Misings have extended its use as a curry called *Pitang Oying* which is a popular curry item among the Misings. The change in the sound/pronunciation is notable – in Mising language, there are no aspirated or stressed sounds and most proper nouns end with the sound of 'ng'. Therefore, the Assamese *Pitha* becomes *Pitang* in Mising. Similarly, the musical instruments *Dumdum* and *Lu:pi* (drum and brass *taal*) have come from the Assamese *Dhool* and *Taal* – the use is almost the same except a slight change in the rhythm while beating. These instruments are now integral parts of the Mising culture and music.

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CHAPTER IV

In the Zone : Analysis and Verification

[This chapter is an analytical approach to the field findings. The recorded data in their colloquial form are written out as found in the field which are then translated into English. This is followed by their analysis and verification in the light of the Markedness Model of Carol Myers-Scotton adopted for the purpose. The chapter is in five parts. The first part gives an account of the terminology and the divisions of analysis; the second part gives a spot introduction of the methodology and theoretical framework adopted for analyzing the data; the third part illustrates the use of code-switching as various verbal tools under 'marked choices'; the fourth part deals with these devices and indices under 'unmarked choices'; and the fifth part examines the threat perception and the possibility of displacement of the Mising language.]

4.1.1 The terms and lexemes used in the present study in general and the present chapter in particular, are those already in the sociolinguistic mode. However, on situational demand, help has been taken from certain words and parts of expression which are typical of the concerned languages. Since code-switching involves at least two languages, the terminology of Carol Myers-Scotton (1997) has been taken to refer to the mother tongue of the user group and the language to which the switching takes place. In this context, Myers-Scotton (1997, 220) describes, "The language which sets the grammatical frame in mixed constituents is the Matrix Language

(ML)...the other language(s) participating in the code-switching is the Embedded Language (EL). The ML frames the projection of the complementizer (CP) which constitutes intra-sentential code-switching. (CP is synonymous with a clause with a complementizer (COMP.), e.g., *because he came late*, with *because* as COMP)”. This will be applicable mainly to intra-sentential switches. For inter-sentential and other forms of code-switching, we shall use Language One (L1) for the base language or the matrix language, in our case, Mising, and Language Two (L2) for the lending language or the embedded language (which is also referred to as intruding language), in our case, Assamese. The present community is mainly bilingual, but in some cases, elements of multilingualism are also found, because, they use English and Hindi parts of speech also in course of their discourse. In such cases, English and Hindi are referred to as Language Three (L3) and Language Four (L4) respectively.

Code-switching is also referred to as *code-mixing* particularly in case of intra-sentential switches (Kachru 1983, Singh 1985, Sridhar & Sridhar 1980). However, as the term connotes, code-mixing has some attributes of assimilation or mixing of phonemes. Such elements are also found in the present study. For example, the word “poriyé” meaning “(I/we) shall study”, is a mixture of Assamese word “pori” and the Mising suffix “yé”. Here, the involvement of L2 is more of structure than of social meanings. Such phonemically intermixed intra-clausal switches will be referred to as *code-mixing* in some cases. However, barring such phonemic mixtures, all forms of language alternation including single-word switches, will be referred to as *code-switching* for the purpose of analyzing the data.

Although there is some degree of similarity between *diglossia* and *code-switching* as both the situations witness change of language from one variety to another, diglossia has its distinctive features different from code-switching. Ferguson originally defined diglossia as “a relatively stable language situation in which, in addition to the primary dialects of the language (which may include a standard or regional standards), there is a very divergent, highly codified (often grammatically more complex) superposed variety” (Ferguson 1959, 435). It is a situation where two (or

even more) distinctive speech varieties of the same language coexist. These varieties are historically or genetically related but they are distinctive functionally. In diglossia “the domains of linguistic behaviour are parcelled out in a kind of complementary distribution. These domains are usually ranked in a kind of hierarchy, from highly valued (H) to less valued (L); when the two varieties are recognized (or tacitly accepted) as genetically related, the H domains are usually the reserve of the more conservative form of the language, which is usually the literary dialect if there is a written form. Formal domains such as public speaking, religious texts and practice, education, and other prestigious kinds of usage are dominated by the H norm; the L norm is used for informal conversation, jokes, street and market, the telephone, and any other domains (e.g. letter writing, cinema, television) not reserved for the H norm” (Schiffman 1997, 205). There are certain situations found in some societies where forms of two genetically unrelated or at least historically distant languages occupy the H or L niches. Such a situation is referred to as *extended diglossia* by writers like Fishman (1967), where one variety is used for prestigious purposes, such as, religion or education or formal situations while the other is employed in informal and day to day communication.

There is a difference between diglossia and code-switching. William Downes (1998, 81) echoes Gumperz in describing the contrast as “In diglossia, the code allocation is stable and the norms clearly focused. The functions are specialized only by situation, not by participant’s intended effect. By contrast, conversational code-switching is rapid, largely unconscious, and used for communicative effect.” Although diglossic situations are occasionally found in the speech behaviour of the Misings at large, the present study will focus on the interlingual code-switching between the Mising and the Assamese languages practiced by the ethnic Mising speakers.

4.1.2 The degree of knowledge a speaker has of L2 (or the languages other than L1) governs the frequency and amount of switching to that language. The amount and type of switching also largely depend upon the level and form of acquisition of the concerned language. In this context, John Edwards (1994) says, “Consider, first, that

there are four basic language skills : listening, speaking, reading and writing. Consider further the possible subdivisions : speaking skill, for example, includes what may be quite divergent levels of expression in vocabulary, grammar and accent. This is, thus, a substantial number of elements here, all of which figure in the assessment of bilingualism, it does not follow that strength in one means strength in another”. It is also a part of the strategic study of code-switching that in many cases there is usually a dominance of one language over the other during conversation where language interference or intrusion occurs. However, every switch from one language to another may not result from linguistic intrusion and interference. “Speakers may often switch for emphasis, because they feel that the *mot juste* is found more readily in one of their languages than in another, or because of their perceptions of the speech situation, changes in content, the linguistic skills of their interlocutors, degrees of intimacy and so on” (Edwards 1994, 72).

Code-switching can serve both as an index and a tool. As an index, code-switching can indicate a speaker’s self-perception as a multidimensional person. This can be as a member of a specific group or a member simultaneously of several groups. As a tool, it can be used in an ongoing conversation to step in and out of a presumed or expected identity (Myers-Scotton 1993, 2006).

4.2.1 Analysis and Verification of Data

The field findings of the present study are analysed in the light of the Markedness Model propounded by Carol Myers-Scotton (1983, 2006). The Markedness Model views linguistic choices as negotiations of self-identity and the desired relationships with others, which speakers exercise in tune with the reaction of the listeners and the prevailing social norms. According to this theory, the bilingual speakers make their linguistic choices mainly to meet their own goals, but at the same time, they also keep their eyes open to the reaction of the listeners as the listeners form an important component of the conversation. Myers-Scotton says in this context, “The Markedness Model tries to establish a principled procedure that both speakers and listeners use to judge any linguistic choice that they might make or hear as more or

less *marked*, given the interaction in which it occurs.” (Myers-Scotton 2006, 14). Under this theory, there are mainly two linguistic choices that speakers make while engaging themselves in code-switching; they are, marked choice and unmarked choice.

While discussing this theory, Myers-Scotton (1993) refers to a Rights and Obligations set (RO set) for the members of the society. This is a behavioural situation that conforms to the expectations of the participants in a given situation. Such a set of expectations gets settled in the minds of the members by social norms and values or long experiences in similar situations, and it is usually maintained by members by observance of these norms and beliefs. For example, in a social gathering, if a person behaves as expected of him in such a situation, he will be said to have made an unmarked choice of behaviour. Similarly, when a speaker uses the expected language in a given situation, he will be said to have made an unmarked choice of language. “In regard to language, the unmarked choice is the linguistic reflection of any specific RO set. For example, for bilinguals in France, the unmarked choice to use in a government office is French, not any other languages that they speak. Or, for most Spanish/English bilinguals in the United States (especially if they are recent arrivals), the unmarked choice to use to elderly relatives at family gatherings is Spanish... Thus, when a speaker makes the *unmarked choice*, he/she is causing no social ripples because participants expect such a choice, based on experience” (Myers-Scotton 2006, 14).

Marked choices, on the other hand, are a principle of negotiations. They are not expected, predictable or pre-known in the society or situation where a given Rights and Obligations set is in force. By making a marked choice of language, the speaker seeks a new set of Rights and Obligations to be in force for that conversation. For example, an Assamese-speaking customer approaches a Bengali-speaking shopkeeper in Guwahati and speaks Bengali while requesting for two kilograms of Atta (flour) and one litre of vegetable oil on credit (observed by the author on March 27, 2006). The customer who normally speaks Assamese, switches to Bengali

apparently in an attempt to soften the shopkeeper's mind (by speaking the shopkeeper's mother tongue) towards securing the credit sale. Here, the speaker indexes a new set of Rights and Obligations to be active for that conversation and situation by making a marked choice. In the words of Myers-Scotton (2006, 15), "the speaker making a marked choice is calling for a new situation, for a new RO set to be in effect. Thus, a choice that is marked in interaction X would be unmarked in interaction Y, the one that the speaker wishes to be in effect. Generally speaking, a marked choice is a negotiation about the speaker's persona (who the speaker is) and the speaker's relation to other participants. Thus, making a marked choice is a negotiation about either the solidarity or power dimension or both".

The Markedness Model also presents a set of rational aspects associated with the choice of language by speakers. According to this rational choice, speakers use a particular language rather than another during verbal interaction expecting that the choice will bring them the best results. For this purpose, they assess and measure the relative costs and rewards of speaking that language. This may not necessarily mean that the choice so made is the best choice. By making a rational choice, the speaker makes calculations on the basis of his/her experiences for the best results out of the choice. Therefore, "rational choices are subjective, with the emphasis on mental calculations about getting the best outcome" (Myers-Scotton 2006).

4.2.2 The data are analysed to find how interlingual code-switching, mainly between the Mising and the Assamese, is used as linguistic devices and indexes. The data on linguistic interactions are presented as examples supporting the statement on a particular type of use. Each example is analysed by putting all the sentences in fresh lines and numbering them in the Arabic notation beginning from '1' to whatever figure the number of sentences is equal to. While using the speech data, L1 is given in the normal running fonts, L2 is shown in italics and L3 and others (if any) are italicized and underlined in order to mark the speech parts belonging to the Mising, Assamese, English/Hindi respectively. This is followed by the analysis and interpretation of the language use and its implications. In the examples, the qualities

of the choices found marked or unmarked are mentioned in the analysis and interpretation, but the dominating function is given in parenthesis in the statement heading. It is noteworthy that the use of code-switching as a linguistic device and impicator, is various and has no bounds. It is as infinite as the language itself. In the present study, the use of code-switching as a major sociolinguistic device used by the Misings as found in the field work conducted in the strategically selected villages and towns/cities, are covered and presented.

4.3.1 Use of code-switching as sociolinguistic devices (marked choices)

4.3.2 A linguistic tool to include/exclude participants in/from in-group discussions

In societies where more than one language exist, particularly those where one language is dominant over the others in terms of use, the speakers of the dominant variety generally are not fluent in the minor languages. In some cases, they even do not understand these minor varieties mainly because of their limited use or non-use in the social circles, academic curricula and in the offices. In such cases, the use of these varieties is confined to the ethnic speakers only. On the other hand, the speakers of a minor language are generally fluent in the dominant language apart from their ethnic variety. It is an oft-seen fact that in such multi-ethnic settings, the speakers of a minor variety use their knowledge of both the languages as various verbal tools in dealing with their non-speaker neighbours during in-group conversations.

Code-switching is used by speakers to include and exclude a monolingual participant or a participant who does not understand either of the languages being used in the conversation. This can be for the entire length of the conversation or a particular part of the proceedings where the concerned person is desired to be in or out.

Example 1

Setting : The meeting hall of the the All Guwahati Mising Kebang (All Guwahati Mising Society) located at Japorigog in Guwahati. The Kebang is the apex body of the Mising population of Guwahati city. It plays a pivotal role in taking initiatives for the socio-cultural development of the Mising community living in the city. The Kebang is constructing a *Murong Okum* (cultural house) at Japorigog with a government grant. A site engineer is appointed to oversee the construction works at the site who is an Assamese-speaking person. From time to time the members of the construction committee meet to take stock of the progress of the construction works. In one of its meetings held in June, 2005, the speeches/debates of the members progress as shown below :

- 1 Member A : Kébang Abu odokké gíkumsuné ajon kídínga, longkoké *meeting* dokké su:pak *der mang* koi ika:bo. (Mr. Chairman and my colleagues, it's been one and half months since the last meeting.)
- 2 : Siddí *dinso* sé bareyo:sémyé itíla dun ? (Is that wall alone being built all these days ?)
- 3 : Sémpé itomílo kapé ngolu sé bosérék ara:so okumsém mopínyen? (If it goes in this way, how shall we complete the building within this year ?)
- 4 : Su:paktu ngolu po:lo-po:lolo murkongém bige:la Kangapya:né *engineer* kosin la:tagbo, odok pí:mang émna, *labour* émsin la:dérmotakkubo. (Now we have taken a monthly-paid site engineer and as reported required, the labour strength has also been increased ?)
- 5 : Empige:lasin, kapila ager sé lomma:pé idun *baru*. (Even then why isn't the work picking up ?)
- 6 : *Moi eituei janibo khujisu je ohubidhatu kot hoise* ? (I just want to know where is the problem ?)
- 7 : *Kamtu kiyo aag barha nai* ? (Why isn't the work progressing ?)

- 8 Member B : *Obosye, kamtu jiman aag barhibo lagisile himan aag barha nai.*
(Secretary) (The work, of course, is not progressing as it should have been.)
- 9 : *Aru borokhun-or karoneu keidinman kam bondho hoi asil.*
(Further, the work got stalled for a couple of days due to rains.)
- 10 : *Amar site engineer-e jonuwa mote kisuman technical ohubidhar karone majote prai dui hoptah man kam bondho rakhibo loga hoisile.* (As reported by our site engineer, due to certain technical problems, the work had to be stopped for almost two weeks.)
- 11 : *Karon, architect-or clearance napale ami sad-tu dhalai koribo nuwaru, aru architect jon ehoptahor karone out-of-station asil.* (Because, without the clearance of the architect, we can't cast the slab and the architect was out of station for one week.)
- 12 : *Odokké, sé ngoluk kangapné tanisé:sin lonyi-loum ko gítoma, bík birmékolok midangai éмна.* (Our site engineer too didn't come for two-three days for he had gone to attend his sister's marriage.)
- 13 : *Bík lubinam mote ager-gerné tani:kídí:sé:sin amírem aiyo:pé pa:mang éмна complain dung émdak.* (He has also informed that the labourers had complained of non receipt of their dues.)
- 14 : *Édém su:gam sé ager ru:tum tanisé:m tatla:pé.* (We shall, however, ask this work superintendent later in this regard.)
- 15 : *Kapé-kapéi idaggom, su:pakkolokké, aiyo:pé agersém gerbonpé lagidagbo jate ami December-rot ghorkhon uliyabo paru.* (Whatever is the problem, from now onwards, the work has to go speedily so that we can complete the building by December.)
- 16 : *Karon apunaluke itimodhye gom paisei je, Narah sir-e bisare je election-or agote CM-or dara ghor khonor hubharombhoni korabo lage.* (Because, as you all are already aware, Narah-sir (the WPT Minister) wants to ge the house inaugurated by the Chief Minister before the elections.)

The first member makes an unmarked choice when he begins his speech in Mising, but he switches over to a marked language Assamese in Sentence 6 and 7 apparently because he wants to include the site engineer, an Assamese-speaker, to understand this part of his speech. The speech of the second speaker has a number of communicative implications. When the first speaker has openly complained of the slow progress of the work, the second member who is also the Secretary of the organization, makes it clear to all members, particularly to the site engineer who is a non-Mising speaker and does not understand bulk of the previous speaker's speech, that due to certain unavoidable reasons, the work could no progress satisfactorily. Apparently, his beginning in Assamese is intentional and marked which is directed in making the site engineer understand what the previous speaker had said or meant and also to rescue him from a possible state of discomfort (for not understanding Mising). All of a sudden he again switches to Mising when he says about the absence of the site engineer for a couple of days which is again purposeful – he seems to be not very happy with the engineer's absence and he does not want this expression to be understood by the engineer at this moment. He also informs in Mising that the labourers have complained of non-receipt of some of their dues and the work supervisor has to be asked about the reason. This again seems intended to exclude the work supervisor from the present discussion. These speeches are metaphorically framed and therefore they are marked choices of language.

Example 2

Setting : Inside a Mising household in the evening when the members of the family gather around the fire-place to discuss the next day's works. As usual, the father who is the head of the family is taking stock of the progress of work in the paddy fields and is preparing to distribute works for the next day. Then his younger son informs that Brojen Barman (41) who is doing a sharecropping with the family, has not come back from home till date. He had gone home in Nalbari in lower Assam in early summer of 2003. But the time for beginning the *amdang arig* (summer crop) may run out if he delays further in coming back for the weather is not going to wait for him. Another sharecropper Gombhir Boro (34) is sitting nearby and is there to take

seeds for next day's sowing. Mohan, the elder son of the family and his father explore the possibility of giving the stretch of land allotted to Brojen, to Gombhir in the following conversation.

- 1 Father : Édé Borjen-dé sin lentokuma, longkok *deobar* do:bo gísa:yéku émge:la okko kapikang émdang *baru*. (That Brojen too hasn't turned up, he was supposed to come back last Sunday, I don't know what happened to him.)
- 2 : Su:pak bottepe pédong omango:dosém *kotiya pari-namdém* ingapma:mílo ledupé olomang-tolomang iyéku. (Now that it's not raining too heavily we have to finish growing the paddy seeds, otherwise, afterwards we will be left neither this way nor that way.)
- 3 Elder Son : Ba:bu, sé akon sémméi bík ba:g démsin bipéboi ? (Father, shall we give his share to this man (the other sharecropper) ?)
- 4 Father : Édémé:pé ipa:yépé, bím (Brojen) toya:mílo aríg yokyé. (We may have to do that way, otherwise if we go on waiting for him (Brojen) we will lose crop.)
- 5 : Sém luposul kangkító, bí:sin-ba pagyésong pagma:yésong. (Try talking to this man, it's not sure if he will be able to do it too.)
- 6 : *Jone kheti koribo nuware, tak mati di ki labh ase, tatke belegog diyai bhal.* (No point giving land to someone who can't do cropping, instead, its better to give it to someone else.)

Mohan and his father are worried about timely beginning and completion of the harvest. The rains have already started and they have to finish growing the paddy seeds, otherwise once it starts raining heavily, it will be very difficult for them to complete the work. When his father reminds of this warning, the anguished Mohan proposes to his father that the land allotted for Brojen be given to the other sharecropper Gombhir in Sentence 3. But he does not want that Brojen should

understand this proposal at this moment. Even in Sentence 5, still in unmarked Mising, when the father asks Mohan to talk to Gombhir to find out his capability to take over the piece of land kept for Brojen, Gombhir is deliberately excluded from the discussion. But in sentence 6 the father switches over to Assamese when he expresses that there is no point in lending land to a person who does not do the cultivation in time, and instead, it is better to give it to someone else who can do it. Through this marked choice of language, the father intends to include Gombhir in to the discussion. Through this he also gives a general warning that a non-performer is not going to get land for sharecropping.

Example 3

Setting : In the verandah of the pucca house of Dinesh Pegu (57) of village Gomari in the Golaghat district of Assam on October 27, 2007. A distant relative of Pegu has come to fetch a house maid who happens to be the mother of an eight-year old boy staying with Pegu. Pegu seems to be a father figure to the boy as well as his mother and guides them in all major activities. Over their morning tea, Pegu and his relative talk about the woman who is sitting on a bench in the other side of the verandah.

- 1 Pegu : Sé né:sé bík abí:n bírodo du:míndag, odokké, amodé:bulu lukín-lumíndag émna *olop kosto pai ase aru*. (This woman stays with her elder brother and she complains that her sisnter-in-law and others behave scornfully with her.)
- 2 : *Maiki manuhor kothatu*. (You know, it's a matter of women.)
- 3 Relative : Bík milbo:dé ? (Her husband ?)
- 4 Pegu : Bík milbo:dé ménnýing-konnyí:bo gípak kang émdag. (She says, her husband has gone away (from her) long back.)
- 5 : Su:pag *sari-pas bosor-koi* idu:bo:pé, yoknamé. (Probably, it's already four-five years now since he went missing.)
- 6 : Aipé lagidag, *karon* bí ménnýing Jibo Gogoi kolo:sin dungkatu. (She should make a good domestic help, because she stayed with

Jibo Gogoi (former Speaker, Assam), last year.

- 7 : *Lora-suwaliiu suwa-sita koribo pare.* (She can take care of the children also.)
- 8 : *Émpige:la, léko léko nappa:dé tatkigamdagnéna, ge:yé-payé mílo kerigsudag.* (But sometimes, she has a sour mouth, particularly when scolded, she replies.)
- 9 : *Édém no ka:la solai tobo péna.* (That may be taken care of by you.)
- 10 Relative: *Ma, agerdém aiyo:pé germílo, ko:ka:ngém aiyo:pé kangapmílo, okodémméi ge:pénam kadang.* (No, if she does her work properly, if she takes care of the children, what is there to scold her for.)
- 11 Pegu : *Kamtu koriboi lagibo, karubar ghorot thakok, nijor ghorot thakok.* (One has to work irrespective of his/her being at home or at someone else's home.)
- 12 : *Asolote, jotei nathakok ghorkhon nijor buli bhabi lobo lage, tetiya tat thaki, kam-bon kori bhal lage.* (Actually, wherever a person stays he/she should take that place as his/her own home, then, it becomes a comfortable place to stay and work in.)

While introducing Rashmi to her new Malik (employer or owner), Pegu informs him about her family status and experience in the related field in Sentence 1, 3, 4, 5 and 6. He describes this mostly in the unmarked language of Mising with naturally inserted Assamese words and phrases because he does not mind if she understands what they are talking about her such as that she is staying with her elder brother and she is unhappy with the behaviour of her sister-in-law. In Sentence 1, he effects a clausal swithing and in Sentence 6, the whole sentence which indicates her inclusion in the discussion. It is also implicated that this transmission of information is directed toward preparing the new Malik about her and drawing a sort of symphathy towards her. In Sentence 7, he makes a marked choice when he speaks pure Mising in expressing that she is sometimes sour in replying when scolded. The speaker does not want this part of his speech to be understood by her. Through this,

the speaker excludes Rashmi from the discussion. In Sentence 9, when the new Malik makes it clear that there is nothing to scold her about if she does her works properly, Pegu again switches to Assamese in Sentence 10 and 11 to convey the morale of what her new Malik says. In fact, the expression that one must work with a sense of belongingness wherever he/she stays, is directed to her to understand and grab. Through this marked choice of language, the speaker again includes Rashmi in the conversation.

4.3.3 A comforting agent for non-speakers during in-group conversations

While it is used as a device for excluding the non-speakers from a discussion, it is also used for making them feel comfortable and less alienated during in-group conversations.

Example 1

Setting : The sitting room of Bichitra Kumar Doley (38) at the Duara Chowk locality of Dibrugarh on October 27, 2005. Bichitra's elder brother who lives in Guwahati is on his way back from their parental home in the north bank of the Brahmaputra and is halting for the night at Bichitra's house. In the evening, the two brothers discuss some family matters while watching television news when two neighbours visit the household who are Assamese-speakers. Midway of their discussion, Bichitra introduces his brother to his neighbours in Assamese. After a brief introductory interaction with the guests, the brothers switch back to their ethnic language Mising for continuing their discussion. Since the new guests do not understand Mising and are keeping themselves silent, Bichitra switches to Assamese in the middle of his speech when he describes how it is difficult to get a faithful housemaid these days. Then the silence of the guests is broken and one of them supports Bichitra's statement citing a similar example from his family. Since the topic is one that relates to most families irrespective of their being members of the Mising-speaking society or Assamese-speaking society, Bichitra and his brother switch over to Assamese in between their speeches although the main language they are using is Mising.

- 1 Bichitra : Odokké, siyum-sí:ro ukam-uka ainé ko:néngém pa:maumpé. (And nowadays we don't get good maids.)
- 2 : *Aji-kali bor dig-dar bhal suwali puwatu.* (It's very difficult to get a good girl these days.)
- 3 Guest A : *Ghorot rakha suwalir kotha koise, ei, bor digdar.* (You're talking of a maid, uh, it's very difficult get.)
- 4 Brother : (To the guests) *Mur ghorot thokajoni khubei bhal, kintu ma:ke bisari thakege.* (The one staying in my house is pretty good, but her mother often asks her back.)
- 5 : Ményinké so du:néde aidagga:ma:lang, édéméi tatkitokupén. (The one who was here last year seemed good, why don't you try her again.)
- 6 Bichitra: Bí amil gí kang émdag. (She is heard to have got married.)
- 7 : (Looking at Guest A) *Juwa bosor je mur iyat asile, heijonir biya hol.* (The one who was here last year has got married.)
- 8 : *Nohole taiké anilu heten.* (Otherwise we would have brought her.)

