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Effect of shifting orthographic practices of Manipuri Script on millennials

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Abstract

The Manipuri language is spoken by the Manipuri - the inhabitants of Manipur in the north-eastern part of India and is one of the oldest languages in Southeast Asia and the only Sino-Tibetan (Tibeto-Burma) language in India with its script and literature.

The introduction of Hinduism in the year 1732 A.D. marked the end of the Manipuri script meaning the script was replaced by Bengali script. As of 2005, with new government regulations, the lost script is experiencing revival. Additionally, the print industry is changing and major publishers have begun printing in Manipuri script at minimal scale catering to the new generation of readers, but at present majority of the print media are printed in Bengali script thus creating a divide between the Bengali- educated readers and Manipuri-script-educated readers

The objective of this study was to study the extent of digraphia (usage of two or multiple writing systems in one language) in three of the most popular newspapers in the state and the effects that it has on millennial readers. The methods used was both quantitative and qualitative. The study was conducted on senior school students in the city of Imphal, includes interviews and analysis of news articles. The findings revealed that Manipuri script will replace the Bengali script in the near future which sounds good for the millennials but it has

the potential to create adult-illiterates.

Keywords: Orthographic practices, Manipuri script, Millenials

Introduction

“Language is a system of the arbitrary vocal system by which members of a social group cooperate and interact” (Gazetteer of India, Volume 1). Language not only serves as a means of communication but also has a deeper and profound attribute – it serves as an implication for ethnic social and political implications (Shimray, 2000). The existence of various dialects among the various ethnic group is not new and are often seen as their right to use the language. The use of one particular language as the one ‘dominant’ language is often seen in a society that has various ethnic groups, on the other hand; the other ‘minor’ languages are dependent on the ‘dominate’ one. This ‘dominant’ language becomes the language of the majority of the population and causes a threat to the other minor languages. There are numerous cases when the minority languages become extinct throughout the world, for instances – the Adai (Adaize, Adaes), a language that was spoken by a small tribe that lived near the present day Robeline in Natchitoches Parish, Louisiana became extinct in the early 19th century (Sturtevant).

India is one of the most linguistically diverse countries in the world, as many as 780 different languages spoken throughout the country (Service, 2013). Predominantly, the languages in India falls under five families of languages: the Indo-Aryan, the Dravidian, the Austro-Asiatic, the Andamanese and the Sino-Tibetan (Tibeto-Burma). According to the Census of 2001, the Indo-Aryan includes 21 languages with a total population of 75.28%; the Dravidian includes 17 languages with a total population of 22.53%. The Austro-Asiatic includes 14 languages with a total population of 1.13%, the Andamanese which is spoken by a few hundred among the indigenous tribal peoples in the Andaman Islands and the Sino-Tibetan (Tibeto-Burma) with a total population of 0.97%. Further, individual mother tongue in India ranges in several hundred. According to the Census of 1961, there were 1652 languages in India and in the census of 2001 records only shows 122 languages in India wherein 22 languages are spoken by over one million people. The remaining 100 were spoken by more than 10,000 people. Furthermore there are the languages that were not even recorded just because less than 10,000 people spoke them – Census of India, 2001, Statement 1, Part – A (M. Ningamba Singha, 2013). In a country like India where the existence of bilingualism and trilingualism exists both in the rural and the urban areas, one of the reasons may be the fact that when a member or a kin of the family moves from one region to another, they acquire the language of the residence without

giving up the language of their ancestors (Beteille)

Here the paper focuses on the phenomenon of '**digraphia**' which exists in the state today the usage of two different system of writing in the same language. Additionally, the print industry is changing and major publishers have begun printing in Manipuri script at minimal scale catering to the new generation of readers, but at present majority of the print media are printed in Bengali script thus creating a divide between the Bengali- educated-readers and Manipuri-script-educated readers.

1.2 The Manipuri Language

The Manipuri language is spoken by the Manipuri the inhabitants of Manipur in the north-eastern part of India. The Manipuri language is one of the oldest languages in Southeast Asia and also the only Sino-Tibetan (Tibeto-Burma) language in India with its script and literature (Devi, 2002). The language's closest syntactic sibling is the Kachin with SOV structure. Its synonyms are Meeteilon, Meiteiron, and Meithei in the linguistic literature which means 'language of the Manipuris.' T.C. Hodson wrote the word "Meitei" has its origin in two words, "Mei" which means 'man' and "thei" which means 'others.' So, the literal meaning of the word Meitei is the "other man" (Hudson, 1908). The Meitei community has its religion and related ritual practices since ancient times – Sanamahi, this religion has been recently named "Sanamahism," it has its Pantheon of deities and religious philosophy (Ray, 2009)

The state of Manipur is the north-eastern part of India next to the border of Burma/Myanmar; it has a total landmass of 22, 327 sq. Km and lies at an elevation of 790 meters above the sea level. Archaeological remains of Pleistocene men have been

found in the region dating back 40,000 BCE which is much earlier than the Neanderthal Culture of 35,000 BCE which was excavated in Germany (O'Cottage, 2009). Manipur is an ancient land which also serves as the south-eastern tail of the Himalayan belt; the land provides a unique home for 37 diverse ethnolinguistic, Indo-mongoloid communities.

According to the 2001 census, the approximate population of Manipur was 23, 38,684 out of which the total number of the population that speaks Manipuri as their mother tongue was 14, 66,705 (M. Ningamba Singha, 2013). Further, the census report shows that the state of Assam has the highest number of Manipuri speakers outside Manipur with a total of 1, 5 4,059 speakers and the lowest number of the speaker in the states of Chhattisgarh and the Union Territory of

Pondicherry.

The language and the script have enjoyed a very rich history with numerous records and manuscripts written in the original script before the script seal its faith with the introduction of the Bengali script in the 18th century. In the 18th century, a Hindu missionary named Shantidas Gosai during the reign of King Pamheiba pioneered the conversion of the people from its ancient religion of Sanamahi to Hinduism. Under the King's order, the Manipuri script was replaced with the Bengali script, books, and other written materials were incinerated. Those who opposed of the conversions either followed dual religion – Hindu and Sanamahi or they have fled the state to the neighbouring state of modern-day Assam during the conversion (Ray, 2009). According to sources, those who fled the state will later play a very crucial part in the revival of the script which began in the 1940s and the 1950s. The year 2006 marks the milestone of the revival effort, the Manipuri script was introduced as a part of the syllabus from the 1st Grade, and ten years later in 2017, the script will become a part of the syllabus in colleges (Laithangbam, 2017). Earlier the Manipuri language was taught in the Bengali script in school and colleges, even though the Manipuri script of the Manipuri language was also a part of the syllabus it remained as part of an optional paper in MIL (Major Indian Languages) which has been recognized by the CBSE (Central Board of Secondary Education), Board of Secondary Education, Assam;

Guwahati University, Guwahati; Dibrugarh University, Dibrugarh; Calcutta University, Calcutta; Delhi University, Delhi. Manipuri language has been taught as an elective language in the Graduate Level and as a MIL Language in the Post-Graduate, M. Phil and Ph. D (M. Ningamba Singha, 2013).

The transition from the Bengali script to Manipuri script has seen much appreciation from the general public, there exists a serious issue when it comes to the written form of the Manipuri script – Manipuri belong to the Tibeto-Burmese branch of the Sino- Tibetan language family, which completely has no use of the Bengali letters wherein some of the speakers are unable to pronounce correctly (Laithangbam, 2017). The issue arise when words outside the Manipuri vocabulary are used in the written system – transliteration of 'borrowed' words, the 27 letters system of the Manipuri script only has its limitations, for instance, take the example of a name –

‘Stephanie’ this name when it is transliterated in the Manipuri script, the chances of having different versions depending on the writer is very high, resulting in difference in pronunciation of the name, this instances of personalized spellings imposed by university professors on research scholars, books, etc. have aggravated the linguistic problem (Chungkham, 2017).

Literature Review

1. The Origin

Manipuri, being one of the oldest languages in the Southeast Asia has its script and written literature. The language ran orally from mouth to mouth for several centuries and the only first record of the scripted form can be found in the writings of the PUYAS (stories of our forefathers) namely the Cheitharol Kumbaba, the royal chronicle which has been dated to have been written during the reign of King Kiyamba (1467 - 1508) (O'Cottage, 2009).

To answer the question of how old the Manipuri orthography is had yet to be answered but so far as numismatic studies goes, the script is extremely old and origin of this language can be traced back to 1st century A.D. this claim can be verified in the bell- metal coins inscriptions of Wura Konthouba who reigned during CE 568-658 (Singh, 2002) The Manipuri language had been the state language since the 3rd century A.D. in this era coins were struck, royal chronicles were recorded, edicts and copper plates were issued in this language according to Dr Kriti (1980) which were regarded as the first coins issued by the Manipuri king, thus proving the point that the language is as ancient and hence its existence (Devi, 2002).

The PUYAS mentioned above are historical chronicles of the history of Manipur, and they are considered to be written in the archaic Manipuri script which is considered to be the original Manipuri script. The Ningthou Kangbalon, Cheitharol Kumbaba, Ningthourol Lambuba, Poireiton Khunthokpa, Panthoibi Khongkul, etc. to name a few are some of the chronicles. The contents of these PUYAS were the historical accounts from the eyes and the judgments of the Manipuri Kings (Lalit). These PUYAS recorded the events of each King that ruled Manipur that spanned for more than 3500 years until 1955 AD with a total of 108 kings. Ningthou (King) Kangba (15th century BC) is regarded as the first and the foremost king. Sources from the

PUYAS claim that the present day Manipur was known by many names at various points in history, some of the names are Tilli-Koktong, Sanna-Leipak (land of gold), Meitei-Leipak (land of the Meeteis or Manipuris), Meitrabak (land of the Meeteis or Manipuris) and the present day – Manipur.

