



Attitude Among the Mising Speech Community of Assam for Maintenance and Development of the Mising Language in Terms of Bilingualism

Heema Rani Borah

Abstract: *Mising tribe is an important speech community of Assam, the meeting ground of various communities and tribes. This community coexists in a limited geographical area along with the different communities and tribes with their unique languages and cultures. They speak Mising language in their households and communicate mostly in Assamese with other people. Therefore, socially the Mising people are bilingual. The community do not have any script or written tradition and although an effort has been going on to write in their language with modified Roman scripts, the literature of the language is yet to reach a developed stage. So the backwardness in terms of literature is restricting the language to spread and establish it as a medium of education in the respective society. Used only as a spoken language Mising has been included in the UNESCO endangered language category in its report (2011) and it has become almost certain that the practical field of this language will get shrink within a short period. So in such a crucial linguistic situation it has become an important matter of discussion from the socio-linguistic perspective how an integrated language planning is the need of the hour for maintenance and development of the Mising language. In this case it is very important to have a conscious and positive perspective of the respective Mising language speakers towards maintenance and development of the language. This study covers the perspective of the Mising community towards maintenance and development of their language. Respective people's standpoint towards choosing another language for communication is also observed. Moreover, in the perspectives of language situation in Assam, it also discusses the real scenario of bilingual situation of the Mising speech community. Information is collected through the methods like field observation, questionnaire and stratified and purposive sample survey method. The subjects have been formatted on the basis of quantitative perception and analysed with SPSS software and Descriptive Statistical method. As per study it is decided that majority of the Mising population has shown positive perspective towards maintenance of the language which can be very helpful in near future. The people of the Mising community should also put effort on regular basis to enrich their language and literature as well.*

Keywords: *language attitude, speech community, language maintenance, language development, language situation, bilingualism, language use, perception.*

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I. INTRODUCTION

Languages exist only because of society and therefore, the attitude of the native speakers becomes the deciding factor in terms of keeping a language alive and effective in a consolidated way. Positive stance of the native speakers of a certain language community only can increase the longevity, language vitality, language planning, policy of their language etc. through its effective use (Fishman, 1976). Attitude towards one's own language or another language indicates about bilingualism, code mixing and code switching, people's language selection, natural instinct of a certain community towards language change, language maintenance etc. (Fishman, 1966), (Romaine, 1995). Keeping all these aspects in mind, Fasold (1987) has included the necessary concepts for preservation of an endangered language, such as, language maintenance, language planning etc. into the array of language attitude. Based on such concepts formed by linguists, studies related to language attitude have been considered as an important chapter of Socio-linguistics. Especially, language attitude becomes a significant subject for study when it is about promotion and extension of a language spoken within a minority speech community and determining its contemporary and impending positions.

Mising is the second largest speech community of Assam which has been living amongst various communities and tribes with different languages and dialects. According to the census of year 2011, total Mising population in Assam is 6,80,424. Racially, the Misings are mongoloid and linguistically they speak a language of the Sino-Tibetan family's branch called Tibeto-Burman of which there is a sub-branch called North-Assam. The inhabitation of Mising community is mostly found in the districts of Upper Assam like Dhemaji, Lakhimpur, Sonitpur, Tinsukia, Dibrugarh, Sivasagar, Golaghat and undivided Jorhat district including Majuli.

Among the various clans of the community the Samoguriya, Bihiya, Bankowal and Tamar clan do not speak Mising language and prefer Assamese as their first language. On the other hand Mising people belonging to the other clans use both Mising and Assamese language for their communications. Normally it seems that they use Mising language in their households and while communicating with fellow community members. They mostly use Assamese for communicating with Assamese or non-Mising people. So the Mising people of Assam are socially and collectively bilingual and various socioeconomic factors are working behind this bilingualism.



Moreover, the unprecedented development of information technology, rapid growth of communication and transportation, huge expansion of mass media in the present time have strengthen the relationships among various countries, societies and communities as well increased vibrancy and interdependency amongst each other. For such vibrant linguistic and social structure of Assam, Mising people has been able to establish language contacts with the other speech communities living in the state like the Bodo, Nepalese, Deuri, Tea garden community etc. and for practical purpose contacts have been made with the Hindi, Bangla, Bhojpuri and English speaking people as well. As a result in the linguistic behaviour of a few Mising people we can notice speech repertoire of languages other than Mising and Assamese, such as Hindi, English, Bangla, Nepalese and even other tribal languages like Boro, Adi, Deuri etc. for some close social relationships. In academic sector the Mising people have been taking education through Assamese medium and as per the present education system they are getting introduced to Hindi and English in primary and high school level respectively. Moreover, along with the growing popularity of English language the Mising people are also switching to that medium for schooling. In a wider note, this mindset of people towards English medium has become a warning sign for the Assamese medium schools as well. In terms of language situation while communicating with the Mising speech community in linguistic, social and academic fields of Assam, use and development of the Mising language in academic sector and mass media and respective people's attitude about maintaining the language is been covered in this study.