While under the family setting, Mising is the unmarked choice for Bichitra and his brother, they switch over to L2 on and off for making the non-Mising guests comfortable in their company. The guests show their sign of being alienated from the discussion in the first part of the conversation between the two brothers, by their silence. But as Bichitra switches over to Assamese in Sentence 2, the guests look up to him and one of them offers to participate in the discussion understanding the topic being discussed by the brothers. From now onwards they are put at ease by the intermittent switches to Assamese by the brothers until the guests leave. After their departure, the brothers again come back to their ethnic language for the rest of the discussion.

4.3.4 A means to attract attention and emphasize points

Under a formal situation, a speaker switches from L1 to L2 to attract attention of the participants or an intended group in the audience. A formal situation is referred to as a setting where the participants' behaviours are controlled which means that they are not as free as they usually are in the company of friends and family members. Such a situation is created normatively when and where a sense of discipline and conduct is in force, such as, in offices, meetings and even gatherings where respected persons are present. In such situations, usually participants speak formal language, i.e., the official language befitting the situation. In such a situation, the rights and obligation set of the audience commands that the speaker completes his speech in the language in which he begins it, but midway he switches to L2. By making the unmarked choice of language, the speaker displays two purposes : first, he emphasizes the point he is raising, and second, he attempts to attract the attention of the authority present.

Example – 1

Setting : A meeting hall of the Assam Legislative Assembly at Dispur where the Speaker of the Assembly (himself a Mising) is chairing a meeting of the representatives of the Guwahati Mising Kebang (Guwahati Mising Society) and the Mising Autonomous Council, a statutory body for Mising self-rule constituted by the Government of Assam. Sonatan Doley (48) is an Executive Member of the Mising Autonomous Council and is representing the Council in this meeting held on February 02, 2001. The members are discussing among other things matters related to socio-cultural development of the Mising community. Doley's speech delivered in the meeting is found to be of significance for the present study. The following is an excerpt presented sentence-wise (Mising words are in normal fonts while Assamese words are in italics and English words are in underlined italics) :

- 1 : Méngésunam Kébang Abu, *Asom Bidhan Sabha* lok *Adhyokyo Mohudoy*,
odokké gíkumsuné rengama. (Respected Chairman, Honourable Speaker of
the Assam Legislative Assembly, and the gathering.)
- 2 : Ngo *Mising Autonomous Council*-ém *protinidhitto* ila sé kéba:so:pé gidung.

(I am attending this meeting as a representative of the Mising Autonomous Council.)

- 3 : Silo sémpiné kébang kolo ngo du:pa:la airu:péi mé:podung. (I am immensely happy to be with you all in such a meeting.)
- 4 : Lupé lumílo, MAC-ém *sorkar-é* Mising rengamsém kangabdopé émna *gothon* bitagai. (Indeed, the government had constituted the MAC to look after the Mising people.)
- 5 : Mising dungko-dagko, lambe-pédung odokké Mising durbísok ainam lega:pé agerém gergeboyépé émna ngolum tolígtaggai. (We are pledged to initiate the required activities for betterment of their livelihood, roads, and culture.)
- 6 : Edé appí:dém ngolu gerbomna du:bo, *Kintu* édé agerkídí:dém gerabnadopé *sorkar-sé* pí:dopé murkongém bima:pé idung. (We have already begun such welfare activities, but the government is not providing sufficient fund for their completion.)
- 7 : Silo sé kéba:so Ahomsok Speaker Mohudoy bí:sin dung, bím ngo MAC-r hoi eta kotha jonabo bisarisu je taniyé ka:begdopé agersém gerrama:la ngolum *jonohadharaon-é* aidag émna luma:bo. (Today, in presence of the Hon'ble Speaker, I would like to mention that we are being blamed for non-completion of the half-done works.)
- 8 : *Eta kothar karonei amak bohut beya lage je, sorkar binam poisa:dém pange:la* ngolu MAC-tok ager iné kídingé orpansula dopakdag émna taniyé mé:dag. (People think, we at the MAC just share the money received from the government amongst ourselves, and I am very upset for that.)
- 9 : *Kintu raij, apulaluke hunok, janahadharane bhabe je sorkare diya poisakhinir hatbyabaha ami kora nai.* (But, dear members, please listen, people think that we do not utilize the money that we receive from the government.)
- 10 : *Kintu, heitu hosa nohoi.* (But, this is not true).
- 11 : *Sorkar-e jurake poisa nidile ami keneke kamtu complete korim?* (If the government does not provide sufficient fund, how can we complete the

works?)

- 12 : Édémpila supak ngoluk *AGP sorkar-sé du:do:sém* – yampo-ro: *election-éi* pínga:yébo – gerngo:nam agerkídíngém gerabnadopé murkongko bimílopak *ami basim*. (Therefore, during this AGP regime of ours – the elections are already approaching – we must complete the works.)
- 13 : *Nohole ngoluk uporot manuhor bisshah naikiya hoi jabo*. (Or else, we will lose people's faith.)

In the above example, the speaker begins his speech in Mising which is an unmarked choice of language because in such a meeting, it is expected that the representative from the MAC would speak Mising. The rights and obligation set of the people commands that the preservers of the Mising language and culture make their speech in Mising. But as he observes that some of the audience are not paying sufficient attention to what he is saying, midway he switches over to Assamese with a louder voice. Here, apparently, his switching over to the marked language has two purposes: first, for drawing the attention of the audience and through this the attention of the Speaker of the Assam Legislative Assembly that if the government doest not sanction sufficient fund, the MAC would not be able to complete the half-done works; and second, he emphasizes the point that if the government continues to show apathy to the peoples' projects in the MAC area, their party will lose public faith which may prove dangerous for them during the next assembly elections.

It is noteworthy that in the first part of the speech, the speaker makes an unmarked choice by choosing Mising and uses the Assamese and English words just as borrowings, apparently to fill linguistic gaps in sentence 1, 2, 4, and 6 because these words are not available in the Mising language. In sentence 7 and 8, he goes for clausal switching. But in these sentences also, part of the complemetizing clause “bim ngo *MAC-r hoi eta kotha jonabo bisarisu je*” in sentence 7 and “*Eta kothar karonei amak bohut beya lage je*” are in L2 which means that the linguistic base of the speech has shifted from the matrix language. And in sentence 9 he switches completely over to Assamese and continues upto sentence 11. He comes back to Mising to conclude his speech in sentence 12 but again reminds the participants of

his point in sentence 13 in L2 with which his speech ends. Here he uses Mising as a borrowing.

Example 2

Setting : An interior evening scene in Naren Kutum's house at village Bhalukaguri on June 13, 2004. His elder son Manjit has failed the matriculation examination whose result was declared one week back. On the day of declaration of the result, he had gone to his school but had not returned home. The anxious parents got worried that in such situations teenagers may turn delinquent and commit misdeeds in bewilderment. On enquiring, it was found that he had gone to his uncle's house at Biswanath Chariali. Following telephonic contacts, his uncle brings the boy home. A couple of neighbours too have come to enquire. All are sitted around the fire place over the evening round of *Apong* when the following conversation takes place in an effort to give comfort to Manjit.

- 1 Father : Nom ngo porikang *pe:l*-to emna ge:dulang, ge:ma:da. (Am I scolding you for failing the examination? I am not.)
- 2 : Sinying *pe:l*-to, lunnying ayo:pé porige:l bitokuk. (This year you have failed, you should prepare well and appear next year.)
- 3 Uncle : Porikangém léko *fail* yémíloi taniyé odokkídípé mé:dírdon ? (Why do you lose heart after failing merely once ?)
- 4 : Amme léum-léppi:ko *fail* ge:lasinéi, *abohehot pass* dakku. (There are many people who fail three-four times and at last pass.)
- 5 : *Ei khetrot monor jur aru nera-nepera sestar he prohijon ase.* (In this regard, what is required is mental strength and perseverance.)
- 6 : *Sesta solai thakile, edinakhon nischoy kritokarjya hobo.* (If you continue your efforts, you will surely be successful one day.)

In most cases in Mising villages, it is expected that when a candidate fails an examination, he/she is scolded by parents and guardians for not studying well and

causing to lose time and money. In the above case, Manjit's father tries to console his son because already he seems to have been repenting which is demonstrated by his absconding for a week. Instead, Naren Kutum expresses his acceptance of his son's failure and advises him to study well for the next year's examination. Manjit's uncle joins Naren in the consoling exercise in Sentence 3 and 4. He switches over to Assamese speech passages *monor jur* and *nera-nepera sesta* meaning mental strength and perseverance respectively in Sentence 5. These Assamese phrases are taught in primary schools and are usually instrumental in imbibing a sense of strength in the minds of youngsters. Then he tells another comforting speech in Sentence 6 in Assamese that if a person continues his/her sincere efforts towards a goal, he/she will surely be successful one day. It is significant that here Manjit's uncle makes a marked choice because he makes a departure from the current medium of consoling the disappointed boy knowing that his speech in Assamese with the childhood phrases will have a better effect in Manjit's mind. Another remarkable point observed here is that the other members present in the household including the three neighbours too, pay a better attention to this speech than they did to the earlier ones as evident from their body language. Here Manjit slightly moves his head towards his uncle partly as a sign of acknowledgement of what his uncle has said to him and partly to show that he has not ignored the speech.

4.3.5 Providing spiritual satisfaction through code-switching

It is interesting to find that the use of code-switching can also make a sanctimonious mark in the minds of worshippers. The heavy Mising-Assamese acculturation process has reached such depths as to take over the religious conscience of the members of the affected group. In the following example it is seen that the worshippers are not gratified until and unless the priest says a part of his blessing mantras in L2 as a marked choice.

Example – 1

Setting : Inside a household at village Gali. Bhupen Pegu (43), a resident of the village, is a 6th standard passed and his main occupation is cultivation. But he also

acts as a *bhakat* (priest) of the *Mahapurushia Sankari Bhagawat*. He along with his team members was performing *puja* on the occasion of *Onno Prasanna* (first feeding) of the daughter of Bichitra Kumar Doley of the same village on April 16, 2002. The following is an excerpt of the informal interview with Pegu after the performance :

- 1 Q : Ngolu agom luddom kapila Misingo:pé luman, kapila Mipagémlulusupé *poridang*? (While talking, why don't we speak Mising alone, why do we use Assamese ?)
- 2 A : *Karon*, ngoluk Mising lok *bhasha sorsa émnamdc ko:m*, ngoluk Mising agom-sé pí:lígsukuma. (Because, the language research in Mising is very less and the vocabulary is insufficient.)
- 3 : *Émpila, prai Ahomiya sobda kobo logat pore*. (Therefore, we have to often use Assamese words.)
- 4 Q : Ngolu Misingé télé adito du:dodém Misingo:pé agomémlungap la:dungai, *kintu* su:pak so kéígsó du:langkula lungapla:tokuma, édé Kapila ikan? (When the Misings were in the hills, they could express their minds in Mising alone, but now after coming down to the plains and living here the vocabulary has become insufficient, why?)
- 5 A : Ngolu-je *Asomiya bhasha lo pori-ka*. (It's mainly because we have studied through Assamese medium.)
- 6 : Ngoluk porrou namdém ahomiyap *pori-la*, odokké ahomiyangém ajon jonna ngolu *prai Ahomiya bhasa byabahar koru*. (Whatever we learn from our schools is through Assamese and also we have friendship and other relations with the Assamese-speaking people, therefore, we often use Assamese.)
- 7 Q : Nolu, *bhakat* kídingé pelígdouém oko *bhasha-lo* pelígdon? (While blessing, which language you prefer?)
- 8 A : Edé *eta sabo logiya kotha*, kapidang kindon. (That is a matter to be seen, do you know what happens ?)

- 9 : Misingo:pé pelígyémílo, bélé kumnébé mé:lígsuma, e:h, *bhakat-sé* pelígkinma émna mé:dag. (When we bless only in Mising, the party offering prayers are not satisfied, they think that the priest doesn't know how to bless properly.)
- 10 : Odokké Mipagpé peté:mílopag mé:lígsudag, arrompé mé:dag. (And if we bless in Assamese along with Mising, they are satisfied, they think it proper.)
- 11 : Émpila, ngolu Mising pésin pelígdo, mipag pésin pelígdo. (Therefore, we bless both in Mising as well as in Assamese.)
- 12 Q : Sémmo:pé itíl du:mílo Mising *bhasha-sé* yokyé némpéi mé:dang no?
(Do you think that if things continue as are going on now, the Mising language will cease to exist?)
- 13 A : Yokyar némpé mé:ma, anupé sí:san kídí:sé aiyo:pé *baka sorsa-la* du:yarmílo, *eta homoyot* Misingé Misingo:pé lula:yénémpén mé:dangné.
(I don't think that it will cease to exist and, I think, if the new generation takes interest in developing the language, one day, Misings will be able to talk in Mising only.)

In the above interview, Bhupen Pegu says that the Misings switch over to Assamese because, first, the Mising language does not have sufficient word stock for expressing various feelings of a speaker triggering him/her to switch over to Assamese; second, they have friendship and other established relations with the Assamese-speaking people, and third, they have had their school education through the Assamese language. While saying this, Pegu gives a significant piece of information in relation to the languages the priests use while blessing in sentence 9, 10 and 11. He categorically discloses that the priests, as himself, give the blessing in Mising as well as in Assamese because if it is done in Mising alone the host is not satisfied. Therefore, the priests first bless in Mising and then they use the mantras from the book in Assamese.

Example 2

Setting : The interior hall of Bidya Pegu's (54) house at Dibrugarh after the main performance of a religious function. The guests are being offered *apong* (rice beer) and they are engaged in informal talks. The head priest Dhaniram Doley (57) who hails from a village in the outskirts of the city, says in an interaction that the Mising religious practices are symbolic of two cultures. While blessing, he uses two languages, Assamese and Mising, abruptly switching between them.

- 1 : Mising pésin pelígdo, mipag pésin pelígdo. (I bless in Mising as well as in Assamese.)
- 2 : Su:pak ngo Mipagpé luyé, “*guru Brahma, guru Bishnu, guru mohasoy, probhu Horowanto.*” (Now I'll say in Assamese, O, Lord Brahma, Lord Vishnu, Lord Mohashoy, Lord Horowonta.
- 3 : Odokké Mising pésin luyé, “*rugji-me:rang, ta:to-ya:yo nolu tatdlang ka...*” (Again, I will say “O, plants and insects, forefathers, you hear” in Mising.)

It is seen in the above example that while invoking the Gods, the priest speaks Assamese and for the plants, animals and forefathers of the family, he speaks Mising. This specific use of language attributes to the fact that the priest learnt the customary rites of religion in Assamese from his Guru (religious master) and accordingly he practices them. He speaks Mising while invoking the plants, pests and forefathers because these are associated with agriculture which is the main occupation of the Misings at large.

4.3.6 A means of displaying skill and ability

In some cases, it is seen that switching from L1 to L2 and sometimes to L3 is used as a means to convey the speaker's ability and skill. Under the normative rights and obligations of members prevalent in the society, a person speaking high of himself/herself is not taken easily by the listeners. In certain cases, such a self exposure is taken as an exaggerated opinion of oneself and accordingly its

truthfulness is doubted. Therefore, speakers take the help of reality show for transmitting such information, such as, code-switching for displaying one's ability to speak a prestigious language.

Example – 1

Setting : The fore court of a small roadside tea stall at village Gali. As usually they do, a group of people are gathered to enjoy the winter morning sun. X (name concealed to avoid possibility of derogation) is a candidate for the approaching Panchayat elections (held in Assam in 2002). The campaigning is at its peak and the candidates are making all out efforts to woo the voters in their own ways. While conversing with the gathering, X tries to impress upon the other participants about his ability to speak and work, in reply to a complaint from one of the public. The conversation progresses on a topic regarding the poor performance of the MLAs elected from the Mising areas. The following is an excerpt of the semi-formal conversation :

- 1 X : Ngolu su:pag congress *sorkar-ém ka:tobo, AGP sorkar-émsin ka:tobo*. (Now, we have seen the Congress Government, we have also seen the AGP Government.)
- 2 : Ngolu okkom pa:ton? (What have we got ?)
- 3 : Ngolukkosokke mélignam kídí:dok de:kko *Montri* pésin ika, *kintu* bulu ngoluk do:lung kídí:sok léga:pé, ngoluk réngamsok léga:pé oko agerém gerton? (Many of our elected members had become ministers also, but what have they done for these villages, and for our society ?)
- 4 Public A: Bolo Dispur bo Assembly solil du:dodém, ngoluk kosokké gíné MLA kídí:dokké agoméi lenma. (When the Assembly session is on at Dispur, no speech comes out of our MLAs (elected from our constituencies).
- 5 : Nabbutsul du:dag. (They keep their mouth shut.)
- 6 X : Émpilangí:na asudouko kinné, agom lujo:né taniém ngolu méligpé

lagidangé. (That's why, we have to elect/send some one who knows things and who can speak.

- 7 : *Nolu kindagéi, ngolu kiman bosor hongothon-not asu.* (You all know, how long we have been in the organization (he refers to a students' union where he was an executive member).
- 8 : *Aji baro bosor hol hongothon-not kaam kora.* (Now it's already twelve years that we have been working for the organization.)
- 9 : *Amar bohut obigyota hoi goise.* (Now we have acquired a lot of experience.)
- 10 : *Keneke homosti solabo lage, keneke officer-ror pora kaam adai koribo lage, amak hikabo logiya eku nai.* (We needn't be taught how to run a constituency and how to get things done through officers.)

The candidate who is on his election campaign, talks mostly in Mising in the first part of his speech, in Sentence 1, 2, and 3, with a visible sense of patriotism to the Mising language and culture. His apparent intention here is to project himself as a patriot, as he is generally known, because of his active association with an organization known for spearheading a series of movements for preservation of the Mising language and culture. One of the objectives of this organization is to encourage Misings to speak their ethnic language with fellow Misings instead of Assamese which is the fashion of the day, particularly, in the urban areas. But as one of the public expresses his dissatisfaction over the speaking inability of those elected by them to the State Assembly, in Sentence 4 and 5, he immediately begins to speak Assamese in Sentence 6 and 7 and completely switches over to that language in Sentence 8, 9, and 10. Here, apparently, his switching intends to communicate to the public that he is capable of speaking Assamese and so he will not keep silent when he is required to speak.

4.3.7 A medium of showing high professionalism at business place

It is observed that in some cases, a marked choice of language is directed towards maintaining a social indifference of the speaker towards other participants. This is

adopted mainly to bar some people from taking undue advantage in a given situation or business. The users of this tool feel that some members of the society put the targeted person(s) to a set of social bindings by talking to them in their common ethnic language and establishing that they are country cousins or distant relations or old acquaintances and take advantage out of it. Therefore, such a user speaks the official language to make things formal while on duty or in public places implicating that he means business and nothing else.

Example 1

Setting : Inside a running bus proceeding from Jonai town to Silapathar in the Dhemaji district of Assam on October 23, 2002. The conductor is collecting fare from the packed-in passengers. Due to a *bandh* (public holiday) call given by one of the local students' organizations, the number of public buses plying between these two points is very low. Therefore, the present bus is over-crowded. The conductor cruises through the standing passengers collecting money from them because, he fears, the standing passengers might get down without paying the fare on reaching their stations. It can well be made out from his features and accent that he is a Mising, but he speaks Assamese all through. One of the passengers, a middle-aged woman known to the conductor as understood from her speech, tries to talk to him in Mising urging upon him that the fare of her kid be waived. But the conductor is indifferent and continues to speak Assamese asking for fare. The following is a record of the on-bus conversation :

- 1 Woman : Okkom no kangkima:namém ludu:némpé édémpé ludun? (Why are you talking as if to an unknown person?)
- 2 Conductor : *Nai, sobore bhara lagibo.* (No, fare has to be paid for everyone.)
- 3 Woman : Aba, ko:sokké démmin méligteika émdun, *rail-lo:sin méligdagma:lang.* (We're asking you to exempt the kid only, he is exempted in train also.)
- 4 : *Bondhor dina gari solaisu, kiman risk ase?* (I'm running the bus

- on a day of *bandh*, how much risk is there?)
- 5 : *Kunba jodi garir glass etau bhangi diye, kiman toka jabo mur?* (If someone breaks even a glass of the bus, how much shall I lose?)
- 6 : *Apunaluke buji napai kiyo?* (Why don't you all understand?)
- 7 : *Adha bhara diya.* (Give a half-fare.)

The conductor is speaking Assamese all through inspite of the fact that he is a Mising and is being talked to in Mising by some of the passengers who apparently know him and who are known to him as well. He is fully aware of what the Mising passengers are saying around him. But he has chosen to speak the official language only and be formal apparently triggered by his sour experiences of recongnizing relations and acquaintances in the past. The conductor sends around a clear message through his marked choice of language that here he is the conductor and all others traveling in the bus are passengers to him from whom he has to collect fare. Here, social relations and acquaintances shall not get importance. He gives reasons for it saying that he is running his bus on a day of *bandh* taking a great risk. Any moment, picketers may cause damage to his bus and therefore he wants to make no compromise on collection of fare.

4.3.8 A teaching device in educational institutions

Bilingual teaching is already a recognized way of teaching in schools and colleges in many parts of the world today, including Europe, Africa, Australlia and Asia. This system of teaching, followed in bilingual societies, gives the learners a two-way understanding of a given subject. In the Mising society, particularly in the rural areas, the Mising-Assamese bilingual medium is followed for teaching students in schools, particularly in lower classes. This is stated by the following teachers during an interaction on April 15, 2002. They are Iraboti Doley (55), a primary school teacher at Majulipur, Dhanada Pao (52), a primary school teacher at Bahir Jonai, Photik Pegu (43), a high school teacher at Matmora, Dhakuakhana, Ganesh Doley (55), a primary school teacher at Shantipur, and Birkudhar Pao (56), a high school teacher at Laimekuri.

- 1 Q : Nolu school-lo *poraidouém*, kapé *bujaidon* ? (When you teach in school, how do you explain the lesson ?)
- 2 Iraboti : Ngolu *asolote path*-dém Ohomiya-pé poribipo:do, odokké édém Mising-pé *bhangoni* bidoku. (When we teach our students, we first read out the lesson in Assamese, then we translate it into Mising.)
- 3 : Odopak bulu *path* dém *bujidag*. (Then only they understand the lesson.)
- 4 Q : *Baru*, Mising do:lunh kolo *jodi* Mipag *mastor* ko du:múlo, bí kapé bujaiyén ? (Ok, if a non-Mising teacher has to teach in a school situated in a Mising area, how will he teach ?)
- 5 Iraboti : Ngolum ngoluk *prohikhyon*-no luyíréi tak *je* oko *jégado sakori* idoji, édé *jégadok* *local* *bhasha* dém apir-pirnyo:daggom *hiki* supa:yé *jate* bí édé *jati*-dok ko:kangém *porai* douém bulu *buji*-dopé buluk *bhasha* lo:sin lubila:dopé. (It is instructed during our training that wherever we serve, we must learn the local language so that the children of that area can be taught in their vernacular language also for their better understanding.)
- 6 Photik : *Class room*-ot *porhaunte ami Asomiyate porhaun, karon, amar school khon eta Asomiya* *medium school*. (While teaching in the class room, we teach in Assamese because our school is an Assamese medium school).
- 7 : *Kintu jihetu praibur chatro-chatri Mising, teunlukok bhalke bujaboloi ami Mising bhashat kotha khini bujai diun*. (But since the majority of the students are Mising, we explain in Mising also in order to make them understand properly.)
- 8 Ganesh : É:lo, Mipag-Mising anyipak dém lupé idag. (Yes, we have to use both Assamese and Mising)
- 8 : Émpila *iskullo* *porai* douémsin *kitapdok* agom dém Mising-pé bujai po:pé idak, odokképak édé agomí:dém Asomiya-pé lubidoku. (While teaching a particular lesson, we first explain it in

- Mising, then we do it again in Assamese)
- 9 : Odopak bulu édém aiyo:p tatkindakku. (Then only they understand properly.)
- 10 Jugal : Mising-pé lungapla:ma éndo, akou kapé Mising-pé bujai don? (It has been said that one can't express his/her feelings in Mising, then how do you teach in Mising?)
- 11 Ganesh : Lékoném lupé mé:yémílo, Misingo:pé lula:daksin. (Sometimes, if we try we can express in Mishing alone.)
- 12 : *Kintu*, ngolu Misingai Mipagai du:lu-du:yar sula du:naména su:pag lulu-luyar supé poridu:né. (But, since the Misings and non-Misings are living mixed, our language has also become mixed.)
- 13 : Odokké, su:pag Mising *kitabém* la:lenna Mising-pé *iskullo* poraidung, Mising *area* lok *iskul* kídí:so. (Now the Mising books are written and being taught in the schools of the Mising dominated areas.)
- 14 : Édé *arombhoni he*, édé *kiman agbarhibo*, édém su:pag lula:mada. (This is only the beginning, it's too early to say anything about its progress.)
- 15 Dhanada : Ngolu dan kouém bujai douém, Mising-pé lubipo:do, aro Mising-pé. (While teaching, we first explain the lesson in Mising, in pure Mising.)
- 16 : Odokképag, édé agomí:dém Mipagpé lubidoku, odopak koué agom dém *bujidak*. (Then the same thing is explained in Assamese, then only, the children understand.)
- 17 : Émpila, poraidouém Mising pésin lubipa:dak, Mipag pésin lubipa:dak. (Therefore, while teaching, we have to speak Mising as well as Assamese.)
- 18 Birkudhar: Aru sémpésin idag. (And it happens like this also.)
- 19 : English subject dém *poraidouém akou tinta bhashat kobo logiya*

hoi. (While teaching the English subject, we have to use three languages.)