2. The Fall

In spite having a very rich history and linages, the Manipuri language is no stranger to centuries of evolution regarding oral and written forms. The Manipuri language had to go through a major script change during the 18th century. The year 1732 A.D. marked the end of the Manipuri script, from what happened in this period will forever change the usage and the authenticity of the Manipuri script. To begin with, Hinduism was slowly trickling in Manipur through Assam and Bengal in the 15th and 16th century, in 1727, a Hindu missionary from Bengal came to Manipur to preach Hindu Vaishnavism, during the reign of the Manipuri King Pamheiba (1708 – 1747 A.D.). Later in 1737 A.D., he decided to convert himself to the Ramanandi Sect of Vaishnavism with the help of Shantidas Gosai, a preacher from Sylhet which is now in present day Bangladesh. He ordered the all his subjects to do the same, all those who opposed to his orders were exiled. In the October of 1732 A.D., he ordered the incineration of the PUYAS. This is known as the PUYA MEITHABA which means the “burning of the PUYAS” (Lalit). PUYAS literary means the “stories of the forefathers”. Those who opposed the king’s ordered fled the land and whatever remains of the Manipuri script was hidden away to be saved from the wrath of the king (Ray, 2009). These settlements will later play a major role in the revival of the script in the middle of the 20th century. “One example, "Ke ke kru moirang kekru nacha namba sangai namba yotgi porol laigi shamchet..." may be translated as "something written has been kept concealed in the hands of Moirangs [name of a Meitei clan], and it should be told to your sons or sons-in-laws, not to your relatives." Another such proverb, "Houroubigi hingolda lashing polang phoubani yen shokani konnaraba ting" may be rendered as "O men of the future, something has been secretly preserved for you in the land where the hill people dwell so that it does not come to the king's attention. If the king knows one could get hurt." Older people in the community explain these proverbs point to the fact that the ancient script of the Meitei people was preserved as a closely guarded secret, especially from the attention of the royal establishment who at that time supported Bengali script. These stories

belong to the oral historical traditions of the community and are not found in any written records, such as the royal chronicle.⁶ These untold stories are not the "official history" of the Meitei society" (Ray, 2009).

What happened after the intervention of the Hindu helped shaped the modern day social-cultural and religious identity of Manipuris. Following the introduction of Hindu, the Manipuri people adopted two religion, in the daily lives of a Manipuri, the south-west corner of every house is kept exclusively for the Sanamahi god, and an important note to be made here is that there is no idol worship. Surprisingly, every Manipuri house will have a Tulsi plant in the centre of the courtyard, as it is considered to be a representation of the Brinda Devi, which is a deity worshiped in the Vaishnavite faith. (Ray, 2009)

3. The Revival

The revival of the Manipuri language has a lot of social, political, cultural and historical elements that have been intertwined rather in an erratic fashion which involves the British Rule after the defeat of the Manipuri kings in 1891 AD during the Anglo- Manipuri war of Khongjom there after Manipur became a part of the Bengal Presidency and later the Assam Province, the Nehru language policy, adoption of the English language as the medium of education, etc. The revival movement of the Manipuri script came about in the 1940s, and the 1950s, a cultural rethinking of the Manipuri community who settled in the Cachar district of Assam led to the movement. The pioneering Figure of this movement was Naoriya Phullo; he is considered to be the first person to envision the establishment of the ancient Manipuri faith for the Manipuri community without the influences of Hinduism. This particular movement has become one of the most important parts of the revival process and will have a huge impact in the Manipuri community (Ray, 2009).

After the Independence of India in 1947, Manipur became part of the newly formed Indian union but the history behind this merger remains complicated, according to some scholars after the independence the Manipur Constituency Act of 1947 was established meaning that there would be a democratic form of government with the Maharaja as the Executive Head of an elected legislature. Later in 1949, the then king of Manipur – Maharaja Budhachandra was ordered to be present at Shillong which was the then capital of present day Assam which ended up in a controversial annexation of the state of the Republic of India in the October of 1949.

Manipur became a Union Territory in 1956 and later in 1972 became a state with Muhammad Alimuddin as the first Chief Minister (1972 - 1974).

After the establishment of the state the Manipuri in 1972, the Manipuri community came to realize to recognize them within the nation; there should be the inclusion of

the Manipuri language in the Indian Constitution. At the same time, the Manipuris realized that they need to revive the long lost original writing script (Ray, 2009).

4. The Script

At the time of revival, several disputes broke out within the Manipuri community, the main reason being the orthography of the “authentic script” (Ray, 2009). It gets even more complicated when two version of the script was put forward by two factions of the Manipuri community were completely different – they were the thirty five letter system and the twenty seven letter system. The former had Sanskrit writing system, and the letters were grouped according to the point of articulation as shown in Figure 1.1

Velar	Ke 𑜀𑜂𑜆𑜐	Khe 𑜀𑜂𑜆𑜐𑜃𑜫	Ge 𑜀𑜂𑜆𑜐𑜃𑜫𑜃𑜫	Ghe 𑜀𑜂𑜆𑜐𑜃𑜫𑜃𑜫𑜃𑜫	Ne 𑜀𑜂𑜆𑜐𑜃𑜫𑜃𑜫𑜃𑜫𑜃𑜫
Palatal	Ce 𑜀𑜂𑜆𑜐𑜃𑜫𑜃𑜫	Che 𑜀𑜂𑜆𑜐𑜃𑜫𑜃𑜫𑜃𑜫	Je 𑜀𑜂𑜆𑜐𑜃𑜫𑜃𑜫𑜃𑜫𑜃𑜫	Jhe 𑜀𑜂𑜆𑜐𑜃𑜫𑜃𑜫𑜃𑜫𑜃𑜫𑜃𑜫	Ne 𑜀𑜂𑜆𑜐𑜃𑜫𑜃𑜫𑜃𑜫𑜃𑜫𑜃𑜫𑜃𑜫
Retroflex	Te 𑜀𑜂𑜆𑜐𑜃𑜫𑜃𑜫𑜃𑜫	The 𑜀𑜂𑜆𑜐𑜃𑜫𑜃𑜫𑜃𑜫𑜃𑜫	De 𑜀𑜂𑜆𑜐𑜃𑜫𑜃𑜫𑜃𑜫𑜃𑜫	Dhe 𑜀𑜂𑜆𑜐𑜃𑜫𑜃𑜫𑜃𑜫𑜃𑜫𑜃𑜫	Ne 𑜀𑜂𑜆𑜐𑜃𑜫𑜃𑜫𑜃𑜫𑜃𑜫𑜃𑜫𑜃𑜫
Dental	Te 𑜀𑜂𑜆𑜐𑜃𑜫𑜃𑜫𑜃𑜫	The 𑜀𑜂𑜆𑜐𑜃𑜫𑜃𑜫𑜃𑜫𑜃𑜫	De 𑜀𑜂𑜆𑜐𑜃𑜫𑜃𑜫𑜃𑜫𑜃𑜫	Dhe 𑜀𑜂𑜆𑜐𑜃𑜫𑜃𑜫𑜃𑜫𑜃𑜫𑜃𑜫	Ne 𑜀𑜂𑜆𑜐𑜃𑜫𑜃𑜫𑜃𑜫𑜃𑜫𑜃𑜫
Labial	Pe 𑜀𑜂𑜆𑜐𑜃𑜫𑜃𑜫𑜃𑜫	Phe 𑜀𑜂𑜆𑜐𑜃𑜫𑜃𑜫𑜃𑜫𑜃𑜫	Be 𑜀𑜂𑜆𑜐𑜃𑜫𑜃𑜫𑜃𑜫𑜃𑜫	Bhe 𑜀𑜂𑜆𑜐𑜃𑜫𑜃𑜫𑜃𑜫𑜃𑜫𑜃𑜫	Me 𑜀𑜂𑜆𑜐𑜃𑜫𑜃𑜫𑜃𑜫𑜃𑜫𑜃𑜫
Glides/Liquids	Ae 𑜀𑜂𑜆𑜐𑜃𑜫𑜃𑜫𑜃𑜫	Ye 𑜀𑜂𑜆𑜐𑜃𑜫𑜃𑜫𑜃𑜫𑜃𑜫	Re 𑜀𑜂𑜆𑜐𑜃𑜫𑜃𑜫𑜃𑜫𑜃𑜫	Le 𑜀𑜂𑜆𑜐𑜃𑜫𑜃𑜫𑜃𑜫𑜃𑜫	We 𑜀𑜂𑜆𑜐𑜃𑜫𑜃𑜫𑜃𑜫𑜃𑜫𑜃𑜫
Fricative	e 𑜀𑜂𑜆𑜐𑜃𑜫𑜃𑜫𑜃𑜫	Se 𑜀𑜂𑜆𑜐𑜃𑜫𑜃𑜫𑜃𑜫𑜃𑜫	She 𑜀𑜂𑜆𑜐𑜃𑜫𑜃𑜫𑜃𑜫𑜃𑜫	He 𑜀𑜂𑜆𑜐𑜃𑜫𑜃𑜫𑜃𑜫𑜃𑜫	Kshe 𑜀𑜂𑜆𑜐𑜃𑜫𑜃𑜫𑜃𑜫𑜃𑜫𑜃𑜫

Figure 1.1, The Thirty-five letter alphabet

As shown in the Figures the velar sounds are the ones that are pronounced from the back of the mouth, palatal sounds are pronounced with the tongue against the roof of the mouth, retroflex sounds are pronounced with the tongue curled back and the dental sounds are produced with the tip of the tongue touching the back of the teeth, labial sounds are pronounced with the lips starting together and the fricative sounds are

pronounced such as “s”, “sh”, and “h” and the aspirated sounds are pronounced with extra air exhaled (Ray, 2009).

The latter, the twenty seven letter system (Figure 1.2) is based on a completely different logic – the letters are arranged in such a way that it represents the different part of the body, not a male or a female but the anthromorphic manifestation of the HIGH GOD of the ancient Manipuri religion – Taibangpanba Mapu. The philosophy behind this letter system is found in the PUYA of Wakoklon Hilel Thilel Salai Amilon Puyok Puya. This system is composed of eighteen primary letters and nine additional ones, the first eighteen letters mentioned are arranged in such a way that it follows the parts of the body and the nine additional ones are derived from them. This arrangement follows a religious philosophy; the letters are referred by the names of the body parts.