A. Aims and Objectives

- To study what medium the members of the Mising community prefers for their academics in the present scenario, study the mindset of the respective people about it and analyse its probable impact on learning of the Mising language.
- To find out Mising people's attitude about the use of Mising language in mass media.
- To analyse the contemporary and impending language situations through a study of the respective people's attitude about maintaining the language.

B. Area of Study

In socio-linguistic studies the age of the informers, their educational qualifications, gender, location of the informers' inhabitation etc. play a crucial role. Keeping the enormity of the subject in mind, we have categorised it only on the basis of age groups to study the approach of the Mising community for maintenance and development of their own language. Moreover, Language attitude study has mainly two dimensions – mentalist view and behaviourist view. In this study we have tried to investigate the mentalist view mainly. By which we can predict the situation of Mising language in near future.

C. Research Questions

The main research questions for this study are:-

- In the vibrant linguistic structure of Assam and in the present scenario of science and technology's rapid

growth, do the members of the Mising community uphold a positive perspective about teaching and learning of the Mising language and its development? Likewise, are they positive about using the language in mass media?

- Will the perspective of the Mising people help the language in its maintenance in near future?

II. IDEA OF LANGUAGE ATTITUDE

In socio-linguistic studies especially in terms of bilingual or multilingual situations study of an individual or the respective society's attitude about the language, language selection, distribution of verbal repertoire, dialectal differences, problems in mutual understanding etc. play an important role (Fishman, 1976). Various linguists have mentioned two major competing approaches related to this concept. Those are: (i) Mentalist View (ii) Behavioural View.

The mentalist view is the most represented one and has three components, the "cognitive" (individual's belief system, knowledge and perceptions), "affective" (emotional reactions and feelings) and "conative" (behavioural intentions and interest) (Lambert, 1967).

On the other hand behavioural attitude is the response shown by the respective community towards certain things or subject in a particular social environment. This kind of articulated response collectively hints the point of view of a respective community. Such behavioural perspective can easily be found through observation and analysis. Although different linguists have given theoretical ideas about language perspective, neither of them could be accepted as the final decision.

According to Crystal, "language attitude are actually the feelings people have about their own language or the language of others, and further defined, as an individual's psychological construction regarding their own language and or the languages of others. (Crystal, 1997).

According to neurologists Petty and Cacioppo the term 'attitude' is used to refer to a general and enduring positive or negative feeling someone has which can be either permanent or temporary for a particular individual, a object or a issue. (Petty and Cacioppo, 1981)

According to social-psychologists Eagly and Chaiken, attitude is "a psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favour or disfavour." (Eagly and Chaiken, 2005) It is noteworthy that a person or society's perspective may not be long-lasting. Attitudes related to only a few factors can remain unchanged in a human society.

Romaine (1995) defines that "attitude is a more general concept than can be accurately determined from the answer to a specific question or from the responses given by an informant in a carefully controlled experimental situation." In an extensive study about language attitude Romaine says that positive attitude of the respective members of a speech community inspires them to become bilingual and to mixing and switching the code of their native language.



In a linguistic environment created by such language attributes the respective speech community gets influenced for language selection and shifting of the language.

Appel and Mysken (1987) have mentioned that “generally two theoretical approaches are distinguished to the study of language attitude.

The first one is the behaviourist view, according to which attitudes must be studied by observing the responses to certain language – their use in actual interaction. The mentalist view considers attitudes as an internal, mental state, which may give rise to certain forms of behaviour. It can be described an ‘intervening variable between a stimulus affecting a person and that person’s response.”

Relevance of language attitude in a sociological discussion is undeniable. In general, this idea is related to social belief and both personal and social sentiment as well. Such credentials and feelings can affect an individual and society’s language perspective. We can find out about the language perspective an individual or a society has from their perception and opinion about their own and other languages. Researchers related to linguistics, social psychology, sociology etc. have stated different ideas about language perspective which signify the relevance of this topic in a society.