- 20 : English-dém tu English-pé *poriru:bipo:pa:dag*, odokké Ohomiya-pé *bhangoni* bido, odokké *akou* édém Mising-pé *lubipa:dakku*. (Obviously, an English lesson is to be first read out in English, then it is translated into Assamese, then again it has to be explained in Mising.)
- 21 : Ékímam bulu *bujibínna*, *bujima*. (Otherwise, they don't understand.)
- 22 : *Hindi-r khetrotu eitue hoi.* (It is true with Hindi too.)

All the five teachers participating in the above group discussion, teach in primary and high schools in areas where 75%–95% students are from the Mising community. They have adopted, although unofficially, bilingualism as the teaching tool in pursuit of making the children understand a given topic. They all agree that Mising–Assamese bilingual teaching is required for proper understanding of the rural children of the Mising dominated areas. The prescribed books are in Assamese except the language subjects on English, Hindi and Mising. While English is a compulsory subject, Hindi is optional in the high school level. Mising is currently taught in the lower classes. English and Hindi are taught trilingually in English or Hindi (as the case may be), Assamese and Mising as Birkudhar Pao who teaches English at the high school level, says in Sentence 19, 20 and 21. On the other direction, Mising is taught bilingually in Mising and Assamese again in order to make the children understand the contents where some newly coined words are also found which require Assamese translation.

4.3.9 Employing code-switching to express ethnic solidarity

A striking fact regarding the use of code-switching is the case of the children brought up in urban areas. Most members of this group are educated and many of them are professionals, such as, doctors, engineers, entrepreneurs and govt./public/private sector executives. For them, Assamese is the matrix language equivalent to mother

tongue while Mising is often used as the embedded language. They switch over from Assamese to Mising occasionally but not as frequently as a common Mising would do to Assamese from Mising. The elder members of this group who are over 40 years of age are slightly more in use of Mising words than the younger members. Those who are below 25 years, use just the names of commonly heard items at home, such as, *apong* (rice beer), *apin* (rice), *Ali Ayé Lígang* (the Mising agrarian festival) and some addresses like *Ta:to* (grand father), *Ya:yo* (grand mother), *Ka:kí* (uncle) etc. Generally, the children whose parents are from the rural background understand Mising and in some cases, can speak it to some extent. But others, particularly those whose parents are from the urban background, will have to really go to Mising schools to learn their ethnic language. But occasionally, particularly during community gatherings and festivals, the members of this group are seen speaking broken Mising apparently in their effort to show their ethnic solidarity. Such switches are triggered by their desire to be included and treated as any other Misings.

Example 1 : Y (name concealed as desired by the speaker) belongs to a high profile Mising family of Guwahati. He is a post-graduate from Delhi University and is presently a high ranking government official. For him, as for most of the children brought up in the city, Assamese is the mother tongue and he addresses his parents as *Maa* and *Baba* as the Assamese-speaking children do. When he was a child, his parents used to take him and his brothers to the village. When his grand parents were alive they used to visit the village quite often, but after their death the frequency has decreased drastically and now on unavoidable occasions only he visits the village. He knows a little bit of the Mising culture that he learnt from the village and also from various occasions, such as, marriage, celebration of the Mising agrarian festival *Ali Ayé Lígang*, and religious performances like *saki logai* which are also performed in the city. He understands Mising and can speak little bit of it. The following is the excerpt of an interview with him taken on February 20, 2004 in Guwahati. Since the speeches here are in English and no language alternation occurs for analysis, the question (Q) and the reply of the member (Y) are numbered as questions and

answers and not as sentences. This is done in order to keep the flow of ideas intact for one question and its answer.

- 1 Q: You are a Mising brought up and educated entirely in the city, can you speak Mising ?
- 2 Y: Yes, I am a Mising and I am proud to be a Mising. But unfortunately, I cannot speak Mising fluently although I understand most of it.
- 3 Q: If I ask you as to what is your mother tongue, what is your reply ?
- 4 Y: Here, I think, there are two things : *first*, mother tongue, if I am not wrong, is the language that is learnt from the mother or parents during childhood and *second*, the language which is spoken as mother tongue by the concerned community. My parents too like us to speak Mising, but the environment around and in the school is such that we couldn't learn much Mising and we are inclined towards the Assamese language. Assamese is used in our family while speaking to each other which means that it is the family language and therefore, it may well be called our mother tongue.
- 5 Q: Alright, as we all know the population of Assam is composed of various ethnic or linguistic groups and Mising is one of the major groups among the tribals. The mother tongue of the Misings, therefore, is Mising at large. In this regard, will you mind giving your opinion ?
- 6 Y O yes. As I have already said, I am proud to be a Mising and I am proud to introduce myself as a Mising. Nevertheless, if I say that my mother tongue is Mising and at the same time I say that I cannot speak fluent Mising, it becomes a sort of self-contradictory and funny statement. Therefore, here I would like to say that I very much belong to the ethnic group or linguistic group called Mising, but my mother tongue happened to be Assamese because I attained my speech in such an environment. This is same as the case of the Indians brought up in the United Kingdom or the USA who are Indians but their mother tongue is English.

- 7 Q : Is this true with all other Misings brought up in the city ?
- 8 Y : Yes, this is true with all Misings brought up and educated in Guwahati or any other cities/towns in Assam except for a very few Misings whose parents make it a particular point to teach Mising along with Assamese during childhood. Such children learn Assamese as well as Mising during childhood and speak Mising at home, but for such children too Mising becomes a secondary language when grown up. This is mainly because of the fact that Mising is spoken only at home and that too orally and as the horizon of knowledge widens, they express their feelings in those languages in which they attained knowledge. So, for such children also, Mising becomes a secondary language even at home.
- 9 Q : When you go to the village or when your relatives come to visit you in Guwahati, how do you communicate with them ?
- 10 Y : This is a peculiar mode of communication. Most of our relatives can speak Assamese and with them I speak Assamese. But there are some relatives in the village, particularly the elder ones, who understand Assamese but cannot speak properly. So, with them I have to speak broken Mising and mostly I speak Assamese and they reply in Mising or they ask in Mising and I reply in Assamese. If I speak Assamese alone, they as well as I feel a sort of distance from each other.
- 11 Q : When do you usually feel like speaking your ethnic language ?
- 12 Y : Particularly when community events are held like Ali A:ye Ligang and meetings when all other members communicate primarily in Mising, I strongly feel I were fluent in our ethnic language. But, although I am not fluent, I speak whatever and however I can to show my solidarity.

Y represents all those Misings brought up in cities and towns of Assam barring those very few ones for whom learning Mising is an emphasized point during childhood as made by their parents. Nowadays, such cases are found in some households in cities and towns which can be regarded as a resulting phenomenon of a sort of new

awakening among the Misings to speak their own language and to use their own culture. From the above conversation, the following points can be drawn out :

- a) The mother tongue of most Misings brought up in cities and towns of Assam is Assamese which is occasioned and inculcated by the environment around and in schools/colleges where they receive education.
- b) The mother tongue being Assamese does not mean that they are detached from the Mising language, culture and society. They are emotionally attached to the Mising society and culture and follow all Mising rites and customary laws, such as, social, religious and cultural, on all related occasions.
- c) For this group of people, Assamese is used as the base variety and therefore the matrix language and Mising is the embedded language.

Example 2

Setting : Inside the house of Bolin Kutum (52) at village Lohitmukh Bhalukaguri on April 17, 2002. Anamika Doley (27) is one of the guests visiting the Kutum family on the occasion of a family function. Anamika was brought up in Shillong where her father served as a government officer. Although the family is originally from Bengenagora near Dhemaji town, both she and her brother were educated entirely in English medium institutions right from nursery to the post-graduate level. The family has recently shifted to Guwahati where they plan to settle down. Anamika is among the highly educated Mising girls who has completed M.Sc. and M.Ed. and is presently a lecturer in a college of education at Gangtok, Sikkim. The conversation begins when Bolin Kutum introduces her to one of his guests, his brother-in-law.

- 1 Bolin : Magba, sé:bí bélé Shillong bok du:né Ghana Doley ké omména.
(Brother-in-law, she is the daughter of Ghana Doley of Shillong.)
- 2 Guest : O:h, édémpéi ? (Is it, alright ?)
- 3 : *Ketiya ahila Shillongor pora ?* (When did you come from Shillong?)
- 3 Anamika : Ngolu siyum-sí:ro Guwahati bélémin dungkun. (Nowadays, we are

- in Guwahati.)
- 4 Guest : O, no Misingém lukindone ! (You know how to speak Mising!)
- 5 Anamika : Kapil lukinma:yén Misinge:la. (Why not, being a Mising.)
- 6 Guest : Ma, nolukkémpé town-no sí:sa:né kídí:de lukinma:p ike:dag, émpila:na taddu:né. (Actually, people like you who have grown up in towns/cities normally don't know, that's why I said that.)
- 7 : *Kintu*, aike *bhashasem* lukinsunamdé aru:pé aidag, Me:ma. (But it's good that you know your ethnic language.)
- 8 Anamika : Ngolu okumno Misingo:pé ludo. (We speak only Mising at home.)
- 9 Guest : Aidag, aidag, *asolote* ngoluk *bhasha*-séi ngoluk bottapagya:né *porisoy*-ye. (Good, good, actually, our language is our biggest identity.)
- 10 : Okoloi du:daggom édém midpanpé lagima. (One should not forget that wherever he/she is.)
- 11 Bolin : Ma, bulu amikémpé ima, bí:sín lukindag, bík bírodé:sin tolagma. (No, they are not like others, she is fluent as well as her brother.)

Anamika's father is an old acquaintance of the guest and he thinks that the family is still in Shillong. Therefore, he enquires as to when Anamika came from Shillong in Assamese which is the unmarked choice as it is a general presumption that children brought up in the city normally do not know their ethnic language and they speak Assamese as their mother tongue. But when Anamika replies in Mising which is a marked choice, she expresses her ethnic solidarity with the other participants because the general medium of communication in force here is Mising and speaking Assamese will distance her from the lot. The guest is amazed at Anamika's gesture and in spite of dwelling on what she said (which gives an important piece of information about their shifting from Shillong to Guwahati), he takes more interest in how she said. He appreciates her and her family's practice of Mising among family members and friends while stating that a community's language is the biggest identity for it which the members should remember and practice wherever they live.

4.3.10 A device to explain technicalities to uneducated people

Code-switching is used as a device for making uneducated people understand the contents of a prescription by a doctor or a telephone office. While it is a fact that in the interior Mising inhabited areas, people are far from realizing the necessity of maintaining a clean surrounding to avoid certain diseases, it is crucial for the doctors to motivate them to change their ways of living and food habits. Similarly, the telephone offices in the rural areas have to go through a tough time in explaining to the subscribers the necessity to learn the operational rules given in the Users' Guide before using the telephone. The crucial thing in both the cases is the medium of communication. Both these groups of government employees adopt a typical way of explaining the necessary things to their target groups using both Mising and Assamese with English words inserted into the sentences as and when required. This is evident from the following discussion :

Example 1

Setting : Tileswar Kaman (56) and Jugal Doley (55) are among the eight persons participating in a group discussion on the use of Mising–Assamese code-switching in the rural areas on April 15, 2002 at village Gali. Tileswar is a government doctor at Jonai while Jugal is a telephone engineer presently posted at Kalyan in Maharashtra but originally is from Gali. Both of them have long experiences in serving in the rural areas. Since both of them have direct public dealings, they come across a number of communicative constraints in making the village people understand certain crucial things they deal in. The following is an excerpt of the speeches made by Tileswar and Jugal :

- 1 Tileswar: *Hospital*-lo:pé appíng jégalkké taniyé gidag. (People from all places come to hospital.)
- 2 : Ngolu *patient*-ém *bemar-ajar* agoméém lubidouém *aru prescribe kora dorobbur bujai kounte Mising-otu koun aru Asomiyatu kobo logiya hoi*. (When we explain the disease and the prescribed medicines to the patients, we speak Mising as well as Assamese.)

- 3 : *Aru teneke kounte, 30% man Misingot kuwa hoi, baki 40% Ahomiya aru 30% Ingraji hoi jai.* (And in doing so, we speak approximately 30% Mising, 40% Assamese and 30% English.)
- 5 : *Karon, Misingo:pé ngolu lungap langkuma, odokké Ayomiyango:pé lumílo bulu bujjam kuma.* (Because, we can't express in Mising alone and if we speak only Assamese, they will not understand clearly.)
- 6 Jugal : *É:h, pori ma:né naiba kompé poriné taniyé jetiya ngoluk office lo:pé telephone connection-or karone ahe, bulum ngolu telephone-r jitu Users' Guide ase, heitu bhalke bujabo logiya hoi.* (Yeah, when illiterate or less-educated people come to our office for telephone connection, we have to clearly explain the Users' Guide to them.)
- 7 : *Aru édém bujai dodém, Mising pésin ludo odokké Ahomiya pésin bujaido.* (And while doing so, we use Mising as well as Assamese.)
- 8 : *Odokké, technical agom kídí:dém, jene optical fiber cable, meter box, ittyadi hobdo kídí:dém English pé lupa:dag, karon édémbulum Mising ba Ahomiya lo pa:ma.* (The technical words, such as, optical fiber cable, meter box etc. are said in English because these words are not found in Mising or Assamese.)
- 9 : *Aru teneke bujai kounte, prai ngolu 40% Mising, 40% Ahomiya aru 20% Ingraji koun.* (And in explaining in that manner, we speak approximately 40% Mising, 40% Assamese and 20% English.)

According to Tileswar Kaman, the patients coming from interior rural areas have to be explained properly about the various diseases they are prone to and how to take measures to protect themselves. It is also a crucial job to make the patients understand why and how the prescribed medicines are to be taken regularly for a quick recovery. While dealing with such things, he along with his colleagues speak whatever language or languages they find to be useful because their main concern here is to make the patients properly understand the prescription and the medicines, rather than language use. In the process, as found from the data, they use

approximately 30% Mising, 40% Assamese and 30% English (as inserted words or phrases). Another participant who has professional public dealings, Jugal Doley opines that three languages are essentially involved in the communication exercise while explaining the operational manual to the rural telephone subscribers. Mising and Assamese are used for explaining the details while English is used for referring to technical words, such as, optical fiber cable, meter box etc. In doing this they use approximately 40% Mising, 40% Assamese and 20% English on an average.

4.4.1 Code-switching as sociolinguistic devices and indices (unmarked choices)

4.4.2 A verbal lubricant

Bilingualism itself is an unmarked medium of interaction amongst the Misings during verbal communication. Code-switching is largely used for making a smooth flow of ideas that the speaker desires to convey to the listeners. In many cases, it is seen that speakers wanting to continue in Mising face verbal hurdles for non-availability of terms and phrases representing the desired ideas. Therefore, they choose to switch over to Assamese or in some cases English for expressing smoothly and keeping intact the flow of ideas. Here the use of L2 or L3 depends, to a great extent, on the medium through which the speaker learnt and understood the concerned ideas.

Example 1

Setting : The *soyar* (an open area for people to sit and sleep inside a stilted house) in the house of Sonaram Kutum (56), a primary school teacher of village Lohitmukh Bhalukaguri. *Soyar* is also used for performing religious and ceremonial activities inside a Mising traditional house. Kutum has two sons and a daughter. The eldest son is a government employee and the younger one is an entrepreneur. His daughter Bonima who is the youngest in the family, is in college at Tezpur. One of Kutum's brothers is in Guwahati doing a job. In the summer of 2002, Bonima goes to Guwahati to visit her uncle's family and spends her entire summer holidays there.

During her stay there, she gets introduced to Sanjay who too is in Guwahati looking for a job after completion of his graduation. The friendship gradually turns to love. They think, their relationship is unlikely to be approved by her uncle and parents. So one day they decide to elope and get married in a temple. Although elopement is one of the marital traditions of the Misings, this act of Kutum's only daughter is not readily acceptable to her uncle and parents. On receiving the news, and as per the Mising traditions, Sanjay's parents/family members come to the bride's parents to offer *Orai-alíg* (bride money). This is a highly formal situation under the village environment. The symbolic bride-money *Orai-alíg* is arranged and kept in the middle of the *soyar* and the bride's family members are sitted on one side facing the groom's party. There is one mover-speaker on both sides. The following is an excerpt of the conversation between the members of the bride's party and the bride-groom's party :

- 1 Speaker A : Nolu appíngém kumpa:suge:la, ngolu *mitur* agom ko (Groom's Party) kímínsukapé emna gídung. (Saluting all of you, we inform that we have come to talk on a marital matter.)
- 2 : Ngoluk ao Sanjay-bí noluk omé Bonima:mé dugboge:la lonkok *deubar*-do okumto gía:botagku. (Our son Sanjay eloped with your daughter Bonima and he brought her home last Sunday.)
- 3 : Kapiyén, aokoné yamnéko duga:botagku, *ngolu* ané-abu *hisabe kortyobyatu koriboi lagibo*. (What to do, our son has brought a groom, it is our duty to do the needful as parents.)
- 4 : Yamnéko la:mílo orai-alígko binamdé Donyi-Polo agomé, édémpila, sidém ngolu patige:la miturém kumdung, nolu mé:yin-ka:yinsula la:rígsuteika émna. (When a marriage takes place, it is divine to offer an orai-alíg (bride money), and therefore, we put forward this modest bride-money and pray that it be accepted.)

- 5 Speaker B : Ma, du:po:to. (No, wait.)
(Bride's Party)
- 6 : Ngoluk ommé porila dungai, bík *uporot amar बहुत akha asile*. (Our daughter was studying, we had high hopes from her.)
- 7 : Odokké, bí bík Ba:boi ké okumbo *gorom bondho-so* dungkapéminé gíkané. (And she had gone to her uncle's place just to stay there during her summer holidays.)
- 8 : Bologkém édémpe dugpagbonamdém ngolu mé:yinsula:ma. (But she has been taken away from there, so we can't compromise.)
- 9 Speaker C : Ngoluk omésé atér ommé, bím ngolu bottéru:pé *porai po:pé*
(Bride's Party) émna mé:tungai. (She is our only daughter, and we wanted to educate her.)
- 10 : Empige:la su:pak bím ammé dugpagbomkang, édésin okumsokké dugboma, bíg gítérrokké dugbokang. (But now she has been taken away, that too not from her parental home, but from a place where she was staying temporarily.)
- 11 : *Heikarone ami monot बहुत dukh paisu*. (Therefore, we are very hurt.)
- 12 Speaker A : Kédana, odok legangé *amaru beya lagise*. (Kedan [Parents of
(Groom's Party) the bride and the bridegroom address each other as *Kédan*], we too are sorry for that.)
- 13 : *Kintu kapiyén*, ngoluk auo imurko ito, bím aík ommangí:ngé émna mé:la mé:yinsuteibongka émna nulung kumdung. (But what to do, our son has committed a mistake, we pray that he be pardoned deeming him as your own child, and accepted.)
- 14 Speaker B : (Bride's Uncle looking at his brother) Kaiya, kapiyébon,
(Bride's Party) su:pak mituré sémpé *horaiko patige:la kumdung*. (Brother,

- what to do, now our *miturs* (in-laws of daughter) are praying this way with a *horai*.)
- 15 : *Mitur hisabe jihetu* ngolu bulum *ohotman koribo nuwaru*, émpila la:rígéisula:boi émnana ludu:boné. (Since we cannot dishonour them as *miturs*, we may perhaps accept it.)
- 16 : (Turning to the Groom's party) Odokké, Kédana, agom apirkodan nolum *onurudh kori koisu je omébi BA final dibo logiya asile*. (And, Kedan, we would like to request you for one thing that our daughter was to appear for her BA final examination.)
- 17 : Édém dan bidokupé bim nolu *allow koribo lagibo*. (So, you will kindly allow her to appear at the examination.)
- 18 : *Kaiké akha eta asile* bím BA dém *pass mopé émna*. (My brother had a dream that she would complete her BA.)
- 19 Speaker A : (Groom's uncle joined by others) É, Kédana, édém ngolu (Groom's Party) mé:podanna togésudung. (Yes Kedan, we accept this with all pleasure.)
- 20 Speaker D : Ngolusin *bhabu* ngoluk yamé:de BA pass toka émna. (Even (Groom's Party) we would like our daughter-in-law to complete her BA.)
- 21 : *Heitu amar karone gourobobor bishoy*. (It is a matter of pride for us.)
- 22 Speaker E : (Bride's father) Nolu appíngé édémpé ludu:bo:milo, (Groom's Party) torígéisuyébo:nna. (If you all say that way, we may accept it.)
- 23 : Ngodan Kédana agom apirko lupa:pé émna mé:dung. (I would like to say one thing, Kedan.)
- 22 : Ngoluk omébi ajjoupé amil gíkang, *ekebare nabalika hoi ase*, ngolu okkomsinéi luyírpa:toma. (My daughter has married at a young age and is still immature, we couldn't teach her anything.)

- 23 : Nolu aiké ommé émna luyír-mé:yír sula:bo. (You may please teach her accepting her as your own daughter.)
- 24 Speaker A : Kédana, édém no ajjoukosin mé:pé *lagima*. (You needn't have (Groom's Party) to worry least for that, Kedan.)
- 25 : Édétu *amar kortobyó*. (That is our duty.)
- 26 : Siyum-sí:ro omékolang yaméngko kama. (Now-a-days, there is no difference between a daughter and a daughter-in-law.)
- 27 : Ngoluk *ghorot lakhyi ejoni paisu*, ngolu bím *abdal koriboí lagibo*. (A *lakhyi* (luck) has come to our home, so we will surely take care of her.)

The above example reflects a typical situation of the Mising society related to marriage. There are mainly four customary ways of marriage in the Mising society : first, *dugla la:nam* (elopement), second, *sola la:nam* (forceful marriage), third, *mida:pé la:nam* (wedding), and fourth, *kumsu-do:sula la:nam* (marriage with information/blessing but without ceremony). In view of the prevailing patriarchal system of the Mising society, here the word *la:nam* denoting a man's marrying a woman has been taken for analyzing the example rather than its antonym *ginam* denoting a woman's getting married to a man. Among these four ways of marriage, *sola la:nam* is increasingly losing popularity with the girl child today getting a greater amount of weightage, particularly in marital matters, than earlier days. The other three are the popular ways of marriage : *dugla la:nam* is normally resorted to by lovers sensing disapproval from either of the families, *mida:pé la:nam* is a formal and ritual way of marriage which is becoming increasingly popular today, and *kumsu-do:sula la:nam* is a low-budget marriage system and is normally adopted due to the crunch of money or time. The present example which is an event of *dugla la:nam*, requires two major activities to follow immediately : *Dugtad* (information to the bride's family) and *Orai-alíg* (bride-money). Through *Dugtad*, the parents of the bride is informed by especial messengers sent from the bride-groom's family that their daughter is in the possession/acceptance of the groom's family while *Orai-ali:g*

is the ceremonial presentation of the bride-money to the bride's parents by the bride-groom's family. This is an example of highly sensitive and formal occasion where the rights and obligations of the members call for a *pleading and convincing* attitude from the bride-groom's family and an attitude with the power of *accepting or rejecting* from the bride's family. Behaviourally, the bride-groom's party is expected to be prepared for any eventuality. In such situations, even a misbehaviour from any member of the bride's family is tolerated and accepted with all humility by the bride-groom's party. In order to deal with such a highly sensitive issue, code-switching is used as a verbal oil to keep the expression going smoothly and spontaneously. The clausal switching *kortyobyatu koriboi lagibo* in Sentence 3 represents the dutiful obligation as parents towards their children while *bik uporot amar bohut akha asile* in Sentence 6 is an expression of parents' expectation from children. The full-sentence switching *Heikarone ami monot bohut dukh paisu* in Sentence 11 expresses the bride's family being hurt while the use of *amaru beya lagise* in Sentence 12 is an attempt to console and share from the bride-groom's party. The complementizing clause *Mitur hisabe jihetu ... ohotman koribo nuwaru* in Sentence 15 denotes the rights and obligations of the bride-groom's party from the bride's party and vice-versa in such situations. The clauses *onurudh kori koisu je* and *BA final dibo logiya asile* in Sentence 16, *allow koribo lagibo* in Sentence 17 and *akha eta asile* in Sentence 18, help the speaker to quickly pass on a piece of information to his counterpart that his brother (bride's father) expects his only daughter to complete BA and therefore she should be allowed to appear at the examination. The next sentence *Heitu amar karone gourobor bishoy* in Sentence 21 conveys a ready acceptance and a feeling of happiness over the proposal. The use of *ekebare nabalika hoi ase* by the bride's father in Sentence 22, helps convey a parental perspective towards children, viewing them to be always young and innocent. The use of L2 in the reply of the bride-groom's party *amar kortobyu* in Sentence 25, and *ghorot lakhyi ejoni paisu ... abdal koriboi lagibo* in Sentence 27 help the speaker in readily and smoothly conveying that they are treating the bride as a propitious event in the family and they are committed to look after her welfare. Although the italicized speech passages are the switches from L1 to L2, they form parts of an unmarked choice because this is

the expected medium of interaction in the given situation. The compound word *gorom bondho* in Sentence 7 and English word *allow* in Sentence 17 are habitually inserted compensatory terms.