Kok 𑜀𑜂𑜆𑜐	Sam 𑜇𑜡	Lai 𑜄𑜡
Mit 𑜀𑜃𑜆𑜐	Pa 𑜀𑜃𑜆𑜐	Na 𑜄𑜡
Chil 𑜀𑜃𑜆𑜐	Til 𑜀𑜃𑜆𑜐	Khou 𑜀𑜃𑜆𑜐
Ngou 𑜀𑜃𑜆𑜐	Thou 𑜀𑜃𑜆𑜐	Wai 𑜀𑜃𑜆𑜐
Yang 𑜀𑜃𑜆𑜐	Huk 𑜀𑜃𑜆𑜐	Un 𑜀𑜃𑜆𑜐
li 𑜀𑜃𑜆𑜐	Pham 𑜀𑜃𑜆𑜐	Atiya 𑜀𑜃𑜆𑜐
Gok 𑜀𑜃𑜆𑜐	Jham 𑜀𑜃𑜆𑜐	Rai 𑜀𑜃𑜆𑜐
Ba 𑜀𑜃𑜆𑜐	Jil 𑜀𑜃𑜆𑜐	Dil 𑜀𑜃𑜆𑜐
Ghou 𑜀𑜃𑜆𑜐	Dhou 𑜀𑜃𑜆𑜐	Bham 𑜀𑜃𑜆𑜐

Figure 1.2 the Twenty-seven letter alphabet

Even though the thirty five letter system was approved and supported by almost all the academicians in the state, which includes linguists and archaeologists, the state voted for the twenty seven letter system, which from thereon became the official Manipuri alphabet.

The political and cultural feud with the Government of India and the people of Manipur did not end here, years and decades after the establishment of the Manipuri alphabet, the language was not recognized in the Eight Schedule of the Indian Constitution until 10th August 1992, according to the 71st Amendment of the Indian Constitution, prior to this recognition the language was accepted by the Sahitya Academi in 1971. There are multiple papers and articles written on what so called “suppression of language” is looking into why the language was not included for so long. U.A. Shimray wrote in *Economic and Political Weekly* (August 19, 2000, p. 3008) the geographical, linguistic distribution of the major languages in India forms a perfect scheme of linguistic regions, thus forming linguistic recognition of states (Shimray, 2000). The article argues that for the North-eastern region of India, the state recognition is neither based on linguistic nor the ethnicity, it followed the colonial division based on administrative convenience. This is proved by the fact the today the Naga inhabitants fall into four states – Nagaland, Assam, Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh, further the language classification of the region is argued – according to the Indian language classification, the population of the region belongs to Mongoloid, speaking Sino-Tibetan and Austric languages and dialects but this claim is questioned by the fact that language matrix of the north-eastern region is made up of a number of polyglots – meaning a person who understands and can use several languages, it is not only a different language but from different families of languages. John Samuel wrote, after the Independence of India, either the policy makers lacked an adequate knowledge of the complex socio-linguistic complexity that exists in this region and also the problem of nationality, or they were naïve about the linguistic and the nationality issue. As a result, the people in this region even though they were integrated as a part of India, emotionally, culturally, linguistically they remained alienated from the pan-India national ethos especially in the states of Mizoram and Nagaland. In contrast to the political and linguistic problems that was put on top of Manipuri script, he wrote that Manipur is one of the less alienated nationalities in the region and culturally and emotionally more attached to the pan-India national ethos (Samuel, 1993).

The previous part focuses on the historical aspect of the language, bringing the focus to the objective of the research – the usage of two different writing system in Manipuri language. The study is based on the observation of script choice in newspapers and books that are being circulated and prescribed in the state for the Manipuri speakers, interviews with the State

Official and Linguists from Manipur University and surveys. The newspapers mentioned are the ones which are widely popular and the most circulated in the state. The study will also reveal the signs of inconsistencies in the written orthography of the Manipuri script and also chances of adult illiteracy among the Manipuris.

DIGRAPHIA is the term used to describe a phenomenon where in multiple writing systems are brought into use within the same community (Zima, 1974) (Dale, 1980) (Francis, 1984) which is an analogy to DIGLOSSIA (A, 1959) – where there is coexistence of two varieties of the same language throughout a speech community, in such situations one language becomes the dominant or the prestige dialect and the other becomes the common dialect spoken by the majority of the population. (Britannica.com).

The study on the usage of multiple scripts has only come to life recently, linguists usually don't pay attention to written language use, and even if they do, they do not give much importance to it, rather a substitution to the spoken language when the written data is not available (Angermeyer, 2005). Nonetheless, in recent years, sociolinguists have come to realize the importance of the written language as the variability in orthography was discovered to be a socially conditioned phenomenon. (Angermeyer, 2005). The variation in the script in DIGRAPHIC occurs on the global scale, for example, the variation in the Japanese writing system (Smith & Schmidt, 1996). However, (Fishman, 1967) argues that the extension of DIGLOSSIA can also involve what he called the "digraphia with bilingualism" which he explained that the language contact involves two languages that are commonly written in different scripts, as a matter of fact, this has been the case in a number of language contacts in the world (Angermeyer, 2005), only a few studies have been conducted on the variation in the script, for instance –

the involvement of English in contact with the Hebrew (Lubell, 1993) and again with the Chinese (Cheung & Li) and also with the languages in the Indian subcontinent – while examining the written data in Bangladesh, the term GRAPHOLOGICAL CODE-SWITCHING was used by Banu and Sussex (Banu & Sussex, 2001). In this situation of language contacts – the written texts become bilinguals, meaning these written texts are produced which include the elements from both languages and use both writing systems. This will turn out to be significantly relevant in the case of this study because further observations in the Manipuri writing system show inconsistencies in the spelling. There seems to be little

attention given phenomenon where there is alteration or mixture of two different writing system from the linguist. For instance, cited in (Angermeyer, 2005) Jill Gazda used the term GRAPHICAL TRANSPLANTATION describing the occasional occurrence of Roman Scripts in the Russian texts.

Moving further into the system of using two writing systems in the same language, (Angermeyer, 2005) in this study: Spelling Bilingualism: Script choice among the Russian American Classified Ads and Signage, he investigated the role of script choice in bilingual writing by Russian –speaking immigrants in New York City focusing on the usage of English origin texts that appears in Russian texts which are found to be written either in Roman or Cyrillic script, based on this research, similar scenario can be found in the writing system of the Manipuri writing system where in English words in English orthography are found along with the Manipuri writing system.

Code switching, in the majority of the studies, always been focused on the spoken language and in conversations, but it is very clear that multilingualism is also present in writing discourse. Other researches have applied theories of multilingualism and code-switching to written data, but most of the theoretical and methodological data have focused on spoken data, but this can be applied to the written form, but it raises more questions than answers and have to be taken into consideration (Angermeyer, 2005). Mark Sebba has argued that to study the cases of multilingualism in writing there should be a framework that must be coherent for researchers (Angermeyer, 2005). Herbert

Schendl presented a survey of two different genres: Old English charters and Middle English sermons which are both surviving in manuscript format, the analysis has discussion on both formal and the functional features of the texts, showing how multilingualism in writing was a widely used and non-stigmatized strategy in medieval Britain (Schendl, 2011).

Peter Unseth made his remark on DIGRAPHIA, “There can be multiple scripts used for a single language because there is no one-to-one correspondence between a language and a script, their relationship being an indirect one.” In this context, Unseth mentioned that a script could be more easily replaced than a language and the fact that every society may not have a script but one language can have multiple scripts (Unseth). (Berlanda, 2006) Elena Berlada in her paper, New Perspective on Digraphia mentioned a phenomenon – ‘dominate’ and ‘unique

script', she mentioned that the dominant script is the one that is being used by more than one language, for instance the Roman script which has the strongest dominance and this dominance has increased in the past centuries where in the Roman script has been adopted by variety of indigenous communities in South America, Africa and Asia through the colonializations and imperialism but what has increased the dominance of the Roman script has not only the number of languages but also the fact that these languages in Roman are genetically not related to each other. On the other hand, the Cyrillic script has the weaker dominance of writing system, they are still used in several languages, but they have a generic relationship with Russian which may not be the case in case of Roman mentioned above. So, she mentioned that a script could become weakly-dominant as soon as it is used by two or more languages but the dominance increases with the number of languages using it and with the absences of genetic relationship between them. She further explained the characteristics of what is called a "unique script," a unique script is a script which came into existence through invention and is used by the only language (Berlanda, 2006) and this can be applied in the case of Manipuri script because it is only used by one language the Manipuri. They (unique script) are usually affected by the death of the script since is always the danger of the language using the script

may die out. She mentioned the term 'script death,' and further points out that script death can happen when the user decides at some point in history to decides to replace the script with another script from another language and since this script was only used by one language eventually the death of the script.

Further, the death of a language is not easily reversible but the death of a script does not imply that the script will vanish forever, the nature of writing the script makes it much easier to be revived than the language, theoretically speaking it will be possible to choose any death script to write any language (Berlanda, 2006).

A similar situation of DIGRAPHIA occurs in the India as well; such is the case of using the Devanagari script in writing Arabic. Traditionally, Urdu has been used in writing Arabic and Hindi is written in Devanagari. This choice of shifting orthography among the Muslim community is found to be socially constituted (Ahmad, 2011). This research brings the question of linguistic identity – as a matter of fact, according to the research, the Muslims in India has no longer view the Arabic script as a necessity, let alone a defining script for the Muslim

community, elements of Urdu and Devanagari is believed not to be contrary to Urdu and their Muslim identity.

Further, the paper also proves that some of the features of the Urdu has been lost but many of them were preserved. The Muslims are making Urdu-in-Devanagari different from the Hindi even though the differences are a minute. The study also focuses on one of the crucial phenomena that are relevant in the Manipuri language – the transliteration of the Bengali script to the Manipuri script, similarly transliteration also occurs between the Arabic and the Devanagari script. To give you a bigger picture, the study narrowed the focus down to the transliteration of a religious book – Ahadis, which is a religious book that contains the narration of Prophet Mohammad, this book was originally published in the Arabic script and has been transliterated in the Devanagari script. This transliterated version has become more famous among the younger generation of Muslims also shows that most of the bookstores in Old Delhi sells books written in both Arabic and Devanagari writing system.

These coexistence of Arabic and the Devanagari writing system particularly in areas of Old Delhi which is a radical change in the practices of orthography has been the influences and changes in the political, social and the education system – it goes a long way back – first the Urdu in postcolonial discourse became associated with Pakistan and Muslim separatist, second, Urdu became stigmatize as the language of the uneducated, poor and ghettoized Muslim community and third, even though Urdu was recognized by the Constitution, due to the distorted implementation of the language policy, the opportunities to learn Urdu in government schools in North India are almost non-existent and finally and finally, literacy practices involving Devanagari are viewed as patriotic and nationalistic due to its association with Hindi.