III. METHOD OF THE STUDY

A. Research fields

The main research fields for the study under the heading “Attitude among the Mising speech community of Assam for maintenance and development of the Mising language in terms of bilingualism” are Dhemaji, Lakhimpur, Majuli and Jorhat district of Assam. More than 75% of the Mising population live in these four districts.

B. Research Design

The study employed survey research method. This was because the study intended to measure many variables to help determine the source of attitudes about the maintenance and development of the Mising language available to their own community people. Survey research measure many variables and test multiple hypotheses (Kerlinger and Neuman, 1973). This design also helps in the generalisation of the research findings.

C. Sample and Sampling Procedure

A sample of 600 respondents was taken for the study. The stratified sampling technique was used to select representatives from the various age group levels and the purposive random sampling method was applied for determined the number of sample amount. This is sampling procedure in which the population is divided into sub-groups and sampling carried out independently in each stratum. The sample was categorized into six age group levels respectively. Simple random sampling was then used to select the sample for the study from each stratum. Since a representative sample is a basic requirement in survey research, the researcher was of the view that the method would be more appropriate. In this study, the following

numbers of sample has collected and analyzed base on the theoretical approach:

Table 1: Age Distribution of Respondents

Age Range	Frequency	Percentage (%)
11-20	192	32
21-30	120	20
31-40	83	13.83
41-50	80	13.33
51-60	67	11.17
61-70+	58	9.67
Total	600	100

D. Research Instrument

Self-administered questionnaire was the main instrument for the data collection. The questionnaire was made up of both close-ended and open-ended items. The close-ended questions asked respondents to choose the alternatives while the open ended questions demanded answers that represented the views of the respondents. The questionnaire was placed under the following sections; demographic data, language use of the respective community, perception towards literacy in Mising, attitudes towards the broadcasting programs in Mising language through radio, television or other mass media. At the same time informal interview method and participant and uncontrolled observation methods were used to interpret the results of the questionnaire and complement it. They also help to understand the real scenario of attitude better.

E. Method of Data Collection

The questionnaire was distributed to respondents using simple random sampling method. With this method the researcher himself has gone to the field, asked questions to the respondents whomever he met and filled up the empty cells. Later, the collected questionnaires were divided as per the age group levels and prepared them for analysis.

F. Method of Data Analysis

The software SPSS was used to analyze the data quantitatively. The data collected from the field using questionnaire was first edited, sorted and those found to be unusable were discarded. The questionnaires were then numbered and the responses were then captured using SPSS after the questions and all possible answers have been defines in SPSS. The data generated in SPSS formed the basis of the analysis. The results were presented in descriptive statistics and percentages. A cross tabulation was done to identify relationships among some of the variables.

IV. THE BILINGUAL SITUATION OF THE MISING SPEECH COMMUNITY OF ASSAM

The linguistic demography of Assam is heterogeneous. Currently, various speech-communities are living in unitedly both at Brahmaputra and Barak valley. Among the speech-communities residing on the Brahmaputra valley, Bodo, Mising, Deori, Rabha, Tiwa, Karbi, Dimasa, Garo, Hajong; Tai origin Khamti, Fake, Aiton, Turung, Khamyang etc. are mentionable.

These languages are mainly limited among the same speech-communities. On the other hand, besides Barak valley, in some of the districts of middle Assam, various speech community like Bangali, Sylheti, Manipuri etc. are residing. Moreover, for the purpose of trade and business of preffession, various language speakers come to Assam and saddle here permanently or temporarily. Amongst these, Tea tribe, Hindi speaking Marwari, Bihari etc. are mentionable. Therefore, in case of Assam like its demography, the

diversity of language has been acknowledged as a natural phenomenon. It can be observed that, the diversity of languages do not close way of natural communication, bilingualism or multilingualism has been recognized as an important reason. In such bilingual or multilingual case, the people of various speech-community use Assamese mainly as a lingua franca. On the other hand, in domestic or among the surrounding of the same community they use their own language. Moreover, in some of the cases of daily life like marketing, trade and business, education and for professional purpose, the people varied languages of Assam use Hindi, Bengali, English etc. other than Assamese or own language based on the communicative situation. When the tribal people of Assam use Assamese as a lingua franca, a distinct linguistic form is expressed on their way of communication. In the meantime, that distinct form has been recognized as ethnolect. (Upen Rabha Hakacham: 2009)

The mother tongue or the first language of the Mising speech community of Assam is Mising. They use Mising language as a means of communication at domestic and own community level and outside they use Assamese as the second language. In short, without Assamese language their social and individual life will become obsolete. They acquire both the language in two different environments and can use it distinctly based on the situation of application. On the basis of such symptoms of use of language, their bilingualism can be recognized as co-ordinate bilingualism. In this case, based on the survey of a sample of 600 respondents, 52.8 % people use Mising and Assamese, 24.8% people use Mising, Assamese and Hindi in their daily life. Moreover, it has been observed recently that, besides Assamese, Hindi, English or connection of other tribal languages like Bodo, Bagania, Nepali, Galong, Deori etc. are used by few as a means of communication. In this case, its percentage is 18.5. it means, almost half of the Mising people are proprietor of multilingualism.