4.4.3 An index of dual identity

As mentioned in Section 4.4.2 above, for the Mising society, as for many other communities of the world, bilingualism itself is an unmarked medium of communication. While code-switching functions as the unmarked medium for in-group interaction, it helps them retain their ethnic distinctiveness as well as their belongingness, partial or otherwise, to the culture where they are currently in. While interpreting such use of code-switching “One can argue that individual switches within a conversation with switches have their own social messages; but we argue that an overall pattern of constant switching has its own meaning, too. In effect, such codeswitching conveys the message of dual identities or memberships in both of the cultures that the languages index.” (Myers-Scotton 2006, 21).

Example 1

Setting : The sitting room of Uken Pegu at Hengrabari in Guwahati on the eve of Ali Aye Ligang, the agrarian annual festival of the Misings, on February 17, 2004. The Misings of the city are gearing up for the next day’s Ligang celebration along with the rest of their brethren living in different parts of the state. Some local residents are gathered there as a part of pre-Ligang visit, among them some non-Mising speakers too, apparently from the neighbourhood. An informal conversation on the manner of announcement during Ali A:ye Ligang celebration in Guwahati is in progress.

- 1 Speaker A : Ngolu *antoto* Ligang longédo, Misingo:pé lupé emna *sesta-pé* lagidag. (At least on the day of Ligang, we should try to speak only Mising.)
- 2 Speaker B : Éi, odokké, mennyí:ng kémpé *announce* kinman taniyém *announce* moyoka *dei*. (Hello, like last year, don’t let a person announce who doesn’t know how to do it properly.)

- 3 Speaker C : *Asolote, anchoring is an art, édém jikunu manuhe koribo nuware.*
(Indeed, anchoring is an art, this cannot be done by anyone.)
- 4 : *Odokké, pora-pokhyat, eta male aru eta female hobo lage.* (And, preferably, one should be male and the other should be female.)
- 5 : *Rajib-bí aié Mising dém lusuto, odokké Ahomiyatu kunba koribo jona suwali ejonik dilei hol.* (Let Rajib himself do the announcement in Mising, and for the Assamese, we may find a girl who knows it.)
- 6 Speaker D : *É:lo, pakmílo Misingo:pé lunamdé aidag, kintu, sobei buji puwatu bisarile, Ahomiya pésin lupa:yé.* (Yes, it's good to announce in Mising only, but if we want other people to understand the programmes, then we have to do in Assamese also.)
- 7 Speaker C : *Édémí:na, ami enekuwa ekhon homajot asu jot neki duita bhashai proyujon hoi.* (That's it, we are in such a society where both the languages are required.)
- 8 : *Odokké Guwahati sémpin jégalo function-or announcement-tu duyuta bhashat huwatu bhal.* (And, at a place like Guwahati, it's good if the announcement is done in both the languages.)
- 9 : *Karon, ngolu Misingétu ngoluk so:nam-panam kídí:dém kinsoidagbo, kintu élé Mipag kídíngélémsin léngkan pa:yéma:lang.* (Because, we Misings already know our dances, but we have to show them to the other people also.)
- 10 : *Ami amar hanskrititu popularize kodibo lagibo nohoi.* (We have to popularize our culture.)
- 11 Speaker E: *Koribo lagibo, koribo lagibo, édémí:p ila:pe.* (We have to do it, we have to do it, let's do accordingly.)

On examination of the above speeches, it is found that the speeches carry a linguistic dual identity for the speakers. When Speaker A says that the Misings should try to

speak only Mising at least on the day of their festival Ali Aye Ligang as a sign of ethnic solidarity, he uses two Assamese words himself out of nine in Sentence 1. Speaker B uses two English words and one Assamese word out of ten words in Sentence 2. Speaker C who is regarded to be a knowledgeable senior member of the society uses forty-two Assamese words and eight English words out of a total number of seventy-five words in Sentence 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, and 10. Speaker D uses five Assamese words out of thirteen in Sentence 5 and Speaker E uses four Assamese words out of six. Speaker C uses three sentences and three clauses in Assamese and one clause in English. Speaker D and Speaker E use one clause each in Assamese. The following is the quantitative picture of words used in the above speeches from L1, L2 and L3 :

	Speaker A	Speaker B	Speaker C	Speaker D	Speaker E	Total
Mising	7 (77.7%)	8 (80%)	25 (33.3%)	8 (61.5%)	2 (33.3%)	50 (44.2%)
Assamese	2 (22.2%)	1 (10%)	42 (56%)	5 (38.4%)	4 (66.6%)	54 (47.7%)
English	Nil	2 (20%)	8 (10.6%)	Nil	Nil	10 (8.8%)
Total	9	10	75	13	6	113

In the above conversation, as observed from the perspective of a third party, it is found that the speakers naturally and spontaneously use Assamese speech elements in course of their conversation. It is neither triggered by any intention nor are the speakers aware of the degree of use of L2. While discussing a topic about the maintenance of ethnic identity, they are using 44.2% Mising, 47.7% Assamese and 8.8% English words in the the whole conversation. It is observed that Mising as well as Assamese are intermittently used as the matrix language while English is used as an additional or ornamental language in the conversation. Therefore, the speeches are indexical of two distinctive linguistic identities for the speakers : Mising and Assamese without assuming that this language-mixing is an implication of language assimilation. But it is evident that the speakers essentially use Mising as well as Assamese while expressing their feelings in normal situations.

4.4.4 A medium of communication with animals

The Misings are a pro-nature animistic community. They are fond of living close to Nature and with its creatures. This is one of the reasons why they did not accept the ritual of cremating the dead body even after adopting Hinduism. Their innate feelings do not allow them to part with Nature even after death and therefore they want to go back to its lap in burial. They worship the Moon as father and the Sun as mother and observe cultivation of green fields as their festival. In the same line of their allegiance to Nature, they feel essentially comfortable in the company of animals, particularly those tamed or domesticated by them. They unilaterally talk to them to make them understand.

Example 1

Setting : The front lawn of the house of Megho Pegu (64) at village Gali on the morning of April 18, 2003. Bimolti (52) is his wife and the mother of six children. She is a housewife who had a little bit of primary education in childhood. None of her sons has married and therefore she uses to look after the main household activities like cooking and cattle feeding. She takes care of feeding the cattle as she does in case of her children. She has four pigs, seven goats and a number of fowls and chickens. While she has to feed the pigs every morning and evening with the left-overs, the goats and fowls take care of themselves barring the smaller chickens which have to be fed with broken rice once a day. On the above mentioned morning, she was late in feeding the pigs for there were some guests in the family. Bimolti comes down from her stilted house with a big bowl of 'po:nyog' (pig food). On not seeing the pigs around, she calls them as the following :

- | | |
|----------------|------------------------|
| 1 (low pitch) | Yui, yui, yui. |
| 2 (high pitch) | Kam-é:, kam, kam, kam. |

It is observed that while making the first call, Bimolti does it with a low voice thinking that the pigs may be around nearby. But when they are not to be seen or heard after the first call, she uses another language at a higher pitch of voice when

the pigs are seen running towards her with ‘hrak, hrak’ sounds and begin to eat their food from the container brawling with each other. In an interview after the feeding, Bimolti replies to the queries as the following :

- 1 Q : No, kapé e:gém gogkan? (How did you call the pigs.)
- 2 Bimolti : E:g no:nan *bakké* du:malang. (There are languages for calling pigs.)
- 3 Q : Kapé no:doji lubilapéi, mé:nyíngó:ma:pé. (Can you say how the pigs are called, if you don’t mind.)
- 4 Bimolti : Aninnokkém no:milo, ‘yui yui’ émna no:do, odokké, mo:té:lokkém no:yémílo, ‘kam-é kam’ émdo. (While calling from a nearby place, we call saying ‘yui yui’ and if we have to call from a distance, we shout saying ‘kam-e, kam, kam’.)
- 5 Q : Baru aidak, no kindone, édé e:g no:nan bhasha-dé kapé lenkan. (Alright, do you know how this pig-calling language has come into existence.)
- 6 Bimolti : Kapéi lenka:song édém ngo kinma, *kintu*, ta:to-ya:yok doying kínam-mém tatkítangéna, ‘yui, yui’ émandé, ngoluk Mising-ké, odokké, ‘kam, kam’ émandé leke *birtis jug* lokke angkang émna. (I don’t know how this language came into existence, but, we have heard our grandfathers and grandmothers saying that ‘yui yui’ is from the Misings themselves and ‘kam, kam’ has come from the erstwhile British.)

Bimolti does not know how and from where the language has come to be used that way. But she has heard from elder members that the first language ‘yui yui’ belongs to the Misings themselves and the second one has come from the British. From the sound and usage of the words, it is observed that the ‘kam, kam’ correspond to the English words ‘come, come’ both having the same meaning and usage, that is, to ask someone to move near to the caller. In the above example, the former utterance is used to call pigs from a narby place and the second is used from a greater distance,

usually, if the pigs are not to be seen in the surroundings of the house. But both are an unmarked medium of communicating with the pigs because they know and understand that when the above utterances are made by their owner, whose voice they recognize, they are being offered food. Further, as practiced regularly, they expect those utterances everyday after the family completes its morning and evening food.

Example 2

Setting : The paddy field of Binod Chintey (54) in the outskirts of Gohpur in the Sonitpur district of Assam on February 24, 2003. Binod along with his helpers is ploughing in the field preparing it for sowing the *lai* seeds, a variety of paddy cultivated in the pre-spring season. In the post-acculturation convention of manual ploughing, the ploughman drives the oxen pulling the plough with one hand holding a stick and the other holding the plough for proper tilling of the soil. While doing this, the ploughman communicates to the oxen uttering 'ja, ja' for moving forward or faster, 'guri, guri' for making a left turn, 'bahire, bahire' for making a right turn, and 'ro, ro' or 'hou, hou' for making a stop. They also utter 'ah, ah' for asking the oxen as well as other cattle to come near them. These are Assamese words and are typically used while making commands to the cattle. As English in case of communicating pigs in Example 1 above, here Assamese is the unmarked medium of communicating with the cattle. Further, Binod says that the oxen won't understand if the commands are made in the Mising language. This is an evidence of continuance of the contact culture in their original form in the Mising society. When approached, Binod says the following about the language he, as other Misings, uses while communicating with the oxen and the cattle as a whole :

- 1 Q : Nolu, a:l gíddom kapé go:ru kídí:dokki luposudon ? (How do you talk to the oxen while ploughing ?)
- 2 Binod : Ngolu ludo, *agot-pé ba lomna gímopé 'ja, ja' émdo, lakkepé gurimopé 'guri, guri' émdo, lagbígpé gurimopé 'bahire, bahire' émdo, odokké roboloi 'ro, ro' naiba 'hou, hou' émdo.* (We say, 'ja, ja' while

- commanding them to go forward or faster, ‘guri, guri’ to turn left, ‘bahire, bahire’ to turn right, and ‘ro, ro’ or ‘hou, hou’ to stop.)
- 3 : Odokké, ngok ruyiso:pé goga:péyémílo ‘ah, ah’ émdo. (And we say ‘ah, ah’ for calling them to our side.)
- 4 Q : Ede Ahomiyang agomema:lang, edem nok go:rukídí:de tatkindang ? (Isn’t this language Assamese, do your oxen understand it.)
- 5 Binod : Tadkindag, bulu Mising-pé lumílo tadkinéima:yé. (They understand it, they won’t understand if talked in Mising.)
- 6 Q : Baru, édémpé Ahomiya:pé Mising go:rom luposunamdém Mising-é kapé irrobton ? (Ok, how did this way of talking to Mising cattle in the Assamese language start ?)
- 7 Binod : Ngoluk mémkampé, édé *Ahomiya jatir pora aha a bostu*. (We think, it is a thing that has come from the Assamese society.)
- 8 : Karon, ngoluk Mising-étu tolo adi:to du:dodém sébulum kinmangai. (Because, we Misings didn’t know about all this when we were in the hills.)
- 9 : Su:pak sé *bhoiyam*-so du:langkula:miné sémpé arig inamdém kintoné. (Living here in the plains only we have come to know about this way of cultivation.)
- 10 : Su:pak, sé *go:ru, nangol, jungoli, moi* édé appí:déi Mipag agomo:ngé. (Now these ‘goru’ ‘nangol’, ‘junwoli’, ‘moi’ all these are Assamese words.)
- 11 : Bulukkolokké-tu *bohut bostuei* ngoluk Mising-lo:pé *ahise*. (A number of elements have come from them to our Mising culture.)

According to Binod, the present way of cultivation with ploughing has come from the plains Assamese society. The Misings did not know about this way of cultivation earlier when they were in the hills and now they have adopted it living in the plains. (Sentence 8, 9, 10, 11). Therefore, the Misings still use the original names of the

agricultural equipment and animals, such as, ‘goru’ (cattle), ‘nangol’ (plough), ‘junwoli’ (log used for holding the oxen together), and ‘moi’ (leveler).

Example 3

Setting : The front side of Kundiram Patir’s (56) house at village Majulipur, Laimekuri on April 18, 2002. Kundiram is a *mahaut* (elephant keeper) in charge of an elephant owned by Ganesh Kuli of Milanpur, a nearby village. After a day-long jungle-cleaning work, Kundiram and the elephant are back at home in the evening and the *mahaut* is cleaning the elephant with hot water mixed with ‘posotiang’, a variety of herb. He asks the elephant to sit uttering ‘byeit, byeit’ so that he can clean its back also. After the cleaning is over, he goes to the front of the elephant and commands it to lift him to its back. While doing so, he says ‘kan de’ when the elephant lends forward its two big ears holding which the *mahaut* stands on its trunk and says ‘uta’ commanding it to lift him to its back. Sitting on the back of the elephant, he puts his both feet at the root of its ears on both sides and says ‘agad ja’ asking it to move forward. He drives the elephant to the corner of the enclosure where the elephant eats a banana tree. The language of the *mahaut* in dealing with the elephant is noteworthy. He speaks Hindi while asking the elephant to sit, ‘byeit’ (sit). He makes the rest of his commands in Assamese, such as, to lend forward its ears, ‘kan de’ (give ears), to lift him to the elephant’s back, ‘uta’ (lift), and to move forward, ‘agéd ja’ (move forward). It is to be noted that the word ‘uta’ is the intonated Mising version of the Assamese word ‘utha’ with the same meaning. Here he uses non-verbal mediums of communication as well. For example, the elephant would turn left or right sensing the strokes from the mahaut’s feet, that is, repeated strokes at the right ear means to turn left and at the left ear will make the elephant to turn right. This again is an unmarked medium of communication for the present mahaut and elephant as it is the treatment and language expected and understood by both of them.

4.4.5 As lexical and conceptual fillers in written communications

Although the Mising is now a recognized language, it is more used as a medium of oral communication for its written form is still in its infancy and is yet to pick up to gain popularity among its users. In the year 1987, the language was introduced in the primary schools of the Mising dominated areas and since then it is being taught in schools. Exercises in writing in Mising are conducted through various magazines, souvenirs, journals, news magazines and other book forms brought out under the aegis of the Mising Agom Kebang (Mising Literary Society) and other similar organizations.

From the eighty three materials written in Mising collected for the purpose, it is found that in most cases, the writers try to make expressions only in Mising without using Assamese or other languages. In the process they coin a number of new words and phrases which were never used earlier, such as, 'Do:sog' meaning 'Drama'. In the year 1995, a few culturally interested Mising youths of North Lakhimpur town gathered and formed a dramatic society called 'Dolen Ope:' (Drama Society). The words 'Do:sog' and 'Do:len' were coined and were used in its scripts :

Do:sog --- *do:yíng* + *isog* (story + action) meaning 'drama'.

Do:len --- *do:sog* + *la:len* (drama + producing) meaning 'drama-making'.

During the field study, it is found that in writing, the code-switching from L1 to L2 is not as frequent as it is in oral interactions. Here Mising is the matrix language governing the grammatical elements of the sentence and only some nouns and phrases or passages (of which equivalents are not found in Mising) are used apparently for filling lexical and conceptual gaps.

Example 1

Setting : A newspaper reporting. The *Disang Po:lo* (October-November), 2004 issue of the Mising monthly newspaper "Regam Gomug" published from Guwahati, reports the death of eminent educationist Indira Miri as follows :

- 1 : “Modi:sok bottapé *pori*-la kinné, réngam ager gerné, *Sikyabid*, *Podmosri*, Songkordeb aman pa:né Mimé Indira Miri-bí longko 4 Septembor-do Guwahati Intarnesonel Hospitel-lo yumé 10.30 do:dído do:ng amo:sokké ui amo:lo:pé gikangkku. (The learned educationist of the north-east India and the Padmashri and Sankardev awardee Mrs. Indira Miri left this world for her heavenly above at 10.30 p.m. on September 4 at the International Hospital in Guwahati.)
- 2 : Miri-ké sinamdé *Uttor-Pub* Bharot-sok *pori*-la kinné ope:lok aín-murkong ako jínga:pakkang. (With Miri’s death, the intelligentsia of the North-east India has lost an important figure.)
- 3 : Bharot *sadhin* ma:dapé lekeké ‘NEFA’ (Arunachal Pradesh)-lo *pori*-nam ponjarmonam légangé adi bargo:la gíla taniyém luyirgo:né Miri-bí dídagbo bíkke turdíé 98 dítag kopé ikanga:bo.” (Miri who traveled over the hills of erstwhile NEFA (Arunachal Pradesh) for teaching people was 98 years old at the time of her death.)

(Regam Gomug, Vol.3:Issue-5).

In the above report, the Assamese words (in italics) and English words (in italics and underlined) are used for filling the linguistic and conceptual gap existing in the matrix language. The word ‘pori’ meaning ‘to read’ is used as a verb prefix whose meaning is determined by its suffix and sometimes by the adjective that follows it. Here it is used as a compound word ‘pori + la kinne’ meaning ‘learned’ (after studying a lot). This word ‘pori’ is now an integral part of the Mising vocabulary, e.g., as nouns : ‘pori-ne’ (student), ‘pori-ma:ne’ (non-student/illiterate); as verbs : ‘pori-to’ (read), ‘pori-yo’ (don’t read) etc. The second Assamese word in the above speech ‘Sikyabid’ meaning ‘educationist’ does not have an equivalent in Mising although there is a word ‘luyirne’ meaning ‘teacher’. The third and fourth Assamese words ‘uttor-pub’ meaning ‘north-east’ and ‘sadhin’ meaning ‘independence’ also do not have Mising equivalents. The English words used in the above report, e.g., ‘Septembor’ and ‘intarnesonel hospital’ are spelled as they are typically pronounced by the Misings.

Example – 2

Setting : An article in a souvenir. It is seen that where the subject is ancient or it is an ancient story, the writing can be completed without using Assamese or English words. But in such writings also Misingised forms of Assamese words are found. In the story *Tamig, Tapad-ke Do:ying* (Story of the Fly and the Leech), the writing goes:

- 1 : “Ménnyíng konnyíng do:lung kolo *Butukoli* émnam *raikong* minéko dungai. (Years back, there was an old woman cannibal called Butukoli.)
- 2 : Bík *ba:ri* ara:do singkin amíngko dungai. (There was a shaddock tree in her *bari*, a protected area of land near a dwelling house).
- 3 : Édé singkin amí:do abarunko singin a:yé e:la dungai. (The tree had a lot of fruits.)

(Dole:, Ramprosad, 2005).

In this writing, the words ‘butukoli’ and ‘raikong’ are the Misingised forms of the Assamese words ‘Bhutuni’ (a she-goblin) and ‘Rakhyoh’ (glutton) respectively and the word *bari* is a directly borrowed word meaning an outgarden with plants. As discussed in Chapter II, Assamese words mainly nouns are Misingised adding ‘ng’ at their end, such as, the Assamese words ‘meteka’ (a kind of plant growing on marshy land) becomes ‘metekang’ in Mising and ‘bengena’ (brinjal) is Misingised as ‘bengenang’.

Example – 3

Setting : An article in a souvenir. While referring to technical terms and names of educational institutions, the writers use the original words mainly English. Although Assamese versions of these words are available, the Mising writer prefers the English forms which is an unmarked choice, because it is the expected form of language. This is mainly because of the fact that these are originally English words and are generally used by all members of the society even by the Assamese-speaking people except on highly formal occasions, such as, legal writings, formal speech etc.

1 : Sí:sang ope: émmílo ngolu *Hai Iskul* lokke *Iunibarsiti* potubdo:pé mímbír-ya:me kídarém la:té:pa:ye. ('Youth Society' will embrace boys and girls studying in educational institutions from High Schools to the University.)

2 : *Medikel kolej, Egrikalsar, Injiniyaring* pola du:né ya:me-mímbíréngom kíté:pa:yé. (It will also include the youths studying in Medical, Agriculture and Engineering institutes.)

(Patiri, Suraj Kr., 2003).

The terms *Hai Iskul* (High School), *Iunibarsiti* (University), *Medikel Kolej* (Medical College), *Egrikalsar* (Agriculture), *Injiniyaring* (Engineering) are the Mising spellings of the English words given in brackets.

4.4.6 As a natural and unmarked medium of verbal communication

As Myers-Scotton (2006, 21) says, "In some communities, codeswitching itself is the unmarked choice." She further says while talking of bicultural characteristics of some communities that code-switching "indexes their dual identities, it helps them retain their ethnic distinctiveness while also fitting in to the culture where they live now." As detailed in Chapter Three, the Misings have reportedly undergone a three hundred years of acculturation with the Assamese-speaking society of the Brahmaputra valley. As a result, among other things, they have incorporated a heavy amount of featural qualities from the Assamese language to their speech. Today, their language is essentially bilingual. Many of the Assamese words and phrases are used as they are originally pronounced and used, but many others are found to have been appropriately intonated. But these are integral parts of their speech and this mixed variety is their unmarked medium of communication during in-group interactions.

Example 1

Setting : On the *tunggeng* (front verandah) of Janoi Kutum's house in village Lohitmukh Bhalukaguiri on April 19, 2005. Janoi is a grand old woman of the village who is over 90 years of age and does not know when she was born, as those

days, the Misings did not record birth dates as they do today. It is interesting to note that the basis of all calculations related to time is the great earthquake of 1950. This event is taken exactly as the birth of Jesus Christ is regarded as the basis of time calculations. Janoi says, her eldest son had already attained an age when he could go to the paddy fields for ploughing (13/14 years) at the time of the great earthquake. She got married one year after attaining puberty. On the basis of these two events, her age is calculated. Her son Padmo Kutum (56) is a matriculate and is a teacher in the village primary school. The following is an excerpt of the interaction with Janoi and her son Padmo :

- 1 Q : Nok aminé okko émtang ? (What is your name ?)
- 2 Janoi : Janoi émtag. (It's Janoi)
- 3 Q : Nokké *boyohge* éddíko idagbon, no mé:pa:sudang ? (How old are you, do you remember ?)
- 4 Janoi : E:h, ngoi édém kindon! (Eh, do I know it?)
- 5 : Gasumko ika:bo, ngoluk *omoniyang-éi* yéma:bo. (It's quite a bit, even my contemporaries are no more.)
- 6 Padmo : *A:si-nobboi man hobo, olop besiyé hobo pare.* (It may be 80/90, (sitting beside) could be more.)
- 7 Q : Odokké, no aík yaméng-omma:ngém luposuddom Msingo:pé ludoyé ma lékoném mipagémsin luté:doyé. (While talking to your family members, do you speak Mising alone or you use Assamese also ?)
- 8 Janoi : Misingo:pé ludo, ngo mipagémsin lukinéima. (Mising only, I don't know how to speak Assamese at all.)
- 9 Q : No *baru* Misingo:pé luddom asin mé:namém lungapsula:dang? (Can you express all your feelings in Mising ?)
- 10 Janoi : Lungapsula:dak, kapil lungapsula:ma:yén ? (I can, why not ?)
- 11 : Ngo Mipagémsin lukin-tatkinéima. (I can't speak Assamese nor do

I understand it.)

- 12 Q (to Padmo): Nokkéka, éddíko *boyoh* idu:bon ? (What would be your age ?)
- 13 Son : Ngokké, *sapponna bosor par hoi goise*. (Mine is already over 56 years.)
- 14 : *Asoltu besi hobo*. (The real age would be more.)
- 15 Q : *Baru* nomsin taddung, Misingé kapila agom luddom Mipagé m lulusudang. (I am asking you too, why do Misings mix Assamese while speaking ?)
- 16 Padmo : Ngolu Misingé agom luddom Mipagé m lulu:supa:dag. (We Misings must mix Assamese while speaking.)
- 17 : Odokké *bohut karon thake, ek nombor-pé*, Misi:lo *hobdo pí:ramdag*, odokké *dui nombor-pé*, Mising luman Mising-ésin du:manlang. (It has a number of reasons, first, the Mising language is short of words, and second, there are some Misings who don't speak Mising.)
- 18 Q : *Baru*, Mipagé m luté:douém, kinsul ludoyé kinsuma:pé ludoyé? (Ok, while mixing with Assamese are the speakers conscious about it ?)
- 19 Padmo : Abaya:ngém kinsul luma, supagéi ngo lulusudung. (Mostly they do unconsciously, now itself, I am mixing.)
- 20 : Ngo:tu kinsul luma, supag no luleno:laminé ngo kunsudungkuné. (I haven't done it consciously, now that you have told this, so I am aware of it.)
- 21 : Odokké, lupérung émna lumílo:pag kinsul ludag. (And, when done intentionally, they are obviously conscious of it.)