5. Problem Statement

As from the above literature reviews, it is very clear that the usage of two or multiple scripts is not a new phenomenon and it is and has been occurring throughout history. Many types of research have been done on the history, the cosmology and the orthography of the script, but it seems that there haven't been any researches done on this particular phenomenon of digraphia – the usage of the Bengali script and the Manipuri script on the same language. Moreover, most specifically the digraphia in mass media – many of the newspapers, advertisements, magazines, and signages have slowly been replaced with the Manipuri script; newspapers have begun printing newspapers in multiple scripts – English, Bengali, and the Manipuri. It sounds rationale, but the problem arises when the two scripts – the Manipuri and the Bengali scripts are used in the same newspapers –printing different news stories. Thus, creating a divide among the readers.

The problem does not end with the printing of newspapers in multiple scripts. The script which is relatively new compared to its introduction, has many problems in its spellings, according to scholars and experts, the 27 alphabet system is only sufficient for writing the language within the Manipuri vocabulary and in cases where the need to write what are known as ‘borrowed words’, different people have different version of writing. This personalized ‘spelling’ has caused much stir among the language experts, scholars and authorities. Following similar cases of digraphia, this study intends to analyse the intermixing of the two writing system and also investigate the extent of the problem in writing ‘borrowed words’ in the Manipuri orthography.

2. Methodology

2.1. Rationale

The usage of two writing system has the possibility to create a social divide among the Manipuris. The local newspapers are embracing this change and publishers have started publishing newspapers that are printed in two scripts, but here comes the problem, there are instances where different news stories are printed in either of the scripts – for instance take A as a story in the newspaper and it is only printed in Bengali script, and B is also another story in the same paper but it is printed in Manipuri script, so a clear, confusing situation arises, those who can read the Bengali will only have comprehended news A and not news B and vice versa. Another situation is that two version of the same stories are printed in the same newspaper but are in different scripts.

Apart from the analysis of newspaper's stories, this study also focuses on the orthography inconsistencies of the Manipuri script. This inconsistency in the orthography of the script is highly visible in the textbooks that are prescribed in schools as a part of the syllabus by the State's education boards.

2.2. Objective

With an intention to identify the nature of usage of written language in print media, the objectives of this research were:

- To study the extent of digraphia in newspapers, taking an example from three of the most popular newspapers in the state – The Sangai Express, The Poknapham, and Hueiyen Lanpao.
- To investigate the effects on millennials.
- To investigate the extent of orthographic inconsistencies in the script.

2.3. Method

The study consist of both quantitative and qualitative analysis, the quantitative research consists do surveys from high school students, the rationale behind this was high school students will be graduating only with the knowledge of Manipuri script and not the Bengali script, these students makes the perfect source of information to find out the extend of inclusion of inconsistencies in the spelling system of the Manipuri writing system that has been the subject of discussion in the state and among scholars. Further, the survey also focuses on the popularity of the script in

using this script among the students outside their education environment such as in social media. A total of 100 samples were collected, in the process of filtering the, nine were found to be void, so a final sample of 91 formed the foundation of the quantitative study. For the qualitative analysis, newspapers are analysed using multiple masthead and advertisements.

2.4. Study Area

The study was conducted in Imphal, the capital of Manipur.

2.5. Sampling

The research includes data collected from 100 high school students, in-depth interview with an official spokesperson from the Directorate of Language Planning and Implementation, Government of Manipur, which is the governing body responsible for the implementation of the script. Another interview with a professor from Manipur University, news reports and advertisements from three of the most popular newspapers in the state.

2.6. Sampling Technique

The research involved both quantitative and qualitative method of sampling. The quantitative sample consists of survey data was collected from St. Joseph School, Imphal. Out of 100 samples, nine were later found to be void, so the final sample is at

91. The qualitative data consists of newspaper's mast heads, news reports, advertisements and interviews. The interviewee from the interview with the official from the Directorate of Language Planning and Implementation, Government of Manipur is Santosh Sanasam and the professor from Manipur University is Prof Yashawanta Chungkham from the Department of Linguistic, Manipur University. These interviews were unscripted

4. Data analysis and Interpretation

4.1 Quantitative Analysis

To get a fair idea on the extends of the problem statement mentioned above such as – the inconsistency in the spellings of the script printed in the books, the inconvenience of using two different scripts in the same language, etc. A survey was conducted consisting students of ages between 14 and 17 years, who were taught in English medium but as a part of the syllabus, the Manipuri script has been included. To avoid any bias, no knowledge of how many of them had chosen Manipuri as their language of choice and how many haven't were disclosed.

1. Gender distribution of the respondents

To get an approximate gender distribution of the respondents from the sample, the chart on Figure no. 3.1 shows the result.

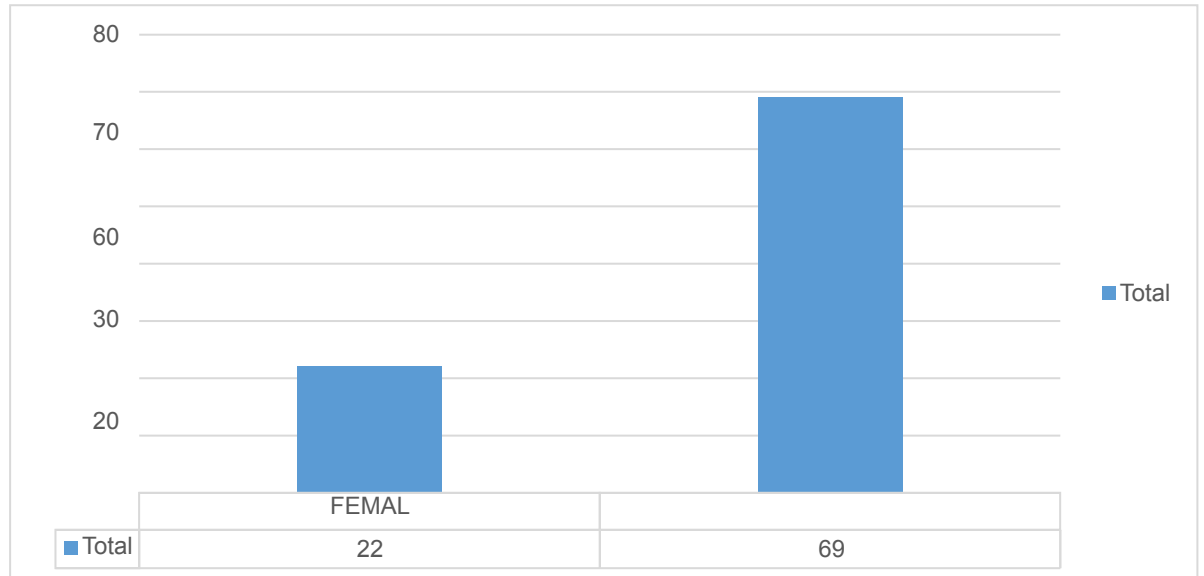


Figure 3.1: Gender distribution of the respondents

Interpretation: Out of 91 students with ages ranging from 14 to 17, the male respondents were 69, and the female respondents were 22. Here, the fact that the samples of the male are more than the female is because the school from which the data was collected had a system in which there are only male students up to the 10th standard and in the 11th and the 12th standard it is co-ed. Since the target samples were between the students who have been taught only in the Manipuri script, which is from the 2006 batch, it is appropriate to say that even though there is quite a difference in the genders the resulting data will have little or effect.

2. Ethnicity distribution of the respondents

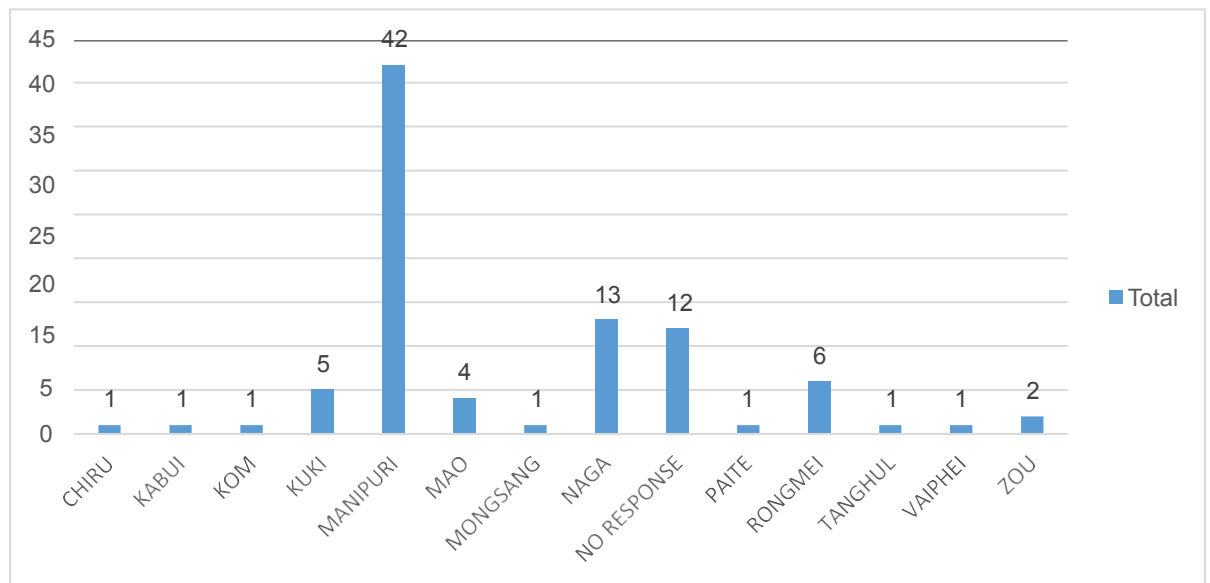


Figure 3.2: Ethnicity distribution of the respondents

Interpretation: Out of the total samples of 91 as seen in Figure 3.2, the majority of the respondents were from the Manipuri community with a total number of 42 respondents, the Naga community comes second with a total of 13 responses. Much to the surprise, 12 respondents have decided to leave the question of Ethnicity with no responses, the reason may differ from person to person, and the interpretation may be many, but it is either they did not get the question, which may sound surprising to a layman but there are cases of inter-ethnicity marriages wherein the partners are from different ethnic background, thus leaving the child not knowing which ethnic group he/she should choose. Rongmei has 6, the Kuki is next with 5, Mao with 4, and Zou with 2 and Chiru, Kabui, Kom, Mongsang, Paite, Tangkhul, Vaphei has one respondent respectively.