In case of acquisition of language, larger number of bilingual Mising has been conceived as sequential bilingualism. Most of them after mastering the Mising language learn the second language based on the situation and necessity. In this case, 96.5% people of the total sample have acquired Mising first and 2.8% people have acquired Mising and Assamese simultaneously.

In case of bilingual skills, though the Mising people can speak in both Mising and Assamese with the same fluency, in case of writing and reading, they have difference in skills. In such case, the Mising are more skilled in Assamese language, as Assamese being the medium of instruction in govt. schools, the Misings are educated in Assamese language. Though Mising is used as a subject in some of the educational institutions at primary level, those education are

now not expanded much. As such, 87.3% people can read and write in Assamese adversely only 45.7% in case of Mising language. In such case, Assamese is playing the role of dominant language. Moreover, Mising language is used only in the Mising society, if they come out of their environment, the main medium of their communication is Assamese. Well, in their daily life, the use of Mising language is more i.e. 67.7%. Moreover, stages of age, gender and the differences of whereabouts etc. have influenced the language skill of the Mising people. The matured people are more skilled in Assamese than the youngsters mainly between 6-15 years. Likewise, the linguistic knowledge of Assamese is more in male as compared to female, and more in urban areas as compared to village people.

The Mising people have acquired bilingualism socially. The illiterate people of Mising can also speak in Assamese skillfully. The Mising people have acquired the linguistic knowledge of Assamese from social and natural environment, not from any formal or educational institution. Their next generation has acquired it from their ancestors hereditary. Recently, it is seen that the new generation have shown reluctance behavior in using the Mising language. As per the collected data from field study, the use of Mising language among the three generations of Mising people: grandparants, parants and grand children are successively 98.9%, 93.7% and 70.7% respectively. On the contrary, their interest is seen more in the use of Hindi and English language. It can be assured that the Mising language is on the verge of danger, for the decrease of practical need of the language. In the report of UNESCO, the chief organization of UNO, Mising language has get the position of definitely endangered languages. In this category, the children generally do not learn longer the language as a 'mother tongue' in at home. Therefore, it can be predicted that there will be a change in the bilingualism state of the Mising speech-community.

V. DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

In this study two factors are to be discussed to present the attitude of the Mishing community for maintenance and development of the language –

- a) Through the study of Mishing community's perspective towards learning the language
- b) By analysing Mishing community's perspective towards publishing and broadcasting programmes made in Mishing language through mass media

A. Attitude of the Mishing Speech Community in terms of Teaching and Learning the Language and its Development

Though Mising language is the mother tongue or the first language of the Mising community members living in Assam, But the Mising students too have to study in Assamese medium as it is the official language and medium of instruction in most of the government run schools of the state.



Moreover the Mising people are bound to learn Assamese to communicate in a wider range as their mother tongue is limited within their community. So, most of the Mising students have been obtaining their education in Assamese medium and some of them in English medium in primary and high school level. Moreover, learning English has become mandatory in the present time of rapid growth of science and technology and overall development of human civilization. So today's conscious guardians prefer to enrol their children in English medium schools. Mising

language is taught just as a subject only in a few primary schools of Mising populated areas. Paucity of trained teacher and text books has restricted the process to become a fruitful exercise. From the information gathered from field study, among the 600 informers only 2.5% people have studied Mising language in their primary standards along with Assamese. So, study is done on what the Mising people who have not been able to obtain education in the medium of their mother tongue think about learning of the language and in a wider scenario what kind of perspectives they uphold for Assamese and English as a medium of education. The responses received from the questionnaires are presented here as per age group –

Table 2: Attitude towards the Mising Language Learning as per Age Group Level – 1