For Janoi, the Mising language is quite sufficient for expressing her feelings. She says, she does not know Assamese at all and never talked to an Assamese person in her life. But even she, without being aware, uses an Assamese word (misingised form) when she says 'ngoluk *omoniyang-éi yéma:bo*' (persons of my age are no

more). This word ‘omonyang’ is originally from the Assamese word ‘homoniya’ meaning ‘of same age’ - the sound of ‘h’ becomes that of ‘o’ and with ‘ng’ at the end of the word, it has become a Mising word. Further, her name itself is an Assamese word (meaning loved one). In this way, even the illiterate, particularly members of the older generations use a number of misingised Assamese words and in some cases direct Assamese words and short clauses mainly unconsciously. However, use of Assamese sentences or complete switch over to Assamese among the illiterate is not common. Her eldest son Padmo is literate and is a primary school teacher. He switches to Assamese as he guesses his mother’s age in Sentence 6 without being directly asked which indicates that it is a spontaneous outflow to help his mother. Again while asked, he switches off and on to L2 while making his reply. According to him, mostly the Misings switch to Assamese in making verbal communications without being aware of the switching. However, while making intentional switches, they are conscious about it. He gives his own current speech as an example and, as he says, after being aware of it now, he speaks Mising without using Assamese in Sentence 19, 20, and 21.

Example 2

Setting : Inside the house of Parboti Doley at village Gali on the evening of October 21, 2007. One of the cows has not returned home till evening. The *guwal* (cowboy) returns after looking around in the village and reports that it has not been found. Three boys of the village too are present in the household on a casual visit to the family. The boys extend their help in exploring the possibilities as to where the cow could go. The conversation takes place as follows :

- 1 Parboti : (To the *guwal*) Sunil-a no okol dungan *go:ru raki* ma:pé. (Sunil, where were you without herding the cattle ?)
- 2 Sunil : Élé ka:kí Jibon bí:na *nangol ésingko té:ledpo:teika émna dal-ko té:bikanna*. (As asked by uncle Jibon, I went to cut down a tree-branch for making a plough.)

- 3 : *Kontégo:ngkona, oddoina yokka:né.* (It took a moment only, then the cow got lost.)
- 4 Boy A : *Pe:gérang dukan yabkurdo koyo lo:tu:do nésin dol du:dop ka:tai.* (In the afternoon, it was seen grazing behind the shop of the Pegu household.)
- 5 Boy B : *Okodén gai-dé:ye domora-dé:ye.* (Which one, the mother or the he-calf.)
- 6 Parboti : *Gai-dé:na.* (The mother.)
- 7 Boy B : *Éi, Sunil kangkíta:k, domora:dé guwali-té du:yé, kama:yé.* (Hello, Sunil, go and see if the he-calf is there in the cowshed.)
- 8 Sunil : *Dung, koyobo gia:dungkubo.* (It's there, it has returned quite sometime back.)
- 9 Boy B : *Émpémúlo gia:yéku, ya:yo.* (Then it will come back, Grandmother.)
- 10 : *Aodém mége:la anédé okol yokyen.* (Where will the mother go leaving the calf.)

As Parboti asks her cowboy Sunil why he did not herd the cattle properly in Sentence 1, she switches over to Assamese when she uses *go:ru raki* meaning herding of cattle. This comes from the Assamese 'goru rokha' with the same meaning. It has come into the Mising vocabulary with intonations fitting the Mising tongue. This is used as a compound verb and is now an integral part of the Mising vocabulary in the rural areas. Similarly, the words, *Konteg* in Sentence 3, is the intonated version of 'Khyontek' meaning 'moment' and *guwali* in Sentence 7 is the Misingised form of the Assamese 'guhali' meaning cowshed. Some words are used as the original Assamese words, such as, *nangol* (plough) and *dal* (branch of a tree) in Sentence 2, *dukan* (shop) in Sentence 4, *gai* (mother cow) and *domora* (he-calf) in Sentence 5 and 6. Although the Assamese-origin words and phrases figure spontaneously in the Mising vocabulary as innate parts of speech, they are borrowed from the Assamese-speaking society during acculturation. Now they are deeply rooted in the vocabulary, many of them intonated and misingised as seen above. Mising speakers use them

unconsciously as an unmarked medium of communication during all forms of conversation in the villages.

Example 3

Setting : The community hall of village Gali on April 15, 2002. A group discussion is in progress on bilingualism and its use by the Misings. The group discussion is attended by eight participants. Among them is Birkudhar Pao (56) who is a High School teacher working at Laimekuri. In reply to a question by one of the participants, he says the following :

- 1 Q : Émpémílo, Pao sir-bí lukítoka, ngolu Mípag agom lulusuma:pé aíké asin mé:namém lula:ma:ne? (Then, Pao sir, please give your viewpoints, cant't we express our feelings without mixing with the Assamese language ?)
- 2 Birkudhar : Lulusupé idag. (We have to talk in a mixture.)
- 3 : Éddíkoi ludaggom, Misingo:pé lungaplangkuma. (Whatever you say, we can not express all our feelings through Mising alone.)
- 4 *Karon ngolu Asom desor manuh*, ngolu édémpéi ika:bo. (Because, we are the people of Assam, we have become a mixed-language speaker.)
- 5 : Lulusul lunamdéi ngoluk *bhasha*-pé ika:bo. (Talking in a mixed language itself has become our language.)

According to Birkudhar Pao, the Misings are far from being able to express their feelings in Mising alone. Language-mixing in verbal interactions must be resorted to if one has to express his/her feelings. This is mainly because of the fact that the Misings are living in a mixed social setting with the Assamese-speaking people with whom they interact everyday. He further states that talking in a mixed language itself has become the unmarked language of the Misings.

4.4.7 Switching to L2 unmarkedly motivated by annoyance and anger

It is an idiosyncrasy that prevails in the behaviour of many speakers to switch to the major language while expressing annoyance or anger. The switching is natural and unmarked that comes out of the speaker representing his/her state of mind. Normally, such expressions are directed to a targeted listener or listeners, but they may also be a general outburst for a common audience. This depends upon the nature of the subject causing the anger, the speaker's character and the stature of the listener. While observing the language behaviour of the Misings, it is commonly found that many speakers switch their medium of expression from Mising to Assamese with expostulatory English words, to categorically show their annoyance or anger. The switching is spontaneous and unmarkedly accepted by the audience as a natural way of expression in such a state.

Example 1

Setting : Inside the house of Atul Pegu (42) at village Gali on October 12, 2003. Atul is the headmaster of Sikari ME School at the adjacent village. His school is still at a venture stage, that is, the government has not yet taken it over and it is run with the fees collected from the students and occasional donations from government agencies and well wishers. He has four children and two unemployed brothers. His college education was financed by his uncle for his father had died early. Although the family's main occupation is cultivation, some members of the family, particularly, his children and brothers directly depend on him. On the morning of the aforementioned day, one of his brothers who is associated with the Takam Mising Porin Kebang (All Mising Students' Union) prepares to go to Gogamukh to attend a meeting and asks for some money from his brother. Atul who is having a bowl of black tea while preparing to go to the nearby weekly market to buy a pair of slippers for his uncle, says the following :

1 Atul : Ngo *sakori idung émna poriyal sok appíngé ngok uporote nirbhor kori thakile keneke hobo.* (How it can be that all members of the family depend on me alone thinking that I have a job.)

- 2 : *Headmaster éмна kapiyen, ngok sakori sé venture school-or headmaster he?* (What if my job is called a headmaster, it's just the headmaster of a venture school.)
- 3 : *Ngo:nu éddíko dormang-ém pa:dang?* (How much do I get as salary?)
- 4 : *Ba:boi bí ngom porai taggai, bím ka:namdé ngok kortyoby hoi.* (Uncle supported my education, so it's my duty to take care of him.)
- 5 *Hei buli sobei kam bon nokorake ngom akha kori thakile keneke hobo ?* (How can it be that all in the family expect everything from me without doing anything ?)
- 6 : *Nolu akon-akon ésin o:koi ita-ira sula apir pirnyiko la:lensupé éмна mé:pé lage.* (Some of you too should do something and try to earn some money for yourselves.)

Atul's brother who did not pass his BA Part I examination last year, is presently with the students' organization as an executive member of the local committee. Many parents and guardians, particularly those in the teaching profession, in the Mising areas do not approve their wards' active association with such organizations ignoring their studies. Atul attributes his brother's failure in his examination to his going around in the organizational works leaving aside studies, and is already annoyed. He is further angered by his brother's asking money that too for going to attend a meeting of his organization. He shows his anger to his brother and also to the other members of the family as a warning, by intermittently switching to Assamese in his rebuke. Through the switches in Sentence 1 and 5, he expresses his deep annoyance when he protests the attitude of depending on him entirely by his family members, particularly his present brother. He tells about his income limitations and inability to support in Sentence 2 and 3 while he expresses his duty-bound commitment to his uncle in Sentence 4, using L2. His language behaviour in the present situation is unmarked as it is the expected and prevailing medium of expression in such a state.

Example 2

Setting : The front ground of the grocery shop of Tularam Mili (51) at Village Gomari on October 27, 2005. Although Mili's main occupation is cultivation, he also runs a small grocery shop in the village. Due to financial problems in his family, he dropped out of school at the IXth standard. On the above date, a group of college students approach him for financial donation which, they say, they are seeking as a part of their fund-raising exercise for observing their annual meeting. They hand over a money receipt counterfoil with Mili's name and a pre-written amount on it. This is a common practice of various organizations in the Mising areas, particularly the students, to approach people for donations with pre-fixed amounts. Reacting to the present approach, Mili says :

- 1 Mili : Nolu édémpé lula kapiyen, bipénédé ngoluminé! (How can it be, even if you say so, we are the ones to give the donation!)
- 2 : *Aru emahot keita donation tula manuh ahe?* (Further, how many donation seekers come in a month ?)
- 3 : Tani akodé appíngém *jodi dibo logiya hoi*, ngolu *keneke solim* ? (If a person has to pay donations to all those seeking this way, how can we run ourselves ?)
- 4 Donation Seeker 1 : Ngolu sé bosérékso supago:min gía:dun ? (This is the only time we are coming this year.)
- 5 Donation Seeker 2 : Ngolutu édémpé tulleima. (We don't seek donations, generally.)
- 6 Mili : Nolu tulimal kapiyén, nolukkémpin donation tuliné *bohut ase nohoi* ? (What if you don't seek, there are many other donation seekers like you, don't you know ?)
- 7 : Odok talé:lo nolu sémpé amount tu fix *kori anise*. (Over and above, you have come with the amount fixed.)
- 8 : Édémpétu sé:kosin bila:mayé. (No one will be able to pay

in this manner.)

9 : *Ami dibo poratuhe dim!* (We will donate only the amount we can.)

In the above example, apparently, Mili is fed up of paying donations. Especially he is annoyed at the present students' manner of seeking donations, because they have brought a donation slip with a pre-fixed amount written on it for Mili. He genuinely and sincerely tries to make the students understand the general feelings of the people of his class over the demand of the donation seekers who often approach them with pre-fixed amounts. All the words he uses are instinctual and naturally flown from a matured base of mental constitution. He spontaneously switches to Assamese while expressing his unhappiness and anguish over the manner in which the students are seeking donation from him. The full-sentence switching in Sentence 2 and Sentence 9 display respectively his tiredness of facing donation seekers and his firmness not to pay as the seekers demand but as he feels. Again through the intrasentential switches in Sentence 3, Sentence 6 and Sentence 7, he conveys to the students about his anguish over the manner adopted by not only them now, but also by the donation seekers in general. These switches are triggered by a general and unmarked tendency to switch to Assamese for making remonstrative expressions as that of Mili in the present situation.

4.4.8 A device to avoid a sense of expressional vulgarity

It is a common practice that code-switching is used to avoid a feeling of vulgarity while passing a particular piece of information in the ethnic language. This is mainly because of a general inhibition to express certain private-considered things in the oft-used language in public or in the presence of persons with whom such private things are not normally shared. For example, the words 'breast-feeding', 'sexual intercourse', 'abortion' etc. are considered vulgar if expressed in the ethnic language in the aforementioned situations. But the same terms are regarded to be important and serious when expressed in another language particularly in which these terms are learnt academically. This inhibition and uncomfortability of expression is a part of

the rights and obligations of the members of the society because under the existing set of social norms, a person is not expected to say such things under normal circumstances, and if said, the speaker is regarded to be not in a proper mode of behaviour. But if the same thing is said in a language considered academically formal, they are accepted as civilized and respectful form of expression.

Example 1

Setting : The sitting room of XY (34) (name not used to avoid possibility of derogation) on April 7, 2005 in Dibrugarh. An elderly couple is there to invite XY and his wife to the wedding of their daughter to be held in the first week of the Assamese month of Bohag (third week of April). The couple concedes to the request for having a cup of tea and sit on the neatly kept sofa. Apparently being impressed by the upkeep of the room, the elderly lady appreciates it and compares with the drawing room of her own house.

- 1 Elderly Lady : *Mem* bɪ room sém kangkono:pé lé:tag ayi. (The room is kept so nicely (by Mem).)
- 2 Ngolukkém ko:dídí:dé barmígla, bare:kídí:dém pencil kokki jígmígla lé:tag. (Ours is a mess, with the children jumping around, and painting on the wall with pencil.)
- 3 XY : (Slightly smiling) Ko:kang du:yém édempé idag, Youoi. (Yes Aunty, it happens with children.)
- 4 Elderly Lady : Nokké kídí:de éddíg bottéka:bon ? (How old are yours ?)
- 5 XY : Ngokkv kama:da, Youoi. (I don't have any one as yet, Aunty.)
- 6 Elderly Lady : (Looking surprised and slightly guilty) O:h. (Oh.)
- 7 XY's Wife : (Coming in with a tray of tea and biscuits) Nya:nyi, Ka:ki, tí:po:tokai.(Aunty, Uncle, please have it.)
- 8 Elderly Lady : Me:ma mida:do gílang *dei*. (Mem, do attend the wedding.)
- 9 XY's Wife : (Looking at her husband). Í:n. (Yes.)

- 10 XY : (Looking at her wife going out) Odog legangi:ngéna bí ajjouko *eikeidin treatment-ot ase*. (For the same reason, she is presently under treatment.)
- 11 : *Mane, juwabar badcha tu tube-ot hol emna, abortion koribo logiya hol*. (Actually, last time she had to undergo an abortion for the foetus was found in her tube.)
- 12 : *Heikarone, eibar olop habodhane ase aru*. (That's why she is keeping more careful this time.)
- 13 Elderly Lady: *Isorbí, aya:yépé, eibar aiyépé*. (God will bless her, it will be alright this time.)

In the above conversation, 'Mem' with which a British lady was addressed or referred to on earlier days, is a word used by an older person to address a younger woman affectionately. While appreciating the neatly and systematically kept decorative items in the drawing room, the visiting elderly lady never thought that the house would be without a child, because she had attended the couple's wedding six years back. XY clears the doubt informing that they do not have an issue as yet. He switches over to Assamese in Sentence 10 and 11 to inform that last time, when his wife conceived, the foetus was found to be in the tube for which it had to be aborted midway to save her life. This is an expression which might sound vulgar and improper if said in Mising in presence of such elderly persons as per the rights and obligations set in force in the normative social environment. Therefore, his expressing it in Assamese with inserted English words is an unmarked choice which is the expected language in such a situation. The English words 'abortion' and 'tube' are the words normally used by the doctors to refer to their meanings and therefore, they are used as academic words. The Sentence 12 is the continuation of the earlier switch and sums up the information on the subject.

4.5.1 A narrative device (partly marked and partly unmarked)

An informal situation is referred to as a setting where the participants' behaviours are uncontrolled and they talk as they normally do in the company of their friends and

family members. It is under the informal situations that bulk of the code-switching activities take place. Under these situations, the switching from L1 to L2 and back to L1 is mostly uncontrolled. It is spontaneous and mostly without being aware of the switching. The switches are mostly intra-sentential in the rural areas while they are intersentential as well in the urban areas. The matrix language sometimes shifts from L1 to L2, particularly, in case of use of independent clauses and sentences, the grammatical control runs out of the track and it shifts along with the shift of the language. The dominance of the embedded language, i.e, L2 (in our case, Assamese) is visibly high particularly in the speeches of the educationally forward group. Along with the Assamese, the English language (L3) also features quite often with its words, clauses and even sentences, particularly in the speeches of the post-graduates, the technically qualifieds and executives.

While narrating a story especially by an educated person, help is taken from L2 and L3 for bringing the original effect of history. In an informal setting, like that of a *Saki Logai* (as described below), the rights and obligations of the participants are normally to hear in Mising with gap-filling insertions from Assamese. This unmarked medium changes to a marked language as the story-telling progresses to a greater depth. This marked choice gives the story a smooth sail with the original effect and taste.

Example – 1

Setting : A multiutility hall in the house of Bidya Pegu (52) at Dibrugarh where a *Saki Logai* is being performed. *Saki Logai* literally means lighting of religious lamps called *sakis*. The term comes from the Assamese *Saki Joluwa* carrying the same meaning and the tradition comes from the ancient Hindu-Aryan religious beliefs and the teachings of the great Vaisnavite leader Srimanta Sankardeva and his disciple Sri Sri Madhabdeva. In Assam, it is a custom of lighting religious lamps called *sakis* at the praying house *Namghar* every evening or occasionally while offering prayers or singing hymns from the religious books *Bhagavat* and *Kirtan*. The tradition crossed over to the Misings through a rigorous spreading of Vaisnavism by Sankardeva's

disciples as a result of which a good number of Misings started practicing it, some of them actively, as Bhakats or priests. In the present time, *Saki Logai* is an unavoidable rite for performing religious activities. On all religious and auspicious occasions or celebrations like *pujas* or *hakams*, Bihu, marriage, etc. it is performed. It is also performed in order to bring safety and peace of mind if anyone in the family or the family as a whole seems to be in the grip of some evil elements. During such *pujas*, the devotees offer prayers and the Bhakat (priest) blesses on behalf of the ancestors, gods and goddesses who in the belief of the Misings, control the well-being of all lives and crops.

Normally, during such occasions, discussions/talks are heard on a variety of topics, ranging from culture and religion to politics and social problems. Such situations are excellent examples of informal situations and the participants freely use the language they normally use. The following conversation takes place at the *Saki Logai* ceremony of Bidya Pegu on April 13, 2003 :

- 1 Speaker A : Boro kídí:dok *jatiyotabador kothatu mane ngo olop hunilu*. (I have heard of the nationalistic feelings of the Boro people.)
- 2 : Bulu *hendred percent* Boro agom lusupé lage émna *kuwanai, kintu, bulu jidhorone jatiyo setona jogai tulise nohoi – édé manibo logiya*. (They don't say that they should be speaking the Boro language a hundred percent (at all times), but the way their nationalistic feelings have been imbibed in their minds, is praiseworthy.)
- 3 Speaker B : (While joining the above speaker) É:h, télé Simen Sapori to, su:pag buluk taniyé *napai, kintu, jidinakhon Vote-or din nohoi, heidina sobei hajir*. (Yes, in Simen Sapori, now no Boro man will be found, but on the day of voting, you will see, all are present.)
- 4 Speaker C : Odokké, ngoluk Misingé *vote* em tubmurdaggomsin, bulu *ketiyau tubmurruma:yé*. (And, our Misings may cast vote

- wrongly, but they will never do it.)
- 5 : Bulukké *ei khetrot pura training ase*. (They have all required training in this regard.)
- 6 Speaker D : Édé *nobojagorontu ketiya ahile dei, édé hol, as I know, 1967 nor pora arombho hoise*. (You know, when that renaissance came; that was, as I know, in 1967 when it began.)
- 7 : 1967 do Boro *jatir dangor andulon eta ghotisile*. (In 1967, there occurred a great revolution of the Boros.)
- 8 : Odo buluk do:lulo *bohut sohidu hoisile, dei*. (In connection with this, a lot of Boros became martyrs in the rural areas.)
- 9 : Odokkéna, *buluk jatiyo setona dé eta beleg dhoronor poristithir sristi korile*. (Since then their nationalistic feelings took a different turn.)
- 10 : Édé *asile ki Boro jonoghostir, apunar, dhormiyo heri eta loipelai*. (That was on a religion-related matter of the Boros.)
- 11 : *Parliament-tot Amiyo Kumar Tisku bula eta heri asile, he was from, I think, South India, kun state- tor asile moi etiya pahorisu*. (There was one Omiyo Kumar Tisku in the Parliament; he was from South India, I don't remember which state he was from.)
- 12 : Bulu *mane jatiyo hisabe conversion huar loge, loge, dhormot dikhyit huar loge loge, buluk tribal seat tu nathakibo emna sorkare heri eta koribo lole; language issue tur agote*. (The government started indicating that if the Boros get a separate identity as a religious community, their benefit as a tribal group might be withdrawn; that was before the language issue.)
- 13 : Odokkéna, bulu *dikhyit hoi gol je first we are Boro, tar pisot-he baki-bur hobo*. (Since then, they got pledged that “first, we are Boro, then others will follow”.)
- 14 : *Sobore principle ekei hobo lage, actually*. (This principle,

actually, should be true to all.)

- 15 : Ngok *rashtra-khonor jaitiyotatu rakhya koribor karone I must have some contribution, no doubt; kintu, ei identity tu not at the cost of my own identity.* (No doubt, I must have some contribution toward the national identity, but that should not be at the cost of my original identity.)
- 16 : Ngo *prothome Mising hisabe, odokké Ahomiya hisabe, tar pisot-he bharotiyo hisabe kaam koribo lage.* (First, I should be a Mising, then Assamese, then only I should be working as an Indian.)
- 17 : Ngok *sutal khon letera kori thoi, ngo lukor sutal khon sapha koribo nalage.* (I should not be going around to clean others' courtyards keeping my own dirty.)

In a *Saki Logai* ceremony which is a domestic formal occasion, the host family offers prayers while the priest blesses on behalf of the ancestors, gods and goddesses being supported by others sitted by his side. Immediately after the prayers, Apong (rice beer) and foods are symbolically offered to the ancestors of the family. This is followed by offer of the same staff to the guests when the informal session begins. In such sessions normally talks take place on random topics over sips of Apong. The above conversation takes place after a couple of playful exchange of teasing speeches between the Doley clan and the Pegu clan which is an unmarked behaviour in such a situation. While appreciating the nationalistic and patriotic feelings of the Boros, Speaker A unmarkedly switches from Mising to Assamese in Sentence 1 mainly to fill a conceptual gap. In Sentence 2, his switch to L2 is a marked choice through which he tries to give an original effect of the Assamese speech passage *jatiyo setona jogai tulise* meaning “imbibing a sense of patriotism”. Speaker B and C support the view point of Speaker A in Sentence 3, 4 and 5 in their habitual and unmarked switches. The attention of the participants is drawn when Speaker D, an elderly and socially respected person, begins his speech. While narrating a story of how the patriotic feelings of the Boros began to be strong, he makes unmarked as

well as marked choices as and where required. Except for Sentence 8, he uses Assamese as the matrix language with Mising and English words and phrases inserted intermittently. First, he unmarkedly shifts to L2 in sentence 6 to refer to a major change in the mindset of the Boros which he calls *nabajagoron* meaning “renaissance”. Similarly, the speaker uses the following speech passages of L2 as unmarked choices : Boro *jatir dangor andulon eta ghotisile* meaning “a major revolution of the Boro community took place” in Sentence 7; *bohut sohidu hol* meaning “many became martyrs” in sentence 8; *jatiyo setona dc eta beleg dhoronor poristithir sristi korile* meaning “their nationalistic feelings took a different turn” in Sentence 9; *Boro jonoghostir... dhormiyo...* meaning “religious issue of the Boro community” in Sentence 10; *jatiyo hisabe conversion huar loge, loge, dhormot dikhyit huar loge loge* meaning “as soon as they convert to a separate community and religious group” in Sentence 12; and *dikhyit hoi gol* meaning “got pledged” in Sentence 13. He makes marked choices when he switches to L2, *rashtra-khonor jaitiyotatu rakhya koribor karone* meaning “in order to save the identity of the nation” in Sentence 15, and his switch to L3, “not at the cost of my own identity” in Sentence 15 where he puts emphasis on the original meanings of these passages and seeks the audience to understand them. In making these choices, it is expected that the speaker and most of the audience are in the knowledge of the above passages and their meanings.