3. Correlation of gender, ethnicity and the number of respondents

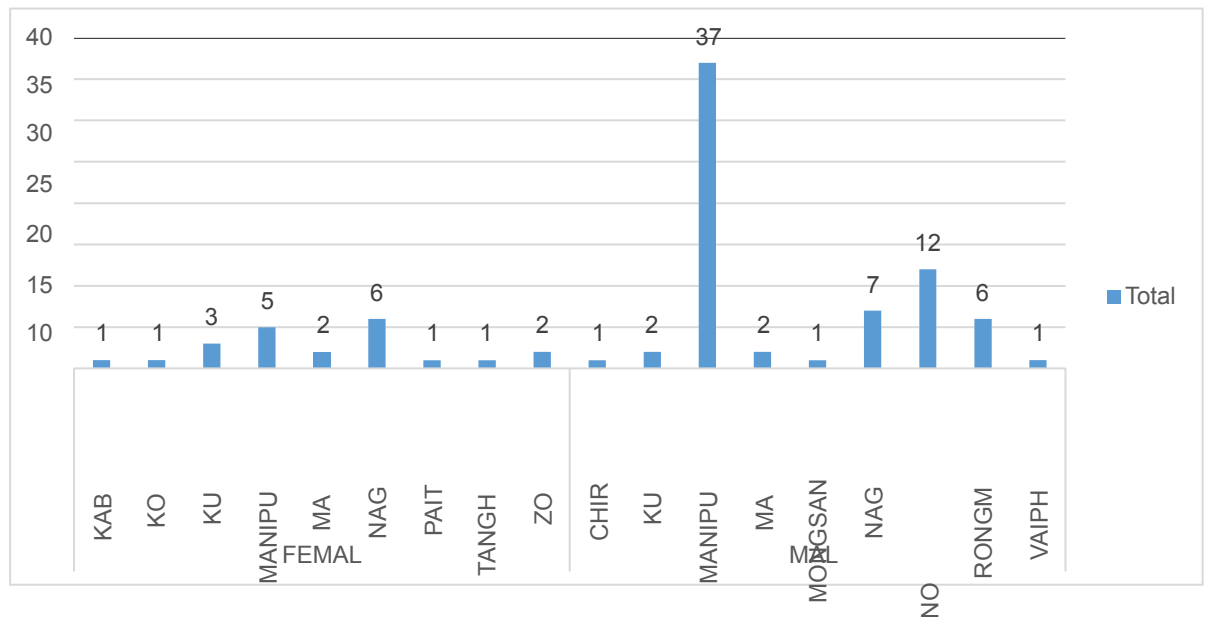


Figure 3.3: Correlation of gender, ethnicity and the number of respondents

Interpretation: As seen from Figure 3.3, the majority of the respondents are Manipuris with a total of 42 in total with 37 males and five females. This is quite normal because the sample was collected in Imphal, where the majority of the Manipuri speaker settle. The rest of the respondents includes students from other ethnic communities. Mentioning from the findings again, these other ethnic groups are

- KABUI, KOM, KUKI, MAO, NAGA, PAITE, TANKHUL, ZOU, CHIRU, MONGSANG, RONGMEI, AND VAPHEI. From the female respondents the distribution of respondents are as follows – KABUI -1, KOM -1, KUKI -3, MANIPURI – 3, MAO – 2, NAGA – 6, PAITE – 1, TANKHUL – 1 and ZOU – 1, similarly from the male respondents the distribution is as follows – CHIRU – 1, KUKI, 1, MANIPURI – 37, MAO – 2, MONGSANG – 1, NAGA – 1, RONGMEI – 6, VAPHEI – 1.

Surprisingly, as mentioned above, there was a situation wherein, the respondents chose to leave the Ethnicity question – blank, 12 in total from the male respondents, this can either mean two things – either the respondents weren't sure of their ethnicity either

due to the fact that there are cases of inter-ethnic marriages or to put it simple perspective – they didn't get the question.

4. Gender and religion distribution

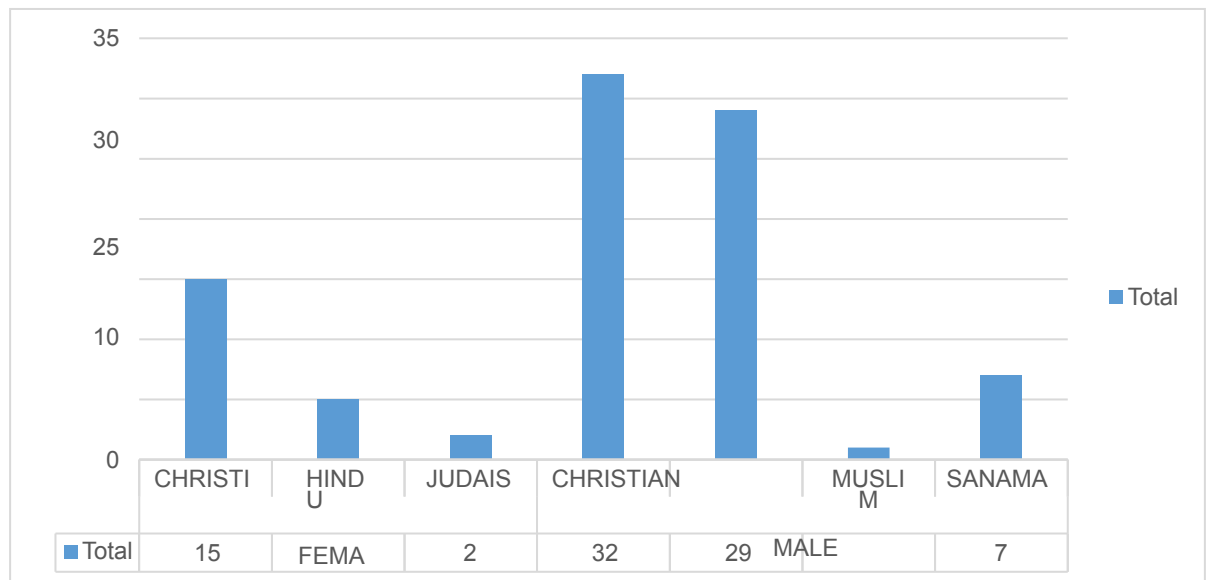
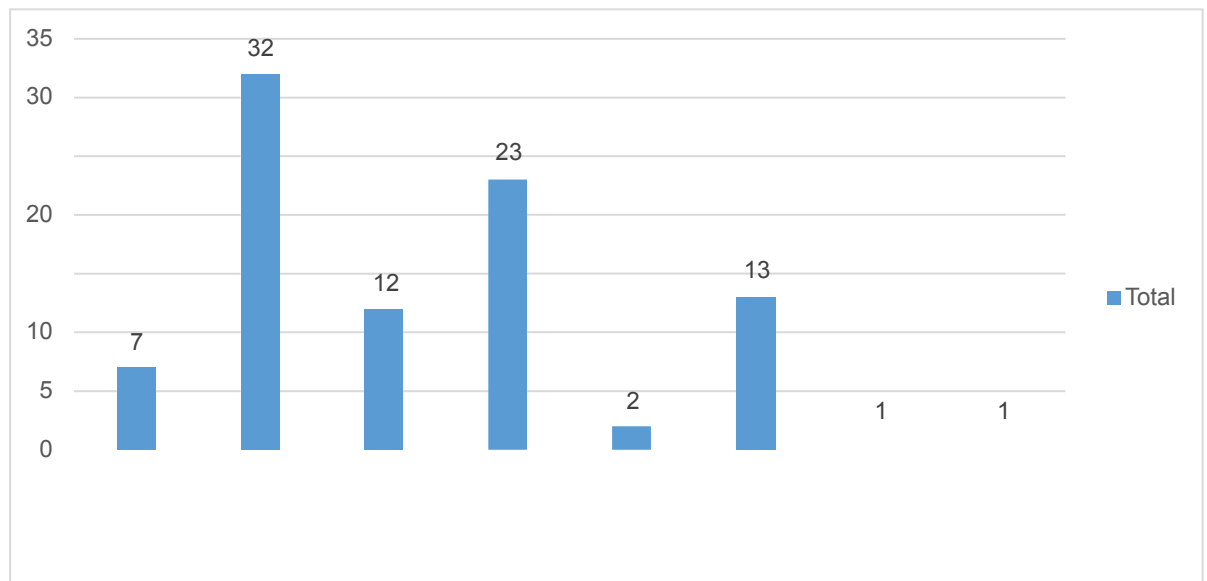


Figure 3.4: Gender and religion distribution

Interpretation: Out of 91 samples collected, the distribution of the Christian religion is greater than the rest of the other religions. From the data, it can be seen that the total number of Christians among the female respondents are 15, followed by Hindu counting at 5 and followed by Judaism at 2. Among the male respondents, again 32 belongs to the Christian religion followed by 29 Hindu, 1 Muslim and seven from Sanamahi- which is the ancient traditional religion of Manipur. So in total, there are a total of 47 Christians, 34 Hindus, 1 Muslim, 2 Judaism and 7 Sanamahi.

The large number of the Christians may be the fact that the sample was taken from a Christian missionary school, but this is a hypothesis, there is no concrete data that can prove this. The study is in the script, not religion.

5. Income distribution concerning gender (estimate monthly income)



FEMALE MALE 10,000 TO 25,000	FEMALE MALE 25,000 TO 50,000	FEMALE MALE 50,000 TO 75,000	MALE 75,000 TO 1 LAKH	FEMA LE ABOV E 1 LAKH
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Figure 3.5: Gender distribution of income

INTERPRETATION: To get a fair idea on the socio-economic background of the students, the data of their estimate monthly income were collected. The choices given to them were – Rs. 10,000 to Rs. 25,000; Rs. 25,000 to Rs. 50,000; Rs. 50,000 to Rs. 75,000 to Rs. 1 Lakh and finally above Rs. 1 Lakh which are the estimated monthly incomes of their families. Through filtering the data, seven female respondents and 32 male respondents had an income of between Rs. 10,000 to Rs. 25,000; 12 female respondents and 23 male respondents had an income of between Rs. 25,000 to 50,000; 2 females and 13 males chose the income between Rs. 50,000 to Rs. 75,000; only one male and one female had an estimated family income of 75,000 to 1 Lakh and above 1 Lakh respectively.