Q#	Question	Response	Age group					
			11-20	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61-70+
			192 (%)	120 (%)	83 (%)	80 (%)	67 (%)	58 (%)
1	If someone has appointed to teach Mising language in your village, will you learn?	Yes	159 (82.8)	103 (85.8)	66 (79.5)	54 (67.5)	40 (59.7)	20 (34.5)
		If I have enough time	26 (13.5)	15 (12.5)	16 (19.3)	13 (16.3)	16 (23.9)	23 (39.7)
		May be not	1 (0.5)	2 (1.7)	1 (1.2)	8 (10)	7 (10.4)	10 (17.2)
		No	6 (3.1)	–	–	5 (6.3)	4 (6)	5 (8.6)
2	If someone has appointed to teach Assamese language in your village, will you learn?	Yes	178 (92.7)	105 (87.5)	71 (85.5)	61 (76.3)	44 (65.7)	23 (39.7)
		If I have enough time	13 (6.8)	10 (8.3)	11 (13.3)	10 (12.5)	12 (17.9)	21 (36.2)
		May be not	–	3 (2.5)	–	4 (5)	6 (9)	9 (15.5)
		No	1 (0.5)	2 (1.7)	1 (1.2)	5 (6.3)	5 (7.5)	5 (8.6)
3	What language do you prefer as a medium of instruction?	Mising	84 (43.8)	31 (25.8)	14 (16.9)	14 (17.5)	6 (9.0)	13 (22.4)
		Assamese	58 (30.2)	33 (27.5)	21 (25.3)	33 (41.3)	27 (40.3)	29 (50)
		Hindi	6 (3.1)	3 (2.5)	1 (1.2)	1 (1.3)	–	–
		English	44 (22.9)	51 (42.5)	46 (55.4)	31 (38.8)	34 (50.7)	14 (24.1)
		Mising/ Assamese	–	2 (1.7)	1 (1.2)	1 (1.3)	–	2 (3.4)

On the first question about learning Mising language mentioned in the above chart majority of people except the age group of 61-70+ have responded positively. However, the percentage is inversely proportional with the age group of people participated in the survey. People from the age group 61-70+ have said that they will learn the language

only if time and situation permit. Who have responded positively said that it is a matter of pride and also necessary to learn one's mother tongue.

On the other hand some people said that students will not get any employment opportunity in future through learning Mising language as it is used within a very limited range.

On the second question about learning Assamese language every age group has opined positively though the percentage is noticeably decreased along with the increase of people's age. While percentage of positive response is 92.7 and 87.5 among the age groups of 11-20 and 21-30 respectively, it drops with the age groups 51-60 and 61-70+ to 65.7% and 39.7% respectively. If we compare between Mising and Assamese language it seems that members of the Mising community are more positive towards learning Assamese language.

English medium schools have been established in every nook and corner of Assam with the influence of modernity and globalisation in a way affecting the medium of schooling for Mising students as well. In the surveyed districts till 2016 the number of English medium schools with facilities to study from primary to high school and

higher secondary level are as mentioned - Dhemaji-37, Lakhimpur-30 and Jorhat including Majuli – 27.¹ It seems that mostly students living in remote areas without proper transportation system go to Assamese medium schools. For the lack of enough facilities they are studying in Assamese medium but they seem to be equally interested for acquiring education through English medium. Almost everyone, the students and their parents have a strong perception that only the English language can make one employable. So, on the fifth question of the above chart about their preferred language as a medium of instruction 36.7%, 33.5% and 27% people of the total participants have advocated in favour of English, Assamese and Mising language respectively. Age group 11-20 has highest positive response towards Mising language which is 43.8% while the age groups 21-60 most of the people advocated in favour of English. Only the people from the age group 61-70+ shown some support for Assamese as a medium of instruction.

Responses received for some other questions regarding learning of the language are here as per age group -

Table 3: Attitude towards the Mising Language Learning as per Age Group Level – 2

Q#	Question	Response	Age group					
			11-20	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61-70+
			192 (%)	120 (%)	83 (%)	80 (%)	67 (%)	58 (%)
1	If a textbook costs 30 rupees (Indian Rupees), will you buy it for reading?	Yes	159 (82.8)	108 (90)	75 (90.4)	56 (70)	46 (68.7)	16 (27.6)
		If I have enough money	24 (12.5)	7 (5.8)	4 (4.8)	7 (8.8)	6 (9)	11 (19)
		May be not	1 (0.5)	3 (2.5)	4 (4.8)	13 (16.3)	10 (14.9)	14 (41.4)
		No	8 (4.2)	2 (1.7)	–	4 (5)	5 (7.5)	7 (12.1)
2	If a same type of text book has published in the following languages, which text book will you buy to read?	Mising	100 (54.3)	49 (41.5)	16 (19.3)	27 (33.8)	13 (19.4)	27 (46.6)
		Assamese	71 (38.6)	53 (44.9)	50 (60.2)	45 (56.3)	53 (79.1)	27 (46.6)
		Hindi	4 (2.2)	2 (1.7)	1 (1.2)	–	–	–
		English	9 (4.9)	10 (8.5)	7 (8.4)	4 (5)	–	2 (3.4)
		Mising/Eng.	–	3 (2.5)	3 (3.6)	3 (3.8)	1 (1.5)	1 (1.7)
		Assamese/Eng.	–	1 (0.8)	6 (7.2)	1 (1.3)	–	1 (1.7)