4.5.2 Code-switching as an index of power (marked and unmarked)

Code-switching serves as an index of power relations. “Power as a theoretical construct of relations between groups and individuals is defined by its asymmetrical nature. Power is an attribute that exists in relationships through one participant having more control over outcomes and factors that affect the other participant than the other way around.” (Myers-Scotton 2006). In a given situation, while indexing the identity of the speaker, a switch can also index the power that he/she wields. For example, while returning the checked unit test answer scripts, the mathematics teacher of Gali ME School (October 17, 2007) tells his students that they all must buy the Mathematics text book and bring it to class when the school reopens after

Puja holidays. The teacher first gives his instruction markedly in Mising : *Nolu appingé, ongko kitapsém répa:yé odokké Punja bondho lududo appingé class so:pé bomnang*. (All of you have to buy the Mathematics book and bring it to class when the school reopens after the Puja holidays.) Then he asks if they have understood it or if they have taken it seriously in Assamese : ‘Buji paisane nai?’ (Do you understand?). In a class room situation in the Mising inhabited areas the unmarked medium is Assamese mixed with Mising although the official medium of instruction is Assamese. The teacher’s switching to Assamese implicates his power over the students in that if they do not obey his instruction they may face punishment and under the existing rights and obligations norms, the students are required to face the punishment without complaint.

Similarly, at an evening fish market at village Gomari (October 28, 2007), one of the fish vendors mostly speaks Assamese as it is the unmarked language in such a place where many customers come from nearby villages inhabited by Assamese-speaking people. When he recognizes a particular person as Mising (who enquires about the price of fish), he switches over to their common ethnic language in an attempt to woo him to buy his fish by expressing an ethnic solidarity. The same fish seller is seen to be speaking Assamese with another Mising customer who is a government administrative officer. The fish seller who symmetrically and asymmetrically switches code during business hours making a judgment on the basis of the look and attitude of the customers, because the customers have the power of purchase and he has to gain as much as possible by selling his fish. Therefore, he negotiates the rights and obligations by switching back forth between Mising and Assamese in an effort to garner their willingness to buy from him.

4.6.1 The functions related to a social phenomenon is generally open and unlimited. The functions catalogued above are on the basis of the data found during the field study and a particular set of examples are used to establish the corresponding sociolinguistic function(s) of code-switching.

4.7.1 The threat perception : an examination : In a bicultural or multicultural society, elements of the dominant culture flow to the weaker cultures. In course of time, this process, if continued in the ascending order, may lead to shift or displacement or even extinction of the minority culture(s). The issue of threat and the possibility of displacement of a language vis-à-vis the Mising language, may be addressed by making an examination into the general experience, the language shift process and the present scenario and trend of the concerned language.

4.7.2 The general experience : Before going into assessing the future possibilities of the Mising language on account of code-switching, it would be useful to take a look at the world scenario on language shift. In this regard, Matthias Brenzenger (1997, 273) observes, “In all parts of the world, we observe an increasing tendency among members of ethnolinguistic minorities to bring up their children in a language other than their own mother tongue, thereby abandoning their former ethnic languages. These changes in language use by individuals might ultimately lead to the irreversible disappearance of the minority’s original language.” The domination of a few languages worldwide and the high speed spread of such languages through modern communication, dominant economy, colonization, and dominant political and military power have contributed to their supremacy over the lesser languages. There is disagreement among the researchers on displacement of world languages. But some scholars have put forward interesting findings. According to an estimate given by Hill (1978, 69), in the last 500 years, at least half of the world languages have disappeared, and another scholar Krauss (1992) states that only 10 percent of the present languages of the world are “safe” and therefore not threatened by future extinction. However, researchers dispute over the subject of extinction threat of languages. Some scholars suggest that weaker languages may get displaced or assimilated to another stronger language but will not die, while others say that language displacement does not take place at a large scale and only a few languages in the world are threatened by extinction.

In the above context, two opposing languages are involved in the process – (a) *replacing language*, and (b) the *replaced language*. As a natural process, the dominant language replaces the minority language(s).

(a) *Replacing Language* : This is the language dominating the linguistic activities of the people with its greater competence and wider spectrum of use. In the world scenario, English plays the role of the dominant language and is in the replacing position with regard to a number of languages, such as, Australian Aboriginal languages, Indian languages in North America, and the Celtic languages in Great Britain. Under this language shift process, many languages have already become extinct as a matter of fact being replaced by English. The decline of the Celtic languages in Great Britain resulted in the extinction of Cornish and Manx. Other Celtic languages, namely Gaelic in Scotland and Irish in Ireland, are entering vulnerable stages. However, many other languages like the Welsh, are resisting the process.

(b) *The Replaced Language* : The other language in the language shift process is the weaker language which fades out due to non-use. Some languages are replaced voluntarily while others are replaced forcefully. For example, the Latin language was not displaced, but developed into new languages – the modern French and Italian. Displaced languages include the American Indian languages in the USA and the Aboriginal languages in Australia, and although many other languages like those in Africa seem to have been displaced or are on the verge of displacement. Even today, hundreds of minority languages exist in environments hostile to them. The dominant languages being used as the medium of instruction in schools and colleges, the medium of communication in the offices, newspapers, and electronic media, play a significant role in forcing the weaker languages to get displaced. Nevertheless, although small speech communities are more susceptible to existential changes, the language shift phenomenon depends largely on the loyalty and sentiments of the members of the ethnolinguistic community. Even a small number of speakers can

keep a language alive, the Baiso language of southern Ethiopia with only 3,260 speakers, for example, does not face any threat of extinction. (Brenzinger, 1997).

4.7.3 The language shift process : Language shift is a long process. “The process of language displacement takes at least three generations. This is not a unidirectional development, but in the course of time successive phases with different characteristics modify the process before a language becomes extinct.” (Brenzinger 1997, 282). The process takes place mainly in three phases :

Phase I : Initial intercultural contacts take place.

Phase II : Attracted by its wider exposure and stronger competence, the children of the minority ethnolinguistic group are educated through the majority language.

Phase III : Gradually, interpersonal and intergroup communications take place more in the majority language for which the bilingualism develops into a monolingualism in the stronger language. Recessive use of the minority language leads to the process of its shift or displacement which might finally lead to its extinction.

4.7.4 Trend of the Mising language : In the light of the above parameters, we may now take the case of the Mising language, its present scenario, direction and future. As has been discussed in Chapter Two, the Mising tribe was in contact with the Assamese-speaking people of the Assam valley for about 700 years. For a considerable length of time the Misings did not yield to socio-cultural or linguistic cross-over from the plains society. But as the contacts continued in an ever-increasing spectrum of social and occupational activities, the dominant culture found its way into the minority ethnic group. The flow reached and affected almost all fields, such as, social life, cultural pursuits, and religious belief. All these changes gave a new dimension to the linguistic behaviour of this group. A large number of elements flowed from the Assamese language to the Mising dialect resulting in the beginning of a bilingual process among the Mising speakers. The bilingualism or

biculturalism gripped this tribe for at least three centuries. When the Assam region came under the British rule after the Yandaboo Treaty of 1826, the medium of communication in the administrative set up came to be English which proved to be the dominant language over all other local languages of the region. Accordingly, another cross-cultural transmission took place with elements of the dominant British culture flowing into the weaker local cultures. The process added elements of a third culture to the Misings. India's independence in 1947 and the transfer of power from the British to the Indians, did not bring much immediate changes to the cultural practices of the rural people in the north eastern region of the country particularly in the field of language practice. The twentieth century witnessed a significant rise in the use of the English language by the people of the Brahmaputra valley triggered by the modern system of education and the proliferation of electronic media like the radio and the television. The increase which still has an upward trend has engulfed the rural areas as well. This has added a third language to the repertoire of the Misings. After adoption of Hindi as the national language of India, and the various schemes adopted by the Government of India to popularize Hindi and encourage its use, a good number of Mising students study Hindi and can speak the language. Although generally they are not fluent as English or Hindi speakers, they use Hindi and English words and clauses in course of their discourse.

As there are no Mising medium schools, Mising children are mostly educated in Assamese medium schools. A good chunk of them, particularly those living in the urban areas, are educated in English medium schools. Since the medium of learning largely affects one's language use, Mising students are highly influenced by Assamese and English although Mising is taught in the lower classes as a language subject in Mising dominated areas. The field studies report that while making oral expressions in L1, on an average, Misings use 35% Assamese words, 7% English words and 1.5% words from Hindi or other languages. This percentage increases to 57%, 18% and 3% respectively in case of the educated and the city/town dwellers leaving just 22% for their ethnic language, i.e., Mising. This group constitutes

approximately 13% of the total Mising population and the rest 87% uses the ethnic language for more than 78% on an average.

It is evident from the above assessment that the interlingual code-switching is more frequent among the educated and city dwellers than among the rural masses comprising illiterates or semiliterates. As observed, notwithstanding their practice of Mising–Assamese code-switching, a strong sense of ethno-linguistic loyalty and awareness exists among the Misings including the educated and the urban dwellers. This is demonstrated by the numerous measures taken by various organizations particularly the Mising Agom Kebang (Mising Literary Society) for promoting the language. Therefore, as seen from the above reports, the Mising language does not face a threat of displacement in the near future.

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Conclusion : Toward a Larger Frame

[This concluding chapter gives an overview of the findings and points arrived at. It is in six sections. The first section gives an overview of the study vis-à-vis the Misings; the second section gives a comparative assessment of the bilingual use of the rural dwellers and the urban dwellers; the third and fourth sections enumerate code-switching as various sociolinguistic devices and indices under marked and unmarked choices; the fifth section shows the trend and possibilities of the threat perception of the Mising language and gives a set of suggestions for saving the language from a possible future displacement; and finally, the sixth section states how the present study serves as the basis for further research in the related areas. It also identifies the potential areas for further research as found from the study.]

5.1.1 An overview

In a multi-ethnic society, the use of supplementary or auxiliary language(s) along with the cognate variety is a naturally and interactively developed trait. In such a society, each member is more or less bilingual and variably multilingual in so far as each member knows and uses some elements of the languages around him/her other than his/her mother tongue. The language acquisition process in such societies involves multi-tract language learning either at school or in the social circles, which in course of time, develops into a genre of switching languages in speech between those available in the repertoire. The degree of use of a language in such an

occurrence depends upon the degree of acquisition of that language, the topic, and to certain extent, its popularity and usefulness. In many cases, the speakers switch codes without being aware of it. Even the nonagenarian woman of the village Lohitmukh Bhalukaguri who claims to have met no non-Mising in her life and does not know an iota of the Assamese language, uses an Assamese word when she says “Ngoluk *omonyang-éi yéma:bo*” (None of our age is alive). She is right with her claim, because she does not know that ‘homoniya’ (of same age group) is actually an Assamese word which has been intonated by the Misings with the sound suffix ‘ng’ and converting the aspirated sound of ‘ho’ into ‘o’ which is typical of the Mising phonology. Over the years, this word has gone so deep into the Mising language that it is treated and used as an original Mising word. There are, of course, a number of dimensions to determine one’s proficiency in the languages involved. As far as the degree of mastery in both the languages is concerned, the Mising–Assamese bilingualism or code-switching is not like those in Europe or the U.S.A., such as, English–French, German–English, and Finnish–Swedish. In these cases, bilingualism means proficiency in both the languages and the speaker can make his/her expressions in both the languages comfortably. These bilinguals are referred to as ‘equilinguals’ or ‘balanced bilinguals’ (Edwards 1994, 57). The Mising–Assamese bilingualism on the other hand, in most cases, can be called ‘non-fluent’ or ‘semi-fluent’ bilingualism where the speakers of the rural areas are fluent in Mising but semi-fluent in Assamese while those in urban areas are fluent in Assamese but not fluent in Mising. There are, however, a few Misings who are almost equally proficient in both the languages, but they too have to switch over to L2 or L3 when they come to technical expressions because Mising equivalents are unavailable for making such expressions.

5.1.2 It is found that the Mising–Assamese code-switching takes place within a sentence intra-sententially as well as beyond the boundaries of a sentence inter-sententially. In cases of intra-sentential switching, mostly the grammatical control of the sentence rests with L1 from where the speaker switches to L2 for words or clauses. In inter-sentential switching, on the other hand, there is no grammatical

control by a single language and therefore, the grammatical base too shifts along with the switch of code. It is normally a complete switching of language; the speaker makes the bulk of his/her expressions in independent sentences in L2 before he/she comes back to the base language to conclude the speech. The former is practiced more by illiterates, semi-literates and those who are less concerned about language use, while the later type of code-switching is prevalent among the educated, the technically qualified and executives. Again, in the research front, the former is mostly used for studying the structural and grammatical aspects of code-switching while the later is used for approaching the social meanings and motivations of code-switching. However, both types may be used for both purposes as well.

As the present study focuses on the sociolinguistic dimension of code-switching, it specifically deals with the social meanings and motivations associated with this language behaviour, rather than the structural approach that deals with the grammatical aspects of code-switching. To this effect, the present study approaches the code-switching behaviour of the target group, the Misings of the Brahmaputra valley, to find out how code-switching is used by the speakers as verbal tools to serve various purposes and how it acts as indices of various human qualities and motives.

5.1.3 As already suggested, the Misings migrated from the upper courses of the rivers Huang-ho and Yangtse-kiang in North-west China and entered India around 2000 B.C., and finally landed in the Brahmaputra valley of Assam between the thirteenth century and the fourteenth century A.D. (Pegu, N. 1998, 34). As they settled down in the valley, their culture, language and ways of living encountered those of the valley which occasioned an intermingling of socio-cultural, linguistic and religious practices. This intermingling resulted in a one-way acculturation among the Misings in line with the principle that elements of the dominant culture flow to the other culture(s) in a process of acculturation. The acculturation brought about a revolutionary change to the Misings affecting almost all dimensions of their socio-cultural system such as dress, food habits, family system, religious belief,

societal system and language use. These practices now form an essential part of their life and character.

5.1.4 As speech is one of the prime aspects of human character which is dynamic as well as variable, the dominant languages have found their way into the weaker ones and occupied their places asymmetrically in the utterances of the members. In the present case, elements of the dominant language (Assamese) have flowed into the weaker language (Mising) and have become integral parts of the speech. The speakers symmetrically or asymmetrically switch between these languages in variable degrees. While a number of factors were responsible for the emergence of this language mixing, acculturation, education and modern communication played their crucial roles. First, after settling down in the Brahmaputra valley, the Misings did not yield cultural cross-over from the plains Assamese-speaking societies for a considerably long period. But in course of time, as the involvement of the Misings in the political activities of the valley increased, a new chain of social, cultural and linguistic relations developed occasioning a gradual mixing of the Mising and the Assamese languages. Second, education taught them new things about culture, language and religion and inspired them to go towards adopting the beliefs and behaviours of those they read in books and from their teachers who were mainly from the Assamese-speaking societies. Mostly primary education was received through Assamese language and the higher education including technical education, through English medium. This led to the acquisition of Assamese and, to some extent, English into their repertoire. Third, the proliferation of media communications inspired the Misings, particularly the younger generations, to adopt the lifestyle that is in vogue countrywide, in some cases, worldwide. Newspapers, radio, television and films extensively influenced the Mising youths with their use of language (which itself is mostly bilingual) and style of presentation.

5.2.1 The rural dwellers versus the urban dwellers

As evidenced from the field studies, the language practice of the Misings living in the rural areas is opposed to that of those living in the urban areas. While Mising is

the L1 for those living in the rural areas with an upward increase in the use of Assamese with the increase in age, it is Assamese that is used as L1 in the urban areas and the trend of use of Mising goes marginally upward with the increase in age. Table 5.1 and Table 5.2 show the percentage of use of languages during the usual conversations of the Misings with their fellow Misings. Here the word 'language' is represented by the words, phonemes, clauses and other parts of expression of the languages involved. The given scenario is a cross-section of the language behaviour of the people living in the rural areas and the urban areas drawn from all walks of life. Although elements of L3 and other languages are found here and there, their use is occasional and specific and accordingly their role in the grammatical structure of the speech is negligible. Therefore, L1 and L2, i.e., Mising and Assamese which together form 85% of the code-switching phenomenon, are taken as the subject of the present study.

Table 5.1 elucidates the elements of L1, L2 and L3 found used during normal conversations amongst the Misings living in rural areas. In view of the visible difference in the degrees of use, the users have been categorized into (i) Educated, (ii) Semi-educated, and (iii) Uneducated each of which again has been sub-divided into Young, Middle-aged, and Old according to their interest levels.

Table 5.1 : Rural Scenario (data report)

Language	Educated			Semi-educated			Uneducated		
	<i>Young</i>	<i>Middle-aged</i>	<i>Old</i>	<i>Young</i>	<i>Middle-aged</i>	<i>Old</i>	<i>Young</i>	<i>Middle-aged</i>	<i>Old</i>
Mising	72	55	60	80	77	79	85	82	83½
Assamese	15	25	27	12	15	15	8	10	11
English	8	13	9	2	4	3½	1	2½	2
Hindi	2	4	2	1½	3	1½	2	3	1½
Others	3	3	2	4½	1	1	4	2½	2

Educated : 12th standard (passed) and above.

Semi-educated : Gone to high school and below 12th standard.

Uneducated : Never gone to school and primary school drop-outs.

Young : below 20 years.

Middle-aged : 21–50 years.

Old : above 50 years.

It is seen from Table 5.1 above that the degree of use of various languages in the form of words, phonemes, clauses and even full sentences, varies with the difference in age and level of education of the speaker. The highest users of the mother tongue Mising are the youngest uneducated group with 85% use while the lowest users are from the middle-aged educated group with 55% use. From childhood onwards a person's tendency to use other languages particularly the ones perceived as prestigious, grows and reaches the peak of such tendency in the middle age and as he/she grows older normally past 50 years, this tendency decreases. The embedded languages such as Assamese, English, Hindi and others that are acquired along with the mother tongue (which may differ from place to place) play their roles in their respective domains. Among these languages, Assamese forms 85% of the speech.

Table 5.2 shows the picture of language use prevalent amongst the Misings settled or living in the towns and cities of the Brahmaputra valley for more than ten years. Except for negligible differences based on locational variations, the language behaviour of the urban dwelling Misings of the valley is alike. Keeping the difference in language use in mind, the urban dwellers have been categorized into (i) School and College Going, (ii) Service Holders, (iii) Technically Qualified, and (iv) Semi-educated each of which again has been sub-divided into those with the Urban Background and those with the Rural Background. The sub-division has been necessitated by the fact that in each category there are consistently two groups with distinctive difference in language behaviour, that is, those born and brought up in the town/city and those brought up in the village but took to living in the town/city at a later stage. It is interesting to note that the urban situation is diagonally opposed to the rural situation, given the language behaviour of the pure-rural and pure-urban people, particularly the younger ones up to the age of twenty-five years (school and college going). While in the rural areas, the youngest group constitutes the highest users of the mother tongue Mising with 85% use, the children brought up in the urban environment are the lowest users of this language with just 3% use. The service holders of both the categories tend to use more Assamese with insertion of English words, clauses and sentences when they talk of matters related to their work

place. However, on socio-cultural, domestic and other day-to-day subjects, they use Mising as the base language and switch over to Assamese with occasional insertion of English words and clauses. This category witnesses the highest switching between Mising and Assamese with a good amount of English elements in it. The third category, Technically Qualified, uses the lowest percentage of Mising and the highest percentage of English through which they received their technical education. However, in social dealings the ones with rural background use Mising as the base language with frequent switching to Assamese while those with urban background use Assamese as the base language with occasional switching to English with Mising words or sentences in between. There is another group of people living in towns/cities categorized as Semi-educated which includes a section of the house wives of service holders with village background, lower grade employees, domestic helps and daily labourers. Except for the first lot of this group, the others mostly have low level or middle level education ranging from primary level to Higher Secondary level most of whom come from the villages in search of employment. Another constituent of this category which have people who have taken to living in the town/city relatively recently with a distinctive identity are the *Bhakats* (priests) who perform various *Ui* (religious performance) for the Mising families of the towns/cities. On earlier occasions, such people were brought from the villages for performing *Ui*. This category of people retains and practices a good amount of the village cultures including language. They are the highest users of L1 65% and the lowest users of L3 and L4 in the town/city varying between 1 to 4%. It is necessary to note that only 1.5% of this category are from the urban background whose language behaviour is almost like that of the other urban dwellers only with the difference that they make less use of L3 which is known to be the language of the elite group. The language use of this category can be marked as : Assamese 81%, Mising 8%, L3 4%, L4 3% and others 4%.

Table 5.2 : Urban Scenario (data report)

Language	School & College Going		Service Holders		Technically Qualified		Semi-educated	
	<i>UB</i>	<i>RB</i>	<i>UB</i>	<i>RB</i>	<i>UB</i>	<i>RB</i>	<i>UB</i>	<i>RB</i>
Mising	3	56	12	40	4	38	8	65
Assamese	78	32	67	42	65	40	81	32
English	12	7	18	16	30	20	4	2
Hindi	5	3	2	1½	1	2	3	1
Others	2	2	1	½	0	0	4	0

UB : Urban Background, i.e., brought up in cities/towns.

RB : Rural Background, i.e., brought up in villages.

There are two opposing trends found in the Mising society with respect to the use of the Mising language. A sense of self identity and loyalty triggered by a fear of loss of ethno-linguistic identity awakened some of the enlightened Misings to begin a sort of study on and about the Mising language and culture in the later part of the 20th century. With the establishment of the Mising Agom Kebang in April, 1972, this awakening took a revolutionary turn in speaking, writing and shaping the Mising language. Now it has its script and the language is being taught in Mising dominated areas at the Primary level since October 1986. The awakening revolutionized the Mising mind. As a result, a number of writings in Mising as well as in other languages like Assamese and English but on Mising subjects, have since been increasingly appearing.

On the other hand, there is an increasing trend among the Mising parents, particularly city/town dwellers, to put their children into English medium schools, being attracted by the high marketability and popularity of the English language worldwide. This is true even with the non-Mising parents in Assam as in other parts of India. These children as well as those studying in Assamese medium schools in cities/towns, do not get an opportunity to learn Mising at school or from the environment. Such persons, if multiplied over generations, are likely to surpass the number of persons in the rural areas, which would lead to language shift. But as far as the Misings are concerned, such students or persons comprise a tiny number, less than 0.1 percent.

5.2.2 Points arrived at : In view of the above observations, the following points are arrived at with regard to the nature and results of acculturation and nature of language use by the Misings :

1. The long socio-cultural contact between the Misings and the plains people of the Brahmaputra valley of Assam has resulted in the emergence of the Mising-Assamese bilingualism and the users quite frequently switch code back and forth between L1 and L2 and to some extent L3.
2. The striking fact found in the above study is that the Mising-Assamese-Mising code-switching is unidirectional. It means that the linguistic cross-over has taken place from the Assamese to Mising but not vice-versa unlike the bilingual societies in Europe and America. In the present case, the flow of acculturation has been one-way in that the socio-cultural practices and religious beliefs of the plains people flowed into the Mising society while there is little or no evidence of any such practices and beliefs of the Mising-speaking society flowing into the Assamese-speaking society.
3. In case of the use of L2, there is a vast difference between the people living in the rural areas and those living in towns and cities. While Mising is the base language for the people in the rural areas which forms 75% of their speech, it is Assamese which determines the grammatical features of the speeches of the urban people with 85% of the speech elements.
4. For a small group of Misings (less than 0.1%) consisting of those brought up and educated in cities/towns of Assam or abroad and their children, Assamese is equivalent to their mother tongue and is the main communicative language with Misings as well as non-Misings. This group comprises the sons and daughters of government officials, professionals, urban businessmen and other influential persons, and therefore they form a good part of the elite group of the Mising community. Although the language behaviour of these Assamese-speaking Misings does not pose as a serious threat to the Mising language (as a sense of ethnic loyalty exists among these groups too), a steady increase in the number of such persons in the long run

may be detrimental to the growth and even survival of the Mising language as its use will recede.

5. There is another group of Assamese-speaking Misings called Bihiyas or Samugurias found mainly on the banks of the river Ronganadi in the Lakhimpur district of north-east Assam and in isolated areas in the south bank of the Brahmaputra. It is not known when, and under what circumstances, they abandoned their ethnic language, but their dialect is a sort of broken Assamese with Mising words here and there. This group forms approximately 0.02 percent of the Mising population and is a minority sect within the ethnic community. During conversations in gatherings, members of this group are seen switching over to Mising metaphorically and occasionally.

5.3.1 Code-switching as interpersonal interaction *vis-à-vis* inter group relationship

The use of bilingualism or code-switching by a person may appear to be an individual activity, but in effect it reflects a situation which is far beyond the individual's domain. Since languages live in the tongues of their users who live in a given society, they are social systems and must be seen not merely as sets of sentences but as social formations cutting across various communities and cultures. Krishnaswami, Verma and Nagarajan (1992, 15) view language "as a system of communication, as an interactive process, as a tool by human beings in a variety of contexts, and as an interpersonal and socio-cultural activity". Chung (2006, 1) states that "With linguistic globalization as a growing trend in the modern world, most of the world's speech communities are multilingual, which makes contact between languages an important force in the everyday lives of most people". Therefore, it is evident that language plays a significant role in the maintenance of various human relations and behaviour at the individual level as well as societal level.

As evidenced by the present findings, both at the individual level and at the group level, the Misings are indexical of a dual culture in the post acculturation period.

Their practice of code-switching between Assamese and Mising is the linguistic manifestation of the three hundred years old intercultural contact. Code-switching is now an integral part of the Mising speech at varying degrees at all levels of the population in terms of age, education, economy and social status. As any other bilinguals do, the Misings use code-switching as a communicative strategy to fulfill their various objectives and purposes.