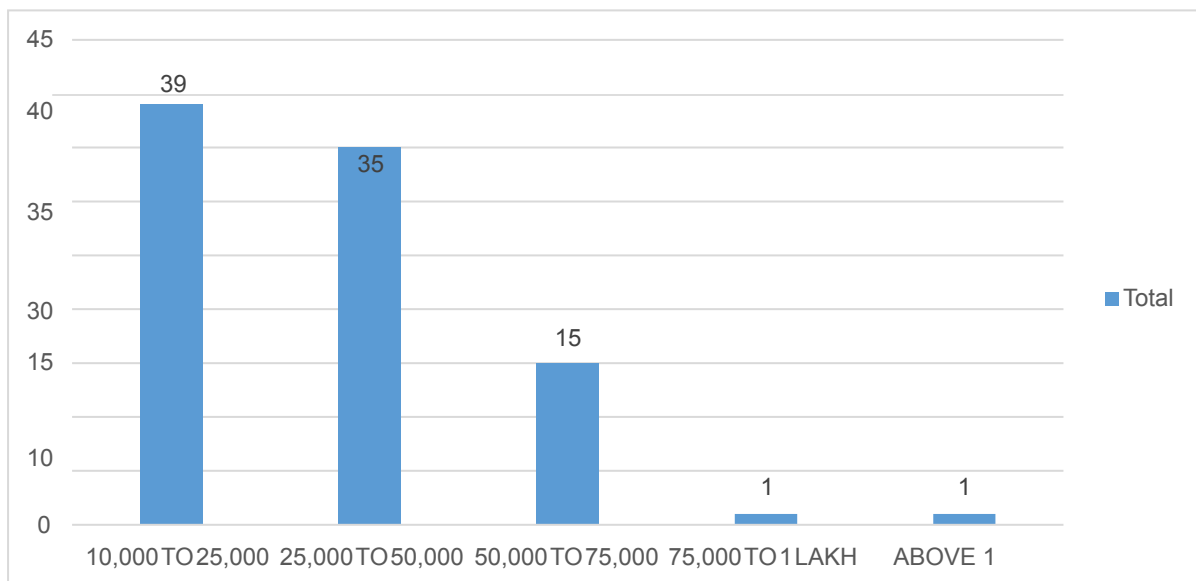
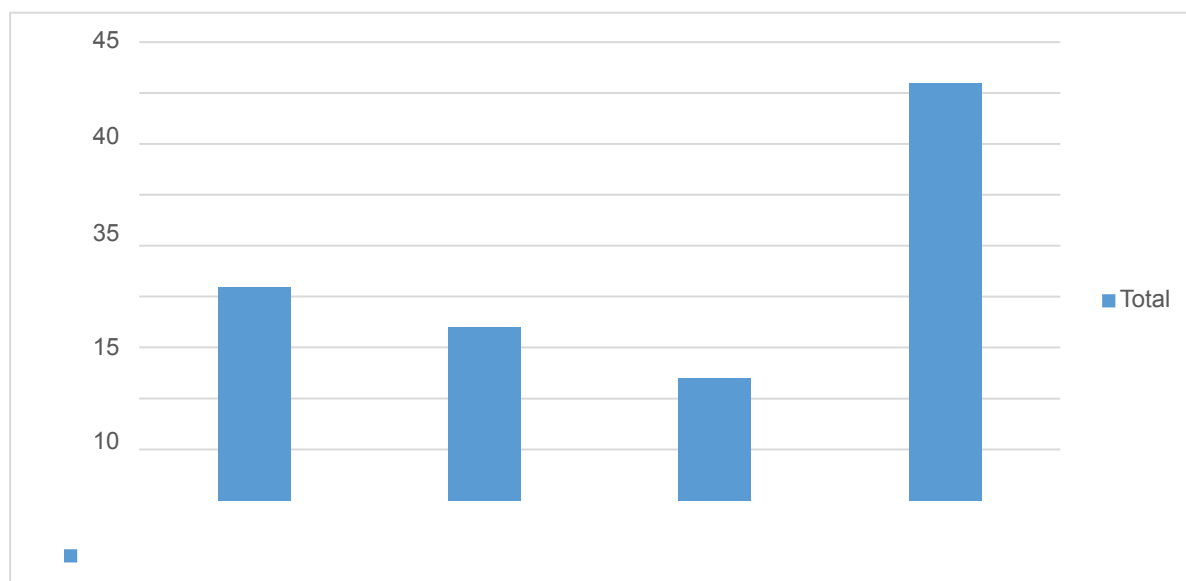


Figure 3.5.1: Overall representation of income

So in total, the majority of the students had and an estimated monthly income of Rs 10, 000 to Rs. 25,000 with a total of 39 students followed by 35 students with an estimated family income Rs. 25,000 to Rs. 50,000. 15 students had an estimated monthly income of Rs. 50,000 to Rs. 75,000 and from the Rs. 75,000 to 1 Lakh and above Rs. 1 Lakh is only one respectively.

6. Evidence of Usage of Manipuri Script in Mass Media



	CAN'T SAY	NO	NO RESPONSE	YES
Total	21	17	12	41

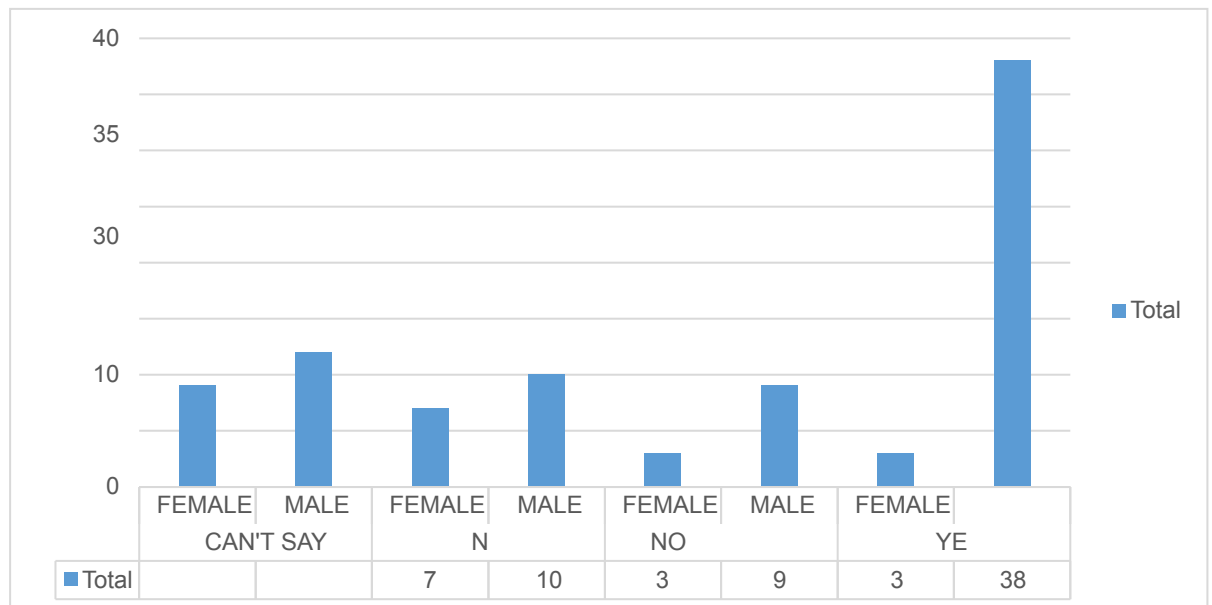
Figure 3.6: Evidence of usage of Manipuri script in mass media

Interpretation: The main area of the research begins here, when the students are asked if they had seen or come across the usage of the Manipuri script in mass media (the meaning of ‘mass media’ was explained in the questionnaires to give the students a better understanding) the results are as follows, out of 91 samples - 41 said ‘yes’, they have found the usage of the script in mass media. 17 responded that they had not found the usage of the script in mass media, 12 did not respond to the question, here it can be assumed that these respondents were not able to decide to where they have come across or not the usage of the script in mass media. 17 responded that they had not found any evidence of the usage of the script in mass media. Moreover, 21 responded, “Can’t say.”

Here, 21 respondents chose “can’t say” which is more than the number of respondents who

chose “no” could be the fact that they are neither aware of the usage nor paid attention while using mass media.

7. Evidence of Manipuri script in mass media in accordance with the gender distribution of the respondents.



3.7: Evidence of Manipuri script in mass media in accordance with the gender distribution of the respondents.

Interpretation: Following the question on the evidence of the usage of Manipuri script in mass media, here the data is segregated according to the gender distribution of the data. From the data collected, 38 samples which found the usage of the script in mass media were male, and three were female, in the next chart will explain where they found the usage of the script in mass media. For those who chose “no” for an answer, ten were male, and seven were female. Three female and nine male chose not to answer the question. For those who chose not to answer the question, the number is three female and nine male.