On the first question of the chart about buying the textbook printed in Mising language with a certain amount majority of people except the age group of 61-70+ have responded positively. People from the age group 61-70+ have said that they will probably not buy it. From the age of 41 and above the positive responses are seemed to be reducing. Lesser educational qualifications compared to the new generation

can be a reason of such an attitude amongst the people above 40.²

In response to the second question of the chart about the preferred language to study a textbook 54.3 % people from the age group of 11-20 and 46.6% the age group of 61-70+ pointed to Mising textbook which is higher than other age groups. According to them it is an inevitable duty of every Mising people to study textbooks printed in Mising language. These people have opined that for the responsibility towards their mother tongue that comes to them naturally and for its maintenance and development to keep it alive. Moreover a positive approach towards obtaining education through their own mother tongue and enriching it through practice and expansion of their language and culture is seen among the respective people. Different age groups under 21-60 most people are positive about Mising textbooks. 44.9%, 60.2%, 56.3% and 79.1 %

people of the age groups 21-30, 31-40, 41-50 and 51-60 respectively said in affirmative that they support buying and studying Mising textbooks. According to the people optimistic about the Assamese textbooks consider Assamese as an easy and simple language to read. They are positive about Assamese as they have studied through Assamese language which have been the medium of instruction in government schools since long ago. People who are positive about English think that knowledge of English language is more important than Mising and Assamese language in the current scenario.

Attitude of the Mising community about another two questions related to this is presented in numerical way in the table below-

Table 4: Attitude towards the Mising Language Learning as per Age Group Level – 3

Q#	Question	Response	Age group					
			11-20	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61-70+
			192 (%)	120 (%)	83 (%)	80 (%)	67 (%)	58 (%)
1	Do you think the learning how to read and write the Assamese language is more important than Mising?	Yes	122 (63.5)	71 (59.2)	56 (67.5)	52 (65)	47 (70.1)	38 (65.5)
		No	60 (31.3)	37 (30.8)	22 (26.5)	19 (23.8)	10 (14.9)	15 (25.9)
		Not sure	10 (5.2)	12 (10)	5 (6)	9 (11.3)	10 (14.9)	5 (8.6)
2	Do you think learning how to read and write in Mising useless?	Yes	24 (12.5)	10 (8.3)	6 (7.2)	3 (3.8)	1 (1.5)	5 (8.6)
		No	160 (83.3)	108 (90)	76 (91.6)	76 (95)	65 (97)	53 (91.4)
		Not sure	8 (4.2)	2 (1.7)	1 (1.2)	1 (1.3)	1 (1.5)	–

In response to the first question of the chart about wider range of efficacy of Assamese language than Mising, majority of the Mising community members said, “It is more important to learn Assamese than Mising language”. More than 60% of the people from every age group supported this statement. Since Assamese is used in government education system and in the offices as well, people can get employment opportunity if studied through Assamese medium which they cannot get through Mising. So in Assam they keep Assamese in a higher position as it is widely used and necessary as well. On the other hand according to those who are not agreeing with the statement said, “Mising is our language and not any other language can be more important than one’s mother tongue. Every language is equal and Assamese can be learnt as well while learning Mising language.” On the second question of the chart – ‘Do you consider it is useless to learn Mising?’- 83.3% of the people from the age group of 11-20 and more than 90% of the people from all the other age groups straightaway denied it. Majority of the people have said, “A language is the identity of a community that ensures its existence. So every community should respect their own mother tongue. Respect of a community prevails through reading and writing in their own language. People should never disregard their mother tongue and should exercise

reading and writing in it for its development.” This statement hints about the positive attitude the Mising people have about maintaining their language. On the other hand people who commented it to be useless to learn Mising are conscious about the limited area of utilization of the language.