5.4.1 The sociolinguistic findings

As illustrated in Chapter IV, code-switching can function as a tool as well as an index. “As an index, codeswitching can index a speaker’s self-perception, as a multi-dimensional person, whether as a member of specific group, or as a member simultaneously of several groups. As a tool, codeswitching can be used in an ongoing conversation to step in or out of a presumed or expected identity” (Myers-Scotton 1993). From the sociolinguistic perspective, code-switching is viewed as a skilled and indexical performance of speakers, rather than a strategy to compensate linguistic deficiency alone. It exhibits what speakers gain or intend to gain by using two or three languages instead of one, in a single conversation and therefore they negotiate the rights and obligations set that exists in a society as social norms of behaviour determined by or based on past experiences (Ibid 1995, 2006).

Code-switches are more marked or less marked according to the prevailing set of convention called the rights and obligations set, in any given situation. The Markedness Model “accounts for the speaker's sociopsychological motivations when they engage in CS: the use of CS can be interpreted as either a marked or an unmarked choice of discourse mode” (Mendieta-Lombardo and Cintron 1995). An unmarked choice causes no commotion to the social systems because it is the existing and expected behaviour while a marked choice creates ripples in the normative system of the society because by making this choice the speakers want a new set of rights and obligations to be in force for the present situation. The rational aspect of the model is that speakers make linguistic choices because they know or expect that such choices will bring the best results to them. The code-switching that

occurs in intra-group exchanges can best be explained “as the mechanism of negotiation of respective rights and obligations of participants” (Myers-Scotton 1982, 2006).

In examining the sociolinguistic agents of code-switching among the Misings of the Brahmaputra valley of Assam, the relevant data were collected from strategically selected villages and cities in the Mising inhabited areas with a view to finding a comprehensive account of their use of code-switching as linguistic tools and indices. The following is a presentation of the findings as illustrated and analyzed in Chapter IV :

5.4.2 A verbal device to exclude or include non-speaker participants (marked):

In a bilingual or multilingual society, generally the speakers of the major language are not fluent in the minor language(s) while the speakers of the minor language(s) are fluent in the major language evidently for its wider use as the medium of communication in the society and offices. Accordingly, the Misings who are the speakers of the minority language use Mising–Assamese code-switching to include or exclude a monolingual or non-speaker participant. This can happen for the entire length of a conversation or a particular part of the proceedings where a certain person is expected to be in or out.

5.4.3 A comforting agent for non-speakers (marked) : While code-switching is used as a device for excluding or including a non-speaker from a discussion, it is also used to ensure that the non-speaker does not feel alienated and remains comfortable during an in-group conversation. This strategic device is frequently used by the Misings particularly during their ethnic or family discussions that take place in presence of non-speakers.

5.4.4 A means to emphasize points or attract attention (marked) : Under certain situations when a speaker feels that the other participants are not paying attention to his speech being made in the ethnic language, he switches over to another language

by which, he feels, he can garner attention. While negotiating the rights and obligations of the members in such a situation, the Misings switch from Mising to Assamese as a marked choice to emphasize a certain idea and bring it to the attention of the audience. In the process, the speaker uses English words or phrases intermittently inserted into the speech. The use of L3 in such cases depend on the education level of the speaker and the topic under discussion.

5.4.5 Providing spiritual satisfaction through code-switching (unmarked) :

Code-switching also acts as a medium of sanctimonious belief for worshippers. As a result of the rigorous Assamese–Mising acculturation, the Misings have adopted Hinduism as their religion and accordingly they use the Hindu hymns or *mantras* during religious functions. The Mising priests use the mantras (with some intonations) as inherited from their *Gurus* (religious masters) who were from the Assamese-speaking communities. Under the prevailing practice, the priests bless the worshippers on behalf of the gods and goddesses and also pray to the deities on behalf of the worshippers. After completing the hymn-singing episode performed by the priest and his supporters, the host family offers prayers to which the head priest blesses. He offers blessings in Assamese in a manner as taught by their *Gurus*, but while addressing the ancestors of the family and the plants and pests, he switches to Mising in which apparently he is more comfortable. Both of these mediums are unmarked for the priests as well as for the worshippers. Further, if the blessing is to be done in Assamese alone, the priests most of whom are uneducated or semi-educated, are not linguistically equipped enough for a full blessing, and on the other hand, if it is done in Mising alone, the worshippers are not fully satisfied. Therefore, the priests perform an effective *ui* (religious performance) with the help of Mising-Assamese code-switching as an unmarked choice.

5.4.6 A means of displaying skill and ability (marked) : In bilingual or multilingual societies, it is perceived prestigious to be fluent in the major or official language. A person lacking in this skill is generally regarded as less efficient for carrying out public works. It is found that amongst the Misings, in given situations,

the speakers take the help of code-switching for proving his/her language skill and speech ability or for satisfying the targeted listeners in a marked use of code-switching.

5.4.7 An index of high professionalism (marked) : It is found that in some cases, a marked choice of language is used to maintain high professionalism particularly at work place. This is adopted mainly to bar some people from taking undue advantage in a given situation or business. The users of this tool feel that some members of the society put the targeted person(s) to a set of social bindings by talking to them in their common ethnic language and establishing that they are somehow related to each other and take advantage out of it. In such situations, the speaker uses the official language to be formal and professional and sends a message that he means business and acquaintance or ethnicity would not get importance.

5.4.8 A teaching device in educational institutions (marked) : While discussing the functions of code-switching in language teaching, Sert (2005) quotes Mattson and Burenhult (1999, 61), “These functions are listed as topic switch, affective functions, and repetitive functions”. As found from the relevant data, teachers mainly of primary and high schools in the Mising dominated areas use Mising–Assamese code-switching in its repetitive function. In fact, this method is adopted, although unofficially, by teachers for clarity of the rural students who are not fluent in L2 but which is the medium of instruction in most schools. In some cases such as for teaching English or Hindi, the third language is also used in addition to L1 and L2.

5.4.9 Employing code-switching to express ethnic solidarity (marked) : The Misings who are brought up in urban areas generally are non-fluent Misings and use Assamese as their L1. But it is found that 90% of such members desire to express their ethnic solidarity by uttering non-fluent Mising passages particularly during community festivals and functions. The other 10% of this group is composed of such people who are settled in various places in India and abroad on job postings.

5.4.10 A device for explaining technical things to uneducated people (marked) :

Code-switching is used as a device for explaining to the illiterate rural people about technical things such as medical prescriptions and operation of telephones. The practitioners switch back and forth between L1 and L2 with insertions from L3 in an effort to make the users understand. The purpose of such a use is to meet their objectives like right use of medicines and telephones by the users which may be achieved only when the users grasp the things involved.

5.4.11 A lubricating agent for verbal communications (unmarked) :

Misings are one of the societies where bilingualism itself is an unmarked medium of interaction amongst the group members. In verbal communications, code-switching is largely used for making a smooth flow of ideas that the speaker desires to convey to the listeners. This is because of the ready availability of such speech passages in L2 or L3.

5.4.12 An index of dual identity (unmarked) :

The effects of the Assamese–Mising acculturation include social, cultural, religious and linguistic mixing. Each of these dimensions is indexical of the others when used. When code-switching is an unmarked medium of communication amongst the Misings, it also serves as an index of dual culture because, the speech passages carry with them distinctive elements of socio-cultural identities.

5.4.13 A medium of communication with animals (unmarked) :

As the Misings were earlier animistic societies, they are fond of living with animals. They rear animals, treat them as members of their families and like to talk to them. But amazingly, they talk to different animals in different languages. They mostly communicate with cows and oxen in Assamese, with pigs in Mising and English, and with elephants in Hindi and Assamese. Although these mediums are not full-fledged languages, the words and passages used convincingly conform to the corresponding languages as evidenced by the users in the fields.

5.4.14 As lexical and conceptual fillers in written communications (unmarked):

While in oral communication, code-switching is used intra-sententially as well as inter-sententially, in the written form, it is used as fillers for bridging the gaps created by absence of the representative words or phrases in L1 for the desired concept or idea. Mising writers have already coined a few new words for filling in some of the gaps but this practice prevails in their language behaviour to represent their ever-widening minds.

5.4.15 Switching to L2 unmarkedly motivated by annoyance and anger (unmarked) :

Code-switching is found to have been used idiosyncratically by speakers while expressing anger or annoyance. Here the switching is natural, unmarked and an unconsciously done act. This spontaneous switching to L2 is accepted as a natural outburst of such a state of mind.

5.4.16 A device to avoid a sense of expressional vulgarity (unmarked) :

Under the rights and obligations of the members of the society, certain words or expressions such 'abortion' and 'sexual intercourse' sound vulgar if expressed in L1 in presence of those with whom such things are not normally shared. But the degree of this sense is reduced to an acceptable extent if expressed in L2, particularly in the language in which such words are learnt academically either from the doctor or by education.

5.4.17 Code-switching as an index of power (marked and unmarked) :

As power is considered as the potential capacity existing in relationships, some persons are believed to have more control over certain things than others in a given situation. When a highly educated person switches his code to a prestige variety during a conversation where the participants are moderately educated or uneducated, switch serves as his identity marker and accordingly he is associated with the elite. Amongst the Misings, it is found that members of the educated elite often engage in code-switching symmetrically or asymmetrically to prestige varieties during in-group conversations. Through such switches, the speaker consciously or unconsciously implies the power that he/she wields. The switches are also indexical of the kind of

relationship he has with the other participant(s). From the choice of language, the participants come to know how to reply or make the next statement.

5.4.18 A narrative device (partly marked and partly unmarked) : It is found amongst the educated members of the Mising society that code-switching is used while narrating a story. This practice is different from the traditional oral stories generally narrated by elderly members of the society where they do not engage in code-switching mainly for the fact that those stories have been handed down from earlier generations and are not associated with the modern learning or the modern mind. But in the present society, the story is narrated in the same way as it was learnt. It is unmarked not to use code-switching for telling the ancient oral stories, but it is marked as well as unmarked to use it in telling a modern story. This is because, while narrating a story, a person travels through various stages of the events where he has to use the marked and other stages where he has to use the unmarked language.

5.5.1 The threat perception and the possibility of displacement

Although Mising–Assamese code-switching is frequently practiced by the Mising-speakers, the Mising language does not face a threat of extinction now or in the near future. The main reasons are : (a) the existence of a strong sense of ethno-linguistic loyalty among the native speakers; and (b) various measures taken by the Mising Agom Kebang (Mising Literary Society) for development of the language.

Nevertheless, a steady rise in the urban Mising population and non-use of the ethnic language by the children brought up in cities and towns might cause a decline in the use of the ethnic language. This decline, if allowed to continue, may lead to displacement of the ethnic language in the distant future. Necessary and timely action in this regard, however, will save the language from displacement. A set of suggestions are given below which may help save the language from a future displacement :

1. The direction of the Mising language is towards an uncertain future as far as oral communication is concerned. The heavy use of code-switching during conversations and speeches in the long run might lead to complete switch to Assamese. It is already a common practice that just the beginning and the conclusion are carried out in Mising even in formal occasions like meetings, all the body of the speech is spoken in Assamese with English words and sentences in between. This is more prevalent amongst the educated and the town dwellers. In order to save the language from shifting to Assamese or some other mixed or new language, the members of this ethno-linguistic group are required to use Mising words as far as possible while making interpersonal interactions or intergroup communications. They have to consciously give up the existing habit of using Assamese words where Mising equivalents are available. Interlingual code-switching may be used as required (as that of metaphorical) with equal mastery in both the languages.
2. As a person develops mastering in more languages, his/her repertoire increases. In a bilingual or multilingual conversation, one's ethnic language, normally, serves as the matrix language and a sense of self-esteem is attached to it. Misings should, therefore, learn their ethnic language with equal importance as they do in case of Assamese or English. The switching from Mising to Assamese takes place mainly because the speaker does not have command over the Mising language as he/she has over the Assamese. Therefore, he/she uses the Assamese version of those words whose equivalents are available in Mising. An effort should be initiated to become bilingual in the real sense of the term which means that one should be able to make expressions in both the languages with equal mastery and spontaneity.
3. A few languages are increasingly dominating the global environment giving a tough competition to the smaller languages to come up some of which have already faded away and many others are on the verge of shift or displacement. Therefore, the adage 'survival of the fittest' prevails even in the linguistic arena. In order to survive in such a highly competitive environment even at the regional level, a language has to enrich its treasure,

both literary and linguistic. In this regard, the rich oral tradition of the Mising tribe, such as, folk tales, folk songs and mythological stories can be transcribed. This is another potential area for pursuing research.

4. Linguistic and literary organizations like the Mising Agom Kébang (Mising Literary Society) have to play a more proactive role in creating awareness among the Mising people, particularly the energetic group(s) to come up with their contributions to their ethnic language. Necessary steps should be taken so that teaching of the Mising language should be added to the next upper class every year or every two years. Sufficient literary output is a necessary requisite for this purpose, and organizations such as Mising Agom Kébang should facilitate such productions in line with the Asom Sahitya Sabha (Assam Literary Society).
5. While it is necessary that the members of a particular speech community use and learn to use their ethnic language for its survival, making others learn and use the language makes it richer, stronger and wider. Necessary measures should be initiated by the concerned authorities/organizations so that the use of Mising language can be extended to the non-speakers. Initially, efforts may be made with the neighbouring non-Mising groups with the Misings to have cultural relations. This will enable a similar code-switching from Assamese to Mising that will bring in a reciprocal bilingualism which is believed to be healthier.
6. In the modern world, the electronic media plays a crucial role in spreading a language. Such is the case with English in the world perspective and Hindi in the Indian perspective. The Mising language can, to a large extent, be popularized at least among the neighbouring ethno-linguistic communities, with quality films, documentaries and songs transmitted through the electronic media so that they reach out to more people and greater audience.

5.6.1 Basis for further research

Sociolinguistics is a complex field of study because it deals with one of the most vital qualities of human beings in the society, i.e., speech. The human mind is

complex and so is the human speech. It is so because speech is commanded by the mind, and it acquires more complexity when it occurs at the societal level. Therefore, it is not possible to cover all aspects of a people's speech in a single study under a given topic because the topic is directed to focus on a particular aspect of the field.

The present study has discovered a number of potential areas for carrying out further research, particularly in the allied fields. First, the Misings have a rich oral tradition in the form of folk tales and mythological stories. With the growth of urbanization, these oral treasures have a possibility of being lost in oblivion. A timely tapping of this orality will not only save them from extinction but also serve as a potential research area. Second, the Bihiya or Samuguriah Misings (they are called Samuhuriah in the north bank and Bihiyas in the south bank of the Brahmaputra) living mainly on the banks of the river Ranganadi in the Lakhimpur District and in pocket areas of Golaghat, Jorhat, Sibsagar, Dibrugarh and Tinsukis districts are a peculiar sect whose socio-religious qualities are same as those of the other Misings, but their language is a typically accented Assamese variety with Mising words here and there. It is difficult to ascertain without a focused research as to when and under what circumstances they departed from the mainstream Mising language and adopted Assamese as their dialect. Third, diglossia is another area for research. The Mising language has six speech varieties, viz., Pagro, Sayang, Delu, Dambug, Moying and Oyan. Amongst these the Pagro is regarded as the standard variety. A diglossic state occurs during conversation when the speakers of the Low varieties switch over to the High variety on formal occasions or while talking to a speaker of the High variety. A more focused research will unfold new aspects of this language behaviour. Fourth, the psycholinguistic approach to the use of bilingualism is an independent area of research. Psychology plays a significant role in the use of Assamese and other languages while making oral communications. Fifth, the religious pursuit of the Misings is another potential area of research. Although they follow Hinduism, there are a number of practices which do not conform to Hindu faith, such as, the practice of burying the dead bodies rather than cremating them as Hinduism commands. This is a customary practice that predates their adoption of Hinduism. Among the other

customary practices that are still continuing amongst the Misings, Dobur Ui, Po:rag, and Mibu Daknam are prominent. The language of the Bhakats used while blessing is a typical mixture of Brajavali-Assamese and Mising.

5.7.1 Conclusion : While the sociolinguistic dimension of code-switching deals with the social meanings and functions of this language behaviour, it invites attention to various aspects of human speech while conducting a study on it. It also shows us how the use of a particular variety of language instead of another describes the identity and motives of the speaker. According to Trudgill “speakers switch to manipulate or influence or define the situation as they wish, and to convey nuances of meaning and personal intention” (Trudgill 2000, 105).

As in other bilingual societies, code-switching occurs in the Mising community as a useful sociolinguistic phenomenon and the speakers use it with various motives and to serve diverse purposes. Since code-switching is the linguistic manifestation of an age-old socio-cultural contact between the Misings and the Assamese-speaking societies, its use exhibits the identity of the speaker – both cultural and linguistic – while exhibiting his/her motives and meanings. Apart from compensating for “diminished language proficiency”, code-switching functions as tools and indices of speakers (Heredia and Brown 2007). As a tool, it is used to carry a “socio-psychological baggage” where a number of social messages are packed (Myers-Scotton 2006, 2). These messages, or some of them, are directed to reach the minds of the listeners depending upon the prevailing community norms. This, in turn, operates as the varying conditions of language behaviour in a given situation or interaction. As an index, code-switching reflects the speaker’s persona and socio-cultural identities. To sum up, code-switching in its sociolinguistic dimension prevails as an effective means of speech interaction amongst the Misings of the Brahmaputra valley, who in turn, pragmatically seek to fulfill their multifarious objectives through this linguistic means.

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APPENDIX I

Profiles of the villages and cities taken for case studies

For the purpose of specific case studies and data collection, three villages and two cities are taken from different parts of the Mising inhabited areas. The selection of these villages and cities are made so as to cover the entire Mising population found in various intermittent areas of the Brahmaputra valley. Accordingly, one village is taken from the area with the largest Mising population in the eastern part of Dhemaji district, one from the Sonitpur district, the last western district counted for rural Mising populace, and another from the south bank of the Brahmaputra. Barring the towns and cities, the Mising inhabited area in Assam measures from the eastern foothill areas of Dhemaji district to the Bhoroli valley areas of the Sonitpur district in the north bank of the Brahmaputra. In the south bank, they are found in dotted areas in a stretch from the eastern border areas of Tinsukia district in the east to the western riverine and foothill areas of Golaghat district in the west. Misings are found more or less in all major towns (district headquarters) and cities of upper and middle Assam with urban population concentration in Dibrugarh, Dhemaji, North Lakhimpur, Sivasagar, Jorhat and Guwahati. They are also found thinly in the towns of Lower Assam, such as, Nalbari, Bongaigaon, Kokrajhar and Dhubri. But this finding is negligible because they are there mainly in pursuit of their professions rather than as permanent settlers. For the present purpose, two cities, one the capital city of Assam and the other the major city in upper Assam, are taken to get the language behaviour of the urban dwellers. The relevant data are collected linguistic community-wise on the basis of information available with the concerned government offices, publications and notifications. However, wherever official information are not available, the required data are presented based on the findings by spot assessments, information received from local people, and publications either in book form or electronic form. The villages and cities are :

1. **Village** : **Gali**
Sub-division : **Jonai**
District : **Dhemaji**
Area : **4.5 sq. km.**
Population : **4,800**

Location and description : The village is located at a distance of 18 k.m. west of the Jonai town in the Dhemaji district of Assam. It is 8 km away from the border of Arunachal Pradesh (East Siang District). Its inhabitants often get in touch with the people of the neighbouring state in several dealings, such as, trade, agriculture, daily labour etc. At the same time the villagers have close ties with the inhabitants of the two nearby villages of Siga and Gali Ghat mostly inhabited by Assamese-speaking people. The National Highway No. 52 passes through the village and as such, the inhabitants of this village get in touch with traders who are mostly of Bihari and Bengali origin but can speak fluent Assamese. The main medium of verbal communication in-group is Mising while out-group is Assamese irrespective of their being from different origins. The members of the Adivasi community living in the village mainly as agricultural and domestic helpers, are fluent in Mising and communicate with the Misings in Mising. But the non-Mising traders and shop keepers communicate in Assamese.

The medium of instruction in the schools situated in the village is Assamese with English as one of the compulsory subjects and Hindi as an optional subject. Mising is taught as a subject in the primary schools. A great interest is seen amongst the youngsters to learn and speak English. Almost all inhabitants of the village can by and large speak Assamese irrespective of the differences in gender, age and education. But the educated are more fluent in L2 than the uneducated and the illiterate.

The inhabitants of the village are found to be highly interested in socio-political affairs apart from their domestic and agricultural activities. The educated members

most of whom consist of primary and high school teachers, shop keepers and students almost regularly read Assamese daily newspapers which reach the village by 9 am every morning from Dhemaji. They also read Assamese weekly and monthly news magazines and one or two Mising newspapers, news magazines and souvenirs that they find occasionally. Mising-Assamese code-switching is highly practiced by the inhabitants of the village during in-group conversations. This frequency and amount of use of either languages depend on the topic being discussed. Normally, they use more of Assamese while discussing political and socio-religious matters that they mainly learn from reading newspapers/magazines or listening to radio/television news bulletins, and use more of Mising while talking of domestic and agricultural aspects. The following is the statistical information of population, occupation, religion and literacy of the village given in percentile.

Table 1 : Distribution of population

Mising-speaking	Assamese-speaking	Others (Hindi, Bengali, Bhujpuri, Nepali etc.)
80%	10%	10%

Table 2 : Chief occupation of the inhabitants

Linguistic Community	Agriculture	Service	Business	Others
Mising-speaking	75%	15%	10%	5%
Assamese-speaking	65%	10%	20%	5%
Others	Nil	20%	70%	10%

Table 3 : Religion

Linguistic Community	Hindu	Muslim	Christian	Others
Mising-speaking	100%	Nil	Nil	Nil
Assamese-speaking	100%	Nil	Nil	Nil
Others	100%	Nil	Nil	Nil

Table 4 : Literacy on the basis of last class passed or last degree obtained

IL – Illiterate (don't know how to read and write), L – Literate (upto 9th standard), SE – Semi-Educated (from 10th standard to 12th standard), E – Educated (above 12th standard). In the category E, three more sub-categories are put : EB – Bachelor's degree, EM – Master's degree, and ET – technical degree/diploma.

Linguistic Community	IL	L	SE	E	EB	EM	ET
Mising-speaking	19%	30%	25%	15 %	6 %	5 %	
Assamese-speaking	Nil	15%	65%	20%	Nil	Nil	
Others	25%	15%	Nil	60%	Nil	Nil	

Table 5 : Number of educational institutions with medium of instruction

(AM – Assamese Medium, EM – English Medium, OM - Other Mediums).

Primary Schools	High Schools	Colleges	University	Other Institutions
AM - 06	AM - 02	Nil	Nil	AM - 03

2. **Village : Lohitmukh Bhalukaguri**
Sub-division : Gohpur
District : Sonitpur
Area : 3.5 sq. km
Population : 1,100

Location and description : The village is situated at a distance of 18 km to the south east of Gohpur town in Sonitpur district of Assam. It is connected from the National Highway 52 by two half-way black-topped roads, one from Gohpur town and the other from Kolabari and the communication is often disrupted during rainy seasons. Both roads leading to the village run through the villages of Assamese-speaking inhabitants. The road leading to the village from Gohpur town passes through the villages of Ujapara, Rajabari, Dhandhi, Senijan, Kombong Kathalkuchi

Gomariati, Panitsuba, and Lokhaichuk out of which the first two are inhabited by Assamese-speaking people, the next two have mixed population of Assamese-speaking as well as Mising-speaking, and the last five are inhabited by Mising-speaking people. The other road beginning from Kolabari passes through the villages of Kalabari, Dakhim Kalabari, Kamdewal and Malipur, all inhabited by Assamese-speaking people, before reaching the meeting point of both the roads at Kothalkuchi. The village typifies the Mising villages with its serene and tranquil atmosphere and simple and rustic people. Its surrounding villages include Mising as well as Assamese speaking populace. Although the village is situated at an interior area, there is an ample scope for its inhabitants to get in touch with the Assamese-speaking people of the surrounding areas, particularly, the aforementioned villages and the township of Howajan and Gohpur which are frequently visited by the villagers for marketing and other purposes.

Table 6 : Distribution of population

Mising-speaking	Assamese speaking	Others (Hindi, Bengali, Bhujpuri, Nepali)
97 %	00 %	3% (Bhujpuri)

Table 7 : Chief occupation of the inhabitants

Community	Agriculture	Service	Business	Others
Mising-speaking	90%	6%	4%	Nil
Assamese-speaking	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Others	Nil	Nil	100%	Nil

Table 8 : Religion

Community	Hindu	Muslim	Christian	Others
Mising-speaking	100%	Nil	Nil	Nil
Assamese-speaking	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Others	100%	Nil	Nil	Nil

Table 9 : Literacy on the basis of last class passed or last degree obtained

IL – Illiterate (don't know how to read and write), L – Literate (upto 9th standard), SE – Semi-Educated (from 10th standard to 12th standard), E – Educated (above 12th standard). In the category E, three more sub-categories are put : EB – Bachelor's degree, EM – Master's degree, and ET – technical degree/diploma.

Linguistic Community	IL	L	SE	E		
				EB	EM	ET
Mising-speaking	24%	25%	35%	14 %	2 %	Nil
Assamese-speaking	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Others	Nil	Nil	100%	Nil	Nil	Nil

Table 10 : Number of educational institutions with medium of instruction. High School includes Middle English (ME) Schools, Middle Vernacular (MV) Schools, High Schools and Higher Secondary Schools. The medium of instruction is signified as : AM – Assamese Medium, EM – English Medium, OM – Other Mediums.