8. Evidence of Manipuri Script in mass media

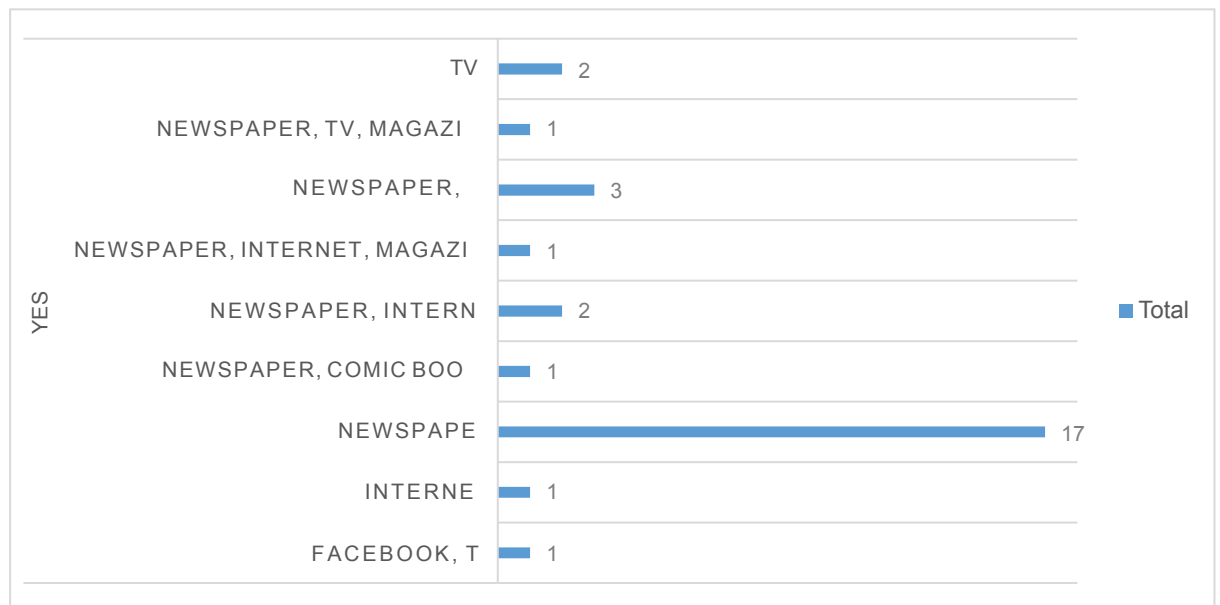
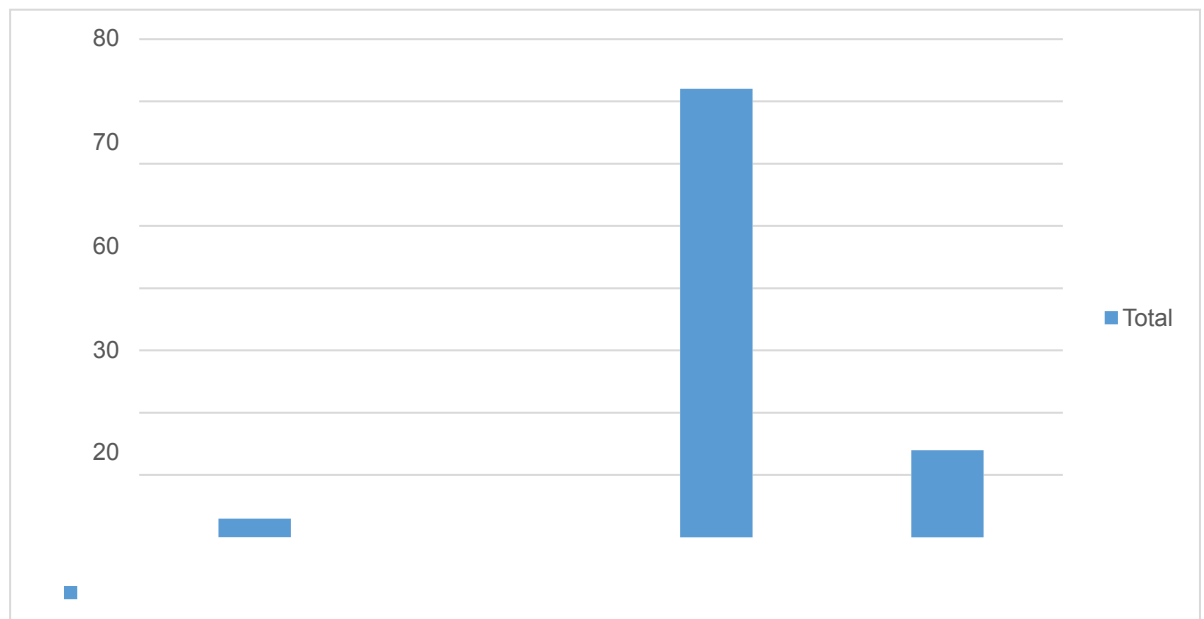


Figure 3.8: Evidence of Manipuri Script in mass media

Interpretation: When the question of where they have seen the usage of the script in mass media, the results came as follows, from a total of 41 who have come across the usage of the Manipuri script in mass media, the majority of the respondents said ‘newspapers’ which is has a total of 17. This can be because some of the newspapers have started printing in the Manipuri script- such as the local daily Hueiyen Lanpao, this particular newspaper has three daily newspapers printed in three scripts – Roman English, Bengali and the Manipuri script. The other Figures are relatively small compared to the rest.

9. Should Manipuri script be promoted in mass media?



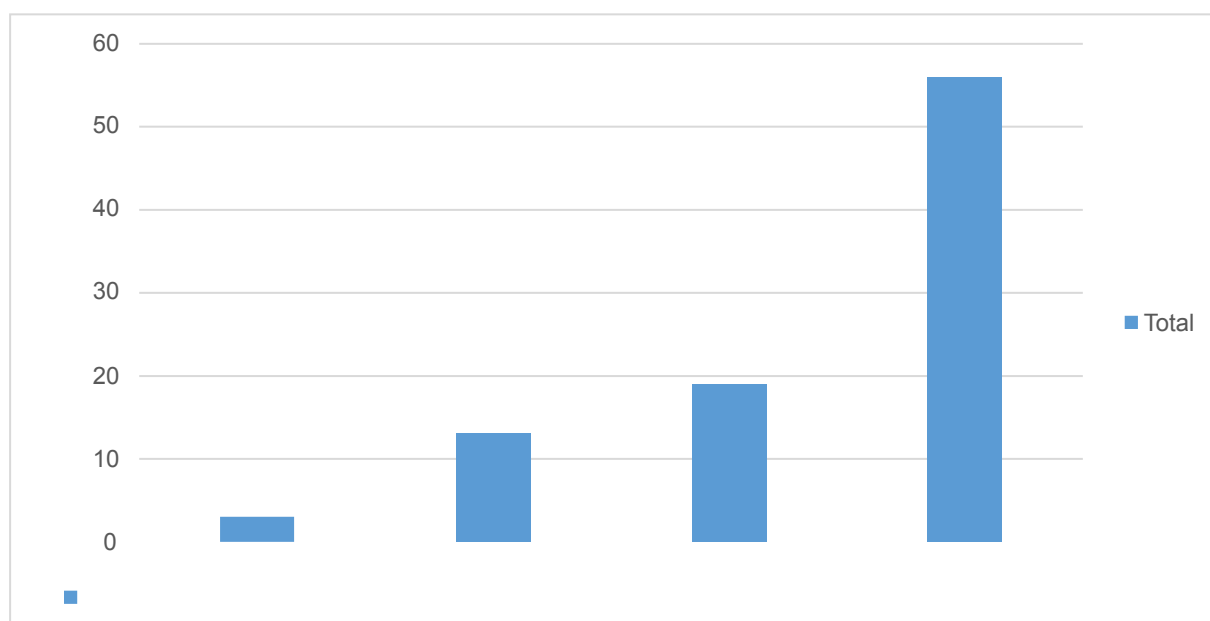
	CAN'T SAY	NO	NO RESPONSE	YES
Tota l	3	2	72	14

Figure 3.9: Promotion of Manipuri script in mass media

Interpretation: Further when the question of whether the Manipuri script should be used or promoted in mass media, the findings are varied. Out of 91 samples collected, a whopping 72 did not respond, i.e., 80% of the respondents did not respond to the question. 14 responded that the script should be promoted in media. A negligible margin of only 2 chose 'no,' and only three responded 'can't say.'

Here, no concrete conclusion can be drawn on why 80% of the respondents chose not to respond to this question. This finding raises more questions than answers from this new generation who have been educated in the Manipuri script.

10. Is it confusing to have two different writing system?



	CAN'T SAY	NO	NO RESPONSE	YES
Total	3	13	19	56

Figure 3.10:

Interpretation: The question of inconvenience among these generations who are taught in Manipuri script when it comes to finding two different writing system – the Bengali and the Manipuri script, the data tells me that these generations are facing problems. An approximate 62% of the students find it confusing/inconvenient to read newspapers/books that are printed in the Bengali script, keep in mind that most of the major circulated daily newspapers are still printed in the Bengali script, although there are Sunday's supplementary newspapers that come in Manipuri scripts, the data is clear, majority of the students finds it inconvenient to have two writing system.

Around 14% of the respondents, i.e., 13, finds it not confusing or okay to have two writing system, 19 out of 91 did not respond to the question, and finally, 3 weren't able to decide whether

or not they find it confusing to have multiple writing systems.

11. Irregularities in spellings

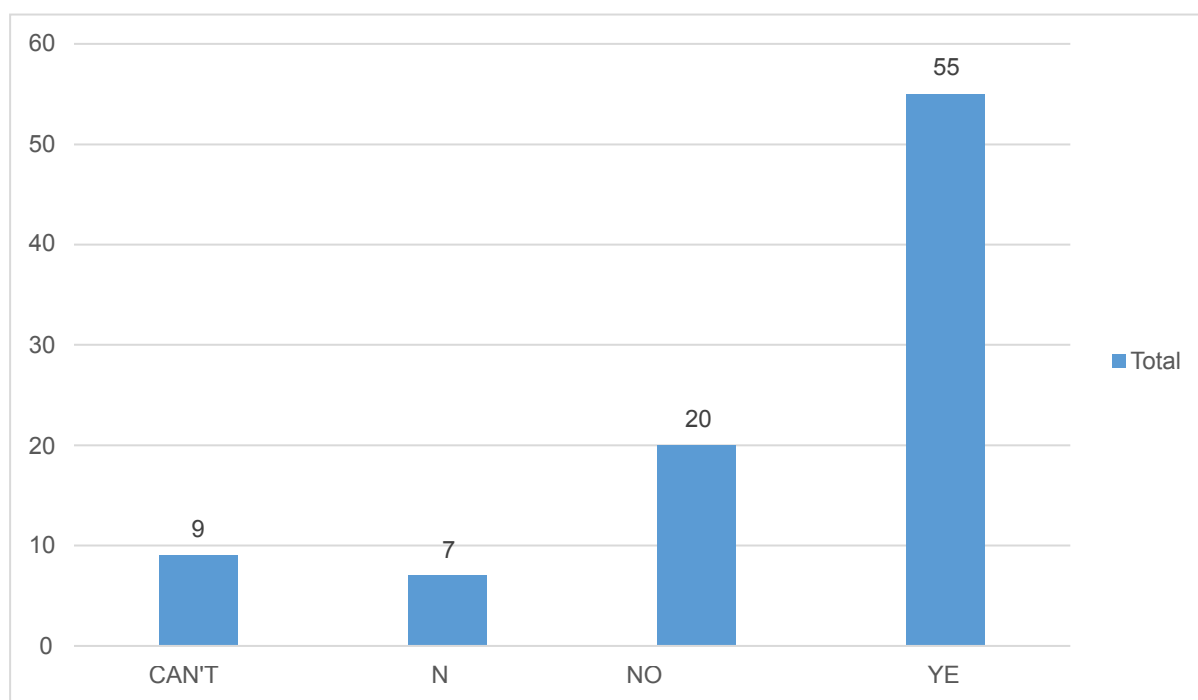


Figure 3.11 Irregularities in spellings

Interpretation: This is one of the most important data so far, the irregularities in spellings in the Manipuri writing system has been a subject of debate for a long time and in the next section, further explanations and proof that there are disturbing cases of spelling inconsistencies in ‘borrowed words’ (Angermeyer, 2005) and other text books that have been prescribed in schools by the State Boards – Board of Secondary Education, Manipur.