B. Attitude of the Mising Speech Community on Using the Mising Language in Mass Media

For adequate expansion and development of a language it is very important to get it published and broadcasted among the respective community members through different media. Therefore three questions related to the perception of Mising community on using and developing the language through mass media was included in the questionnaire. All the impulsive questions were followed by another question so that the participants can actively express their viewpoints. Questions were related to their perception on broadcasting programmes in Mising language through television and radio³ and printing newspapers in Mising language and their participation in this sector. Their perception about this topic is presented as per different age groups in numerical way in the table below -

Table 5: Attitude of the Mising Speech Community on Using the Mising Language in Mass Media

Q#	Question	Response	Age group					
			11-20	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61-70+
			192 (%)	120 (%)	83 (%)	80 (%)	67 (%)	58 (%)
1	Do you think we should have radio broadcasting in Mising?	Yes	183 (95.3)	118 (98.3)	83 (100)	80 (100)	67 (100)	58 (100)
		No	9 (4.7)	2 (1.7)	–	–	–	–
		Not sure	1 (0.5)	–	–	–	–	–
	Will you listen to it?	Yes	172 (89.6)	110 (91.7)	78 (94)	77 (96.3)	66 (98.5)	57 (98.3)
		No	2 (1)	–	–	–	–	–
		Not sure	18 (9.4)	10 (8.3)	5 (6)	3 (3.8)	1 (1.5)	1 (1.7)
2	Do you think we should have TV programmes in Mising?	Yes	188 (97.9)	120 (100)	83 (100)	80 (100)	67 (100)	58 (100)
		No	2 (1)	–	–	–	–	–
		No sure	2 (1)	–	–	–	–	–
	Will you watch it?	Yes	171 (89.1)	109 (90.8)	80 (96.4)	74 (92.5)	62 (92.5)	54 (93.1)
		No	2 (1)	–	–	–	–	–
		Not sure	19 (9.9)	11 (9.2)	3 (3.6)	6 (7.5)	5 (7.5)	4 (6.9)
3	Do you think we should have published a news paper in Mising?	Yes	187 (97.4)	119 (99.2)	83 (100)	75 (93.8)	64 (95.5)	54 (93.1)
		No	2 (1)	–	–	–	–	–
		Not sure	3 (1.6)	1 (0.8)	–	5 (6.3)	3 (4.5)	4 (6.9)
	If that type of news paper is published, will you buy and read it?	Yes	135 (70.3)	89 (74.2)	67 (80.7)	50 (62.5)	39 (58.2)	15 (25.9)
		No	3 (1.6)	1 (0.8)	–	4 (5)	3 (4.5)	18 (31)
		Not sure	29 (15.1)	17 (14.2)	12 (14.5)	17 (21.3)	16 (23.9)	16 (27.6)
		If I have money	25 (13)	13 (10.8)	4 (4.8)	9 (11.3)	9 (13.4)	9 (15.5)

From the above table it seems that overall majority of the population is positive about using and developing the language in mass media (radio, television and newspaper). In response to the first question of the chart about broadcasting programmes in Mising language through and radio, more than 95% of the people from each group gave an affirmative answer. Cent percent people above the age of 31 have given a positive response while 95.3% and 98.3% people from the age group of 11-20 and 21-30 have responded positively. People with their growing age seemed to be more interested towards listening to such programmes.

In response to the second question about broadcasting programmes in Mising language through television, 97.9% people from the age group of 11-20 gave an affirmative answer while cent percent people of each group have given a positive response. On the other hand 89.1% from the age group of 11-20 and more than 90% people from every group have responded positively in terms of enjoying and participating in such programmes. Interest towards broadcasting programmes in Mising language through

television and radio seemed to be lower among the people below age 31 in comparison to the older people.

In response to the third question about publishing newspapers in Mising language more than 93% people from every group have responded positively. In this case positive response of the senior people, especially from the age groups of 41-50 and 61-70+ seemed to be 93.8% and 93.1% respectively. On the other hand responses of people while asked about buying and reading Mising newspaper seemed to be positive among the people up to the age of 40 but the graph comes towards ground from the age of 41 till 70+ . This significant characteristic in the senior people's mindset can be an outcome of their lack of educational qualification and their inability to read Mising language.

In general, people seem to be more interested in enjoying programmes in Mising language through television and radio than buying and reading Mising newspaper.