Primary School	High School	College	University	Other Institutions
AM - 02	Nil	Nil	Nil	AM – 3 (Adult Education Centre)

3. **Village : Gomari**
Sub-division : Golaghat
District : Golaghat
Area : 2.5 sq. km
Population : 1,206

Location and description : The village is situated at a distance of 18 k.m. south of Golaghat town. The village is bifurcated by a wide gravel road and the houses on both sides are approachable easily from the road. 25% of the village houses are Assam Type buildings and the rest are thatched and stilted traditional houses of the

Misings. Even the households with Assam Type buildings have a traditional house on its back side built mainly to serve two purposes according to fifty six year old Dinesh Pegu . This is done for the comfort particularly of the elderly members of the family and also to maintain the Mising traditional way of living. A wide stretch of paddy field lies to the south of the village which has dual ownership of the present village and other adjoining villages for cultivation. With the hills of Nagaland in the near distance, the land wears a picturesque look especially during the seasons of harvest. It may be mentioned here that Golaghat district shares a long stretch of the inter-state border with Nagaland. The inter-state entry point at Merapani facilitates trade and commerce activities for people of the adjacent areas of both the states.

The village of Gomari was established in 1954 when the Government of Assam allotted a good part of the forest area of the district to a group of people whose villages were being eroded away by the flood waters of the Brahmaputra in the river island of Majuli. Presently there are 85 households mostly belonging to the same title clan of Pegu, Doley and Morang. The village is still a “recognized forest village” under which the village is still under the administrative control of the Forest Department rather than the Revenue Department of the state as for the case of other regularized villages. Although Gomari is surrounded by villages inhabited by Assamese-speaking people, it has a separate identity as a Mising (Miri as the Misings are referred to by the Non-Misings) village. Its inhabitants are distinctively maintaining all their religious, cultural and social traditions *vis-à-vis* the main Assamese culture. It has frequent daily interactions with the nearby villages particularly with Adarsha ,a village adjacent to it.

The main medium of conversation of the villagers is Mising, but, as for the case of their ancestral land Majuli, they speak a good part of speech in Assamese. This practice is prevalent mainly in the educated lot. The degree of use of Assamese passages goes down along with the education level. Usually, persons with bachelor’s and master’s degree or technical qualifications use English words and phrases more often during the course of their talks than the less educated members. But these

words and phrases are used as borrowing rather than as speech passages. The septuagenarians and octogenarians speak pure Mising but at times, they are also heard using intonated Assamese words during their conversations.

Table 11 : Distribution of population

Mising-speaking	Assamese speaking	Others (Hindi, Bengali, Bhujpuri, Nepali)
94 %	4 %	2% (Nepali, Bhujpuri)

Table 12 : Chief Professions of the inhabitants

Community	Agriculture	Govt. Service	Business	Others
Mising-speaking	76%	13%	7%	4%
Assamese-speaking	Nil	16%	22%	72% (domestic helpers)
Others	Nil	Nil	100%	Nil

Table 13 : Religion

Community	Hindu	Muslim	Christian	Others
Mising-speaking	100%	Nil	Nil	Nil
Assamese-speaking	100%	Nil	Nil	Nil
Others	100%	Nil	Nil	Nil

Table 14 : Literacy on the basis of last class passed or last degree obtained

IL – Illiterate (don't know how to read and write), L – Literate (upto 9th standard), SE – Semi-Educated (from 10th standard to 12th standard), E – Educated (above 12th standard). In the category E, three more sub-categories are put : EB – Bachelor's degree, EM – Master's degree, and ET – technical degree/diploma.

Linguistic Community	IL	L	SE	E	EB	EM	ET
Mising-speaking	24%	35%	28%	10 %	1 %	2%	
Assamese-speaking	Nil	Nil	50%	50%	Nil	Nil	
Others	Nil	Nil	100%	Nil	Nil	Nil	

Table 15 : Number of educational institutions with medium of instruction

PS – Primary School, HSS – High and Higher Secondary School, CG – Colleges (General), CPE – Colleges of Professional Education, U/INI – University/Institute of National Importance.

PS	HSS	CG	CPE	U/INI
AM-2	AM-1	Nil	Nil	Nil

Table 16 Number of educational institutions with medium of instruction

(AM – Assamese Medium, EM – English Medium, OM - Other Mediums).

Primary School	High School	College	University	Other Institutions
AM - 02	AM - 1	Nil	Nil	Nil

4. **City : Guwahati**
Sub-division : Guwahati
District : Kamrup (Urban)
Area : 216.79 Sq. Km. (1991 Census : SH, Assam-2001)
Population : 5,84,342 (1991 Census : SH, Assam-2001)

Location and description : Guwahati, the modern name of the ancient *Pragjyotishpura* - "the light of the east" - is situated on the banks of the river Brahmaputra surrounded by a ring of rolling hills, in the Kamrup (Urban) district of Assam. Although the 1991 census put the city's population at 5,84,342, it has considerably risen during the last fourteen years. In absence of specific census report after that, latest figures are not available, but unofficial estimates put the population of the city at 1.2 million at the end of the year 2006. The citizens are from all religions and languages of India. Being the gateway to North East India, it is well connected by air, road and rail with the rest of the country. Guwahati is not only an

important business and commercial centre, but also the cultural hub and educational nerve centre of the region besides being a place of pilgrimage. *Kamakhya* -one of the 52 Shaktipeeths of the sub-continent, *Nabagraha* - the temple of nine planets, *Umananda* - the peacock island temple in the middle of the Brahmaputra are notable places of Hindu pilgrimage. Hajo, a city suburb, is an important pilgrimage for the Hindus, the Muslims and the Buddhists. The city is also marked by archaeological and sculptural importance and hand-made products like handlooms and handicrafts. Sualkuchi, thirty two kms away from the city, is the seat of the famous Assam muga silk, the glorious golden Assamese garment. All these features make Guwahati an important centre for cultural and linguistic conglomeration.

The main medium of verbal communication of the city inhabitants is Assamese. But in some pocket localities, Bengali and Hindi are also spoken as common medium of communication. While Assamese is the official language for state government dealings, English is used as the formal language for central government offices and business dealings. It is also the medium of communication on the electronic media, such as, e-mails and mobile cell phones.

Although the city is a multilingual society, the inhabitants are generally bilingual during verbal communications. Amongst those whose mother tongue is not Assamese, their ethnic language is used as L1 and Assamese as L2. Between these languages, switching takes place depending upon the speaker's education and the knowledge on L1. Normally, speakers of highly competent languages, such as, Hindi and Bengali, the speakers hardly switch to Assamese during in-group conversations. But for the speakers of smaller languages, like, Mising, Boro, Karbi, Adivasi etc. code-switching between their ethnic language and Assamese, is a regular feature during verbal conversations. The speakers of major languages including Assamese, Hindi and Bengali, are often seen switching back and forth between English and their ethnic language during conversations. Such switches are of both intra-sentential and inter-sentential types and the degree of use of English depends upon the topic of discussion and the level of education of the speaker.

The Misings began to live permanently in Guwahati from 1953/1954 according to Nabin Taye (56), former President of the Guwahati Mising Kebang, the All Guwahati Mising Society (Taye, N. 2003, 60). Prior to that time, Misings used to visit the city for brief spells on official and business works. The Mising population increased drastically after the shifting of the state capital from Shillong to Guwahati during 1971 – 1973. At present, the total Mising population of the city is estimated to be approximately six thousand. Most of the Mising inhabitants of the city are either government employees or business persons. A high number of Mising students from different parts of the state are pursuing higher studies in different educational institutions of the city. The student group also includes a comparatively smaller number of children brought up in the city who use Assamese as their mother tongue. On the other hand, for the students who come from rural areas, Mising is the mother tongue. The following tables show a comparative picture of the linguistic groups living in the city.

Table 16 : Distribution of population

Mising-speaking	Assamese-speaking	Hindi Speaking	Bengali Speaking	Others
0.25%	37%	21%	26%	15.75%

Table 17 : Chief occupation of the inhabitants

Community	Agriculture	Govt. Service	Business	Others
Mising-speaking	Nil	71%	18%	11%
Assamese-speaking	0.45%	48%	31%	20.55%
Hindi Speaking	Nil	7%	78%	15%
Bengali Speaking	Nil	22%	65%	13%
Others	19%	14%	47%	20%

Table 18 : Religion

Community	Hindu	Muslim	Christian	Donyi-Polo	Others
Mising-speaking	99.85 %	Nil	0.14%	0.1%	Nil

Assamese-speaking	71%	27%	0.65%	Nil	1.35%
Hindi Speaking	71%	8%	4%	Nil	17%
Bengali Speaking	86%	11%	3%	Nil	Nil
Others	42 %	44%	7%	0.05	6.65%

Table 19 : Literacy on the basis of last class passed or last degree obtained

IL – Illiterate (don't know how to read and write), L – Literate (upto 9th standard), SE – Semi-Educated (from 10th standard to 12th standard), E – Educated (above 12th standard). In the category E, three more sub-categories are put : EB – Bachelor's degree, EM – Master's degree, and ET – technical degree/diploma.

Linguistic Community	IL	L	SE	E		
				EB	EM	ET
Mising-speaking	4%	13%	34%	28%	11%	10%
Assamese-speaking	7%	8%	19%	37%	16%	13%
Hindi-speaking	4%	18%	41%	21%	11%	5%
Bengali-speaking	3%	14%	22%	38%	14%	9%
Others	18%	39%	23%	11%	5%	4%

Table 20 : Number of educational institutions with medium of instruction

PS – Primary School, HSS – High and Higher Secondary School, CG – Colleges (General), CPE – Colleges of Professional Education, U/INI – University/Institute of National Importance; AM – Assamese Medium, EM – English Medium, HM – Hindi Medium, BM – Bengali Medium, OT – Other Mediums.

PS	HSS	GC	CPE	U/INI
AM-279	AM-48	AM, EM - 24	EM-11	02 (+ 02 Campuses of
EM-28	EM-23			IGNOU and AAU)
HM-6	HM-4			
BM-4	BM-3			
OT-7	OT-5			

5. **City** : **Dibrugarh**
 Sub-division : **Dibrugarh**
 District : **Dibrugarh**
 Area : **15.50 Sq. Km. (1991 Census : SH, Assam-2001)**
 Population : **1,20,127 (1991 Census : SH, Assam-2001)**

Location and description : The city is located on the south bank of the river Brahmaputra in upper Assam. It is the headquarters of Dibrugarh district and it used to be the headquarters of the erstwhile Lakhimpur district comprising the present Tinsukia, Dibrugarh, Dhemaji and Lakhimpur districts before their division. The city stands as a focal point for medical, educational and media related services in the entire Upper Assam including the north bank. It is a thriving educational, cultural and medical hub of Upper Assam. The Assam Medical College established in 1948 is the oldest medical and health care institution of North-East India. The city also has a university, four under-graduate colleges, two law colleges besides a number of primary, secondary and higher secondary schools. The medium of instruction in the local schools and colleges include Assamese, English, Bengali and Hindi.

The city also serves as a business hub with a sizeable population of the city belonging to a few business communities who have migrated to the state from Rajasthan, Delhi, West Bengal, and Bihar decades back in the process of pursuing their business.

Dibrugarh is the nearest city for the Misings. Located just across the Brahmaputra, it extends the benefits of city amenities to the people living in the north bank of the river the majority of whom belong to the Mising-speaking community. Therefore, they have an old relationship with the city. The present total Mising population of the city is estimated at 4500 (approximately) who may be divided into two groups for the purpose of the present study : those brought in the city, and those brought up in the rural areas but living permanently or temporarily in the city. The difference between these two groups is that the former group uses Assamese as their mother

tongue and latter group uses Mising. The Mising – Assamese code-switching is practiced more by the later group while the Assamese – English is used more by the former group as the other Assamese-speaking inhabitants of the city do. However, a set of strong feelings exist in the mind of both groups for their ethnic culture and identity. Therefore, a great enthusiasm is seen amongst the ethnic residents of the city to learn and teach Mising. A cassette of Mising nursery rhymes was produced in 2003 at the initiative of Pabitra Kumar Pegu and these rhymes based on the traditional jingles heard in the Mising oral stories, is quite popular amongst the Mising families of Dibrugarh. The relevant information related to the city is presented in the following tables :

Table 21 : Distribution of population

Mising-speaking	Assamese-speaking	Hindi Speaking	Bengali Speaking	Others
2.6%	44%	16%	18%	19.4%

Table 22 : Chief Professions of the inhabitants

Community	Agriculture	Service	Business	Others
Mising-speaking	4%	65%	20%	11%
Assamese-speaking	13%	47%	35%	5%
Others	3%	12%	67%	18%

Table 23 : Religion

Community	Hindu	Muslim	Christian	Others
Mising-speaking	90%	Nil	9%	1%
Assamese-speaking	65%	28%	4%	3%
Others	55%	30%	7%	8%

Table 24 : Literacy on the basis of last class passed or last degree obtained :

IL – Illiterate (don't know how to read and write), L – Literate (upto 9th standard), SE – Semi-Educated (from 10th standard to 12th standard), E – Educated (above 12th standard). In the category E, three more sub-categories are put : EB – Bachelor's degree, EM – Master's degree, and ET – technical degree/diploma.

Linguistic Community	IL	L	SE	E		
				EB	EM	ET
Mising-speaking	3%	5%	35%	30%	15%	12%
Assamese-speaking	2%	8%	13%	37%	16%	13%
Hindi-speaking	Nil%	11%	24%	43%	14%	8%
Bengali-speaking	Nil%	8%	21%	44%	17%	10%
Others	18%	15%	25%	18%	11%	13%

Table 25 : Number of educational institutions with medium of instruction :

PS – Primary School, HSS – High and Higher Secondary School, CG – Colleges (General), CPE – Colleges of Professional Education, U/INI – University/Institute of National Importance; AM – Assamese Medium, EM – English Medium, HM – Hindi Medium, BM – Bengali Medium, OT – Other Mediums.

PS	HSS	CG	CPE	U/INI
AM-34	AM-12	AM-4	EM-3	EM-1
EM-11	EM- 7		{Med.-1,	
	HM-2		Law – 2)	
	BM-2			
	OT-3			

APPENDIX II

Questionnaire for semi-structured interviews

- Which is your mother tongue ?
- Do you talk in your mother tongue alone ?
- Can you express all of your feelings through your mother tongue ?
- Which are the languages that normally come into your speech while making your expressions ?
- Please tell me the name of languages in terms of dominance during conversation beginning with the one with the highest use. Can you roughly give it in percentile ?
- Does the code-switching occur in writing as well ?
- What according to you are the reasons for use of Assamese or other languages while talking in Mising ?
- Does the Mising–Assamese code-switching occur to all people or does it occur to the educated alone ?
- How according to you did this bilingual practice begin ?
- What are the cultural elements that have crossed over from the Assamese-speaking society ?
- Is it due to the fact that Assamese is more prestigious, people use it ?
- Is there any difference between the educated and uneducated in the use of bilingualism ?
- Is there any difference between (i) a person's use of code-switching while talking at home or with his friends, and (ii) while making speech in meetings or formal gatherings ?
- Is there a difference between the use of code-switching by a villager and a city dweller ?
- What, according to you, is the future of the Mising language particularly in view of the heavy use of code-switching ?

APENDIX III

Figure 1 : Pit Corder's Visual Model of Interlanguage Notion. Corder symbolically explained the growth of interlanguage with three overlapping circles. (from Corder's *Error Analysis and Interlanguage*, 1981.)

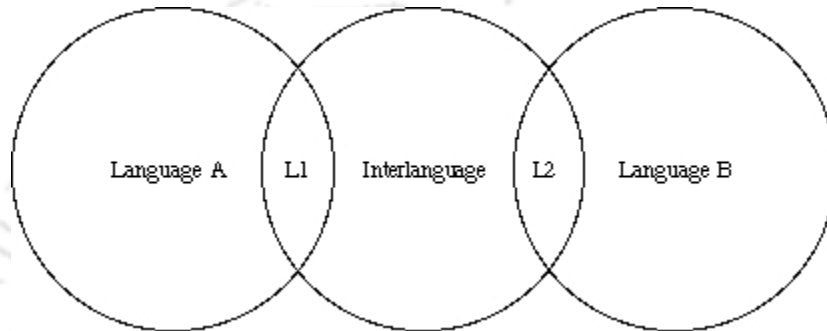


Figure 1

Figure 2. Duran Adaptation of Corder's Interlanguage Notion. This is a symbolic explanation of the growth of all the three languages : Language A, Interlanguage, and Language B. This growth, according to Duran, will be explained by any theory in operation.

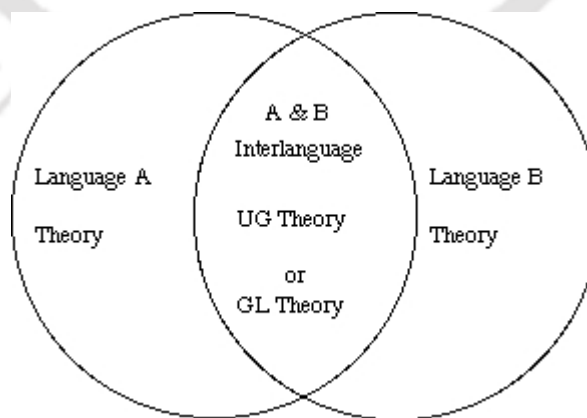


Figure 2

Figure 3. The relationship which will be created between the two languages will involve the influence of all the subsystems of one language on the other to different degrees so that there might be a "new" phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics created which differs to different degrees from Language A and Language B.

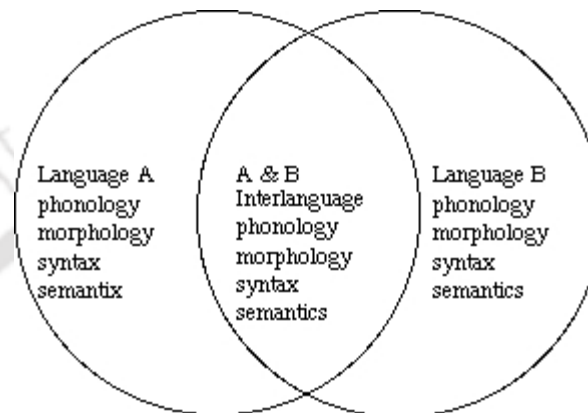


Figure 3

Figure 4. Because the relationship of A & B creates new forms of language which are not normative or conventional forms of either language the interlanguage form will be perceived as nonnormative and "strange." Negative labels such as fossilization, interference, semilingualism, debased, confused, unbalanced, anomalous, pseudolingual, incorrect, etc. will be attached to the new forms.

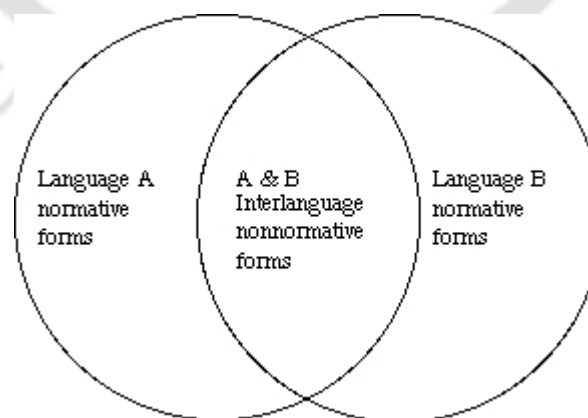


Figure 4

Figure 5. While monolingualism is characterized by its specific language system patterns, A & B Interlanguage system patterns may or may not include system patterns of the two languages. Interlanguage will include the following systematic patterns: transfer, borrowings, overgeneralization, omission, additions, orderings, formulas, substitutions, etc., in a two-way or back and forth flow.

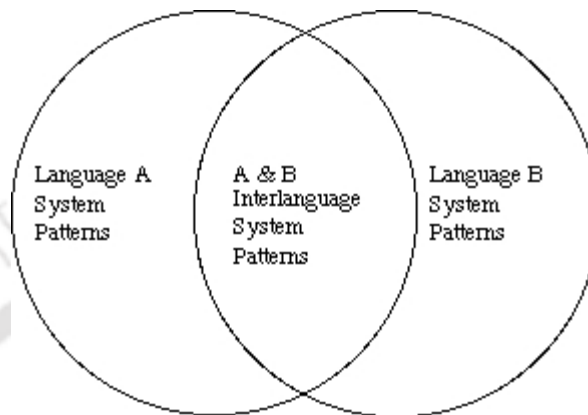


Figure 5

Figure 6. The activity, integrity, and strength of each language should be aided by the major purpose, strength, activity, and integrity of interlanguage as: an interim language; as a transitional language; as a stage in the development of bilingualism; as a move from nativization to denativization; as a theoretical mental construct; and as an adaptive strategy in the language equilibration process.

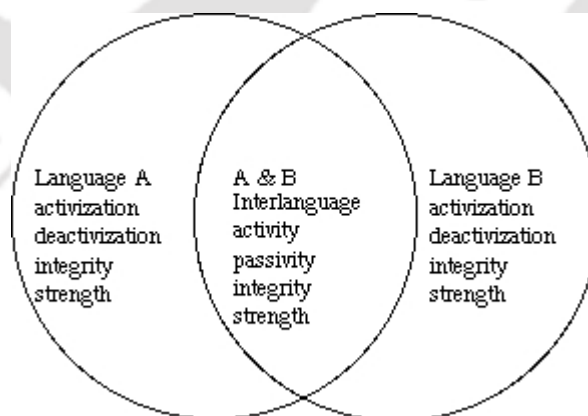


Figure 6

Figure 7. While it may not seem so, it is my assumption that the major purpose of interlanguage is both as an interim adaptive strategy of the language learner as well

as an aid in the maintenance and development of each language to its optimum forms. In this sense some aspects of interlanguage may still remain and others will have disappeared. Interlanguage would have acted on its own behalf as a more or less systematic, dynamic, variable, changing, and complete but permeable process as well as on behalf of the same thing for the separate language.

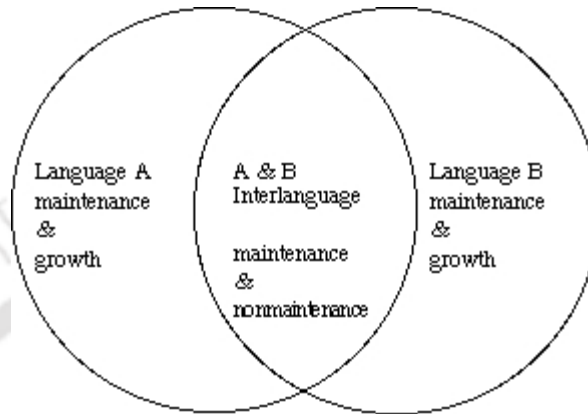


Figure 7

Figure 8. The effects of interlanguage will more/less be three major ones: (a) that Language A and Language B have their unique results unto themselves; (b) that each language will always in some way be tied to the other; and (c) that a third way of using language cognitively and communicatively will be unique and specific to the developed bilingual: metalinguistic ability, cognitive flexibility, conceptual elaboration, divergent thinking, bilateralism, (right/left brain hemispheric function) cognitive pluralism, codeswitching, code-mixing, and other forms of language patterns not common to monolingualism.

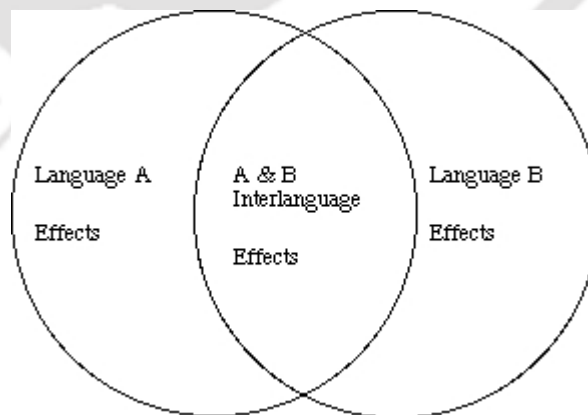


Figure 8

Figure 9. While monolingual speakers of Language A and Language B have no problem supporting or scaffolding the growth of their language, developing bilinguals often do not receive the support (or find such support in themselves) necessary for becoming bilingual. The heart of this type of support may be at the interlanguage stage and then later in the choice of the mixed form as well as the choice of the use of separate languages. Knowledgeable bilingual instructors may soon lend support and appreciation for this unique language process.

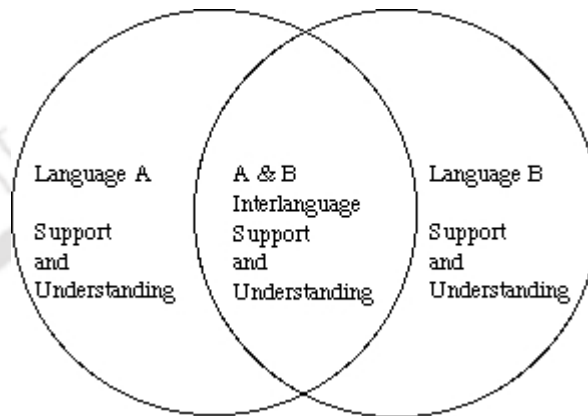


Figure 9