From the data collected, 55 responded that they find inconsistencies in the spellings that are prescribed to them by the state board. In the next chart, the degree of inconsistency is shown, 20 chose not to give any response, 7 out of 91 finds no inconsistencies in the spelling in the books, and finally, nine respondents were not able to decide whether they found inconsistencies in the spellings.

In the next section, the quantitative analysis when it comes to these inconsistencies in the spellings, a professor from the Manipur University gave an insight on how these consistencies will become a cause for concern if they are not rectified soon.

12. Scale of irregularity

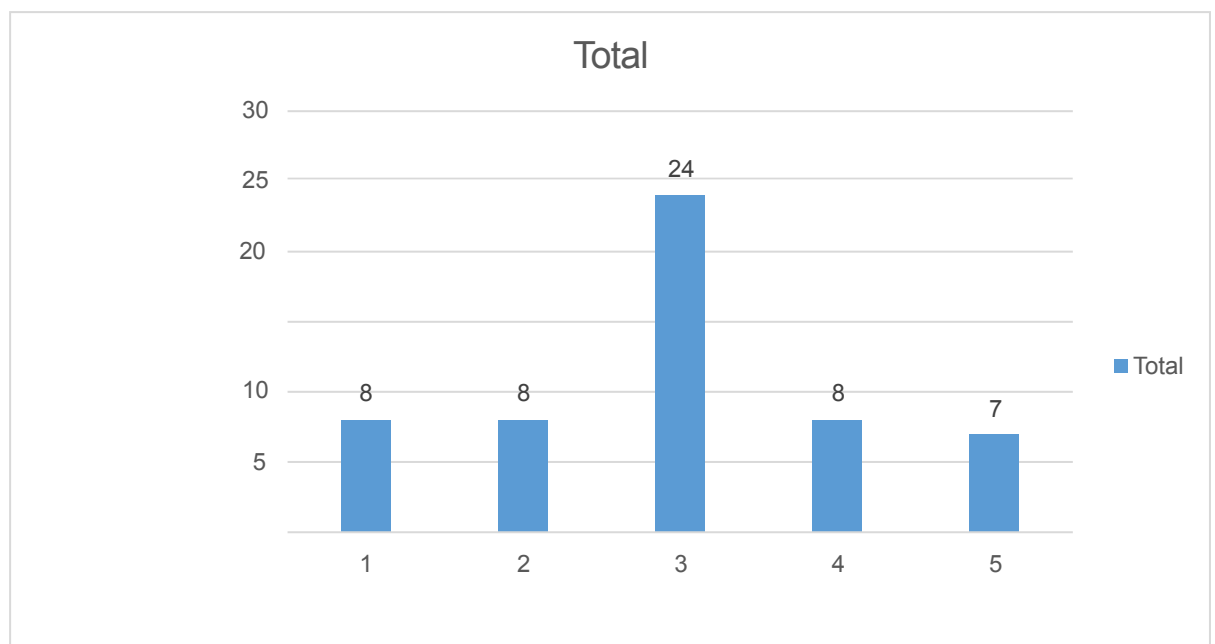
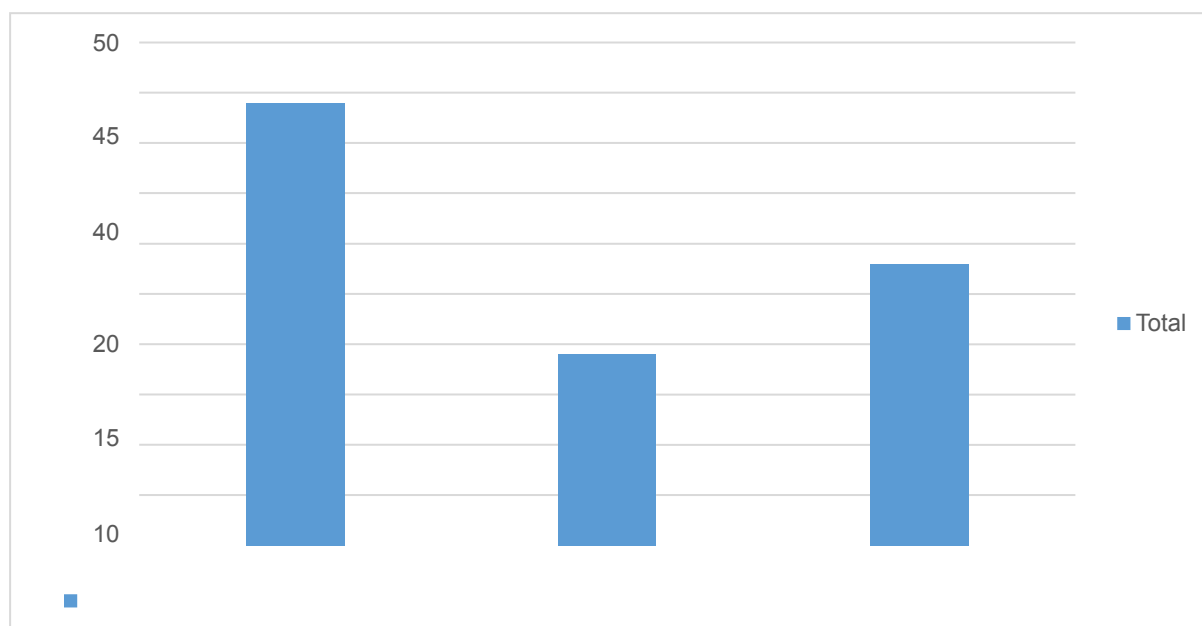


Figure 3.12: Scale of irregularity

Interpretation: This chart shows the degree of inconsistencies in the spellings. The Y axis represents the total number of responses, and the X axis represents the degree of inconsistencies, here one being the lowest and five being the highest. As you can see from the chart that out of 51 total responses that have found inconsistencies in the spellings, 24 scaled it 3 – which can be explained as the degree of spelling inconsistencies in the textbook are fairly at an average, but this also means that this is a serious issue.

13. Usage of the Manipuri script outside school



	NO	NO RESPONSE	YES
Total	44	19	28

Figure 3.13: Usage of the Manipuri script outside school

Interpretation: Moving away from inconsistencies and inconveniences, the students were asked if they use the Manipuri script outside the school, this is to do so to get a fair idea of the extent of the popularity of the script and its impact on the day to day life of these generations of ‘Manipuri educated’ folks.

As from the data, 44 respondents responded that they do not use the script outside the school, which is approximately 49% of the total sample. 19 out of 91 chose not to give any response. Moreover, a mere 28 respondents agreed that they use the Manipuri script outside the school.

14. Gender distribution of the Figure no. 3.13

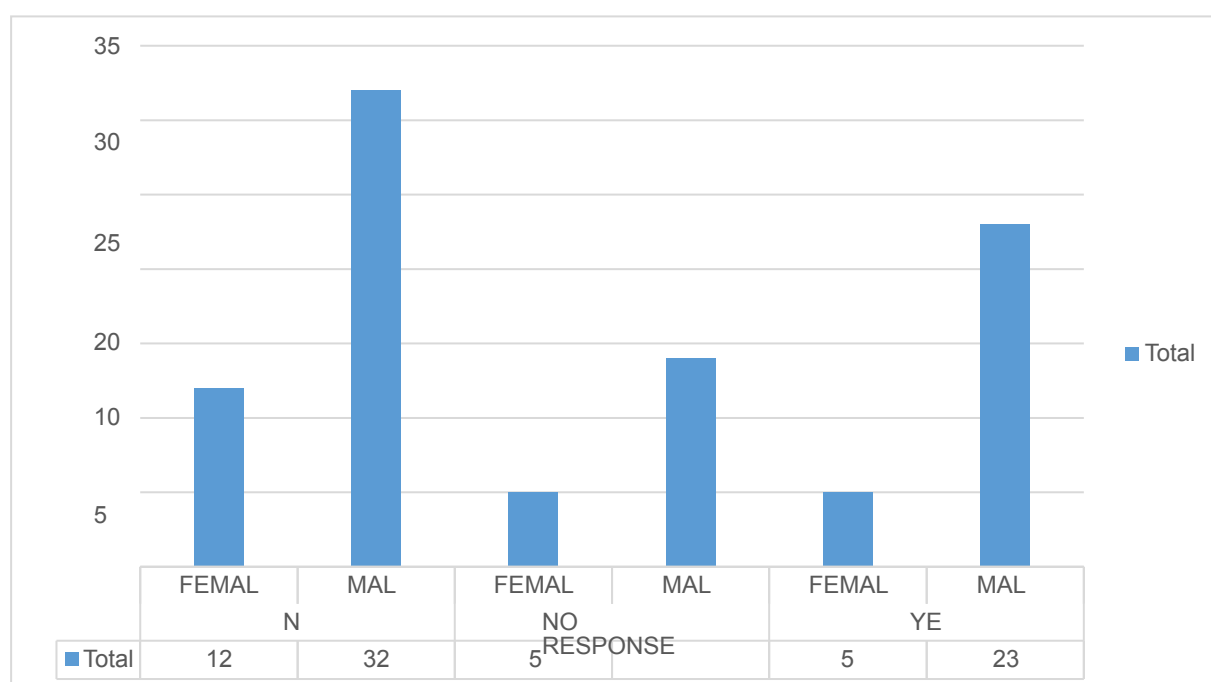