More than 90% people have responded positively about broadcasting and enjoying programmes in Mising language through television and radio. Although 90% people of the total participants have responded positively about publishing newspapers in Mising language, only 65.8% people seemed to be interested in buying and reading it on a regular basis. Their comments are like, "I can't read Mising language", "I don't have a habit of reading newspaper and I can't afford it" etc.. It means that the majority of people are interested to read a newspaper in their own mother tongue, but their academic or financial inability is compelling them to response in negative. Among these three mass media, Mising people are seemed to be equally interested to participate in television and radio while their interest rate significantly drops in case of newspaper.

VI. CONCLUSION

In this study two relevant factors have been discussed about the attitude of Mising speech community for maintenance and development of the language –

- Through the study of Mising community's perspective towards learning the language
- Through Mising community's perspective towards publishing and broadcasting programmes made in Mising language through mass media

From the study it is proved that majority of the people from the respective Mising community hold a positive perspective about learning the language and expansion of education through this language. Mising community's perspective towards broadcasting programmes in Mising language through television and radio for the development of the language is also seemed to be positive. Such results of a study can confirm the answer to the first question that was raised at the very beginning, "Yes, people from the respective Mising speech community hold a positive perspective about learning the language and using it in mass media for maintenance and development of the Mising language."

On the basis of such positive approach we can answer the second question of this research that positive perspective of the Mising community can be very helpful while maintaining and developing the language in near future.

This study has reached to the decisions –

- Every members of the Mising speech community uses mainly both Mising and Assamese language alternatively, starting from domestic life to the vast social life. For such features of using language, they are accepted as bilingual. But in the perspective of various socio-economic reasons, for coming in contact with diverse languages, they are transformed from bilingual to multilingual. Contrary to this, the area of practical application of Mising language is seen to be reduced.
- Majority of the Mising community member hold positive perspective towards learning the language and expansion of education through it along with learning Assamese (73.7% and 80.3% respectively) at the same time. Although there is no noticeable difference found among the Mising people about learning Mising or Assamese language, people seemed to be more

engrossed in learning Assamese. On the other hand people seemed to be more interested in English than Mising (27%) or Assamese (33.5%) as a medium of institutional education.

- According to the age groups the younger people (11-20 years) seemed to be more positive about learning Mising language. As a medium of education majority of the people above the age 40 have preferred Assamese (43.4%) and people below the age 40 have preferred English (35.7).
- 90% people of the Mising community hold a positive perception on using and developing the language through mass media. Growth and development of their own language is imprinted in the psychology of the Mising people. Reflection of more positive mindsets could be seen along with the growing age of the participants.
- It is seen that, currently, the practical need of Mising language is decreased among the new generation of the Mising people. For which in distant future, the language may face great challenge in protecting its existence. For such practice, there might be any changes in the bilingualism of the Mising people and complexities might arise in its maintenance.

REMARKS

Language is the mirror of a race or nation. The extinction of a language means the extinction of the social, cultural, historical and the surrounding knowledge of the language forever. Moreover, if a language extinct, the way of know the knowledge, experiences of the ancestors gathered through ages also gets trapped and they also lose their individual and racial identity. Therefore, it is the call of the hour, for proper study of the languages so that these can attune with present and future. In this case, the integrated linguistic group should try incessantly keeping to the expansion of the languages, keeping in mind the premonition of time. For this, they need to be prepared mentally as well.

As Mising is also a tribal language lighted in spoken form among a limited number of people, therefore, the Mising people should take proper care in the expansion of the language so that it can holster with the prevailing age.

ENDNOTES

¹ Number of English medium schools in the three districts according to the development blocks – (1) Three development blocks of Dhemaji district, such as, Bordoloni, Dhemaji and Murkongselek have 7, 17 and 13 schools respectively; (2) Among the six development blocks of Lakhimpur district Bihpuriya has 4, Bordoloni has 1, Dhakuakhana has 3, Lakhimpur has 15, Nauboicha has 2 and Narayanpur has 5 schools; (3) Among the six development blocks of Jorhat district Central Jorhat has 2, East Jorhat has 1, Jorhat has 13, Majuli has 4, North-west Jorhat has 4 and Titabar has 3 schools.

² According to data received from field study, the sequence of literacy rate among the 600 participants as per the age groups divided for this study is 98.4% > 95.8% > 97.6% > 85.1% > 75% > 43.1%

³ Presently there is a 20 minutes long programme in Mishing language under the title 'Karpung Puli' that is being broadcasted on every Wednesday at 7.15 by the Dibrugarh Radio Centre. In that programme 5 minutes time is allotted for news and musical programmes on Oinitam,

Anunitam, Kaban etc. are broadcasted during the rest 15 minutes. Moreover the DD North-East channel also broadcasts programmes on the culture of various North-Eastern communities.

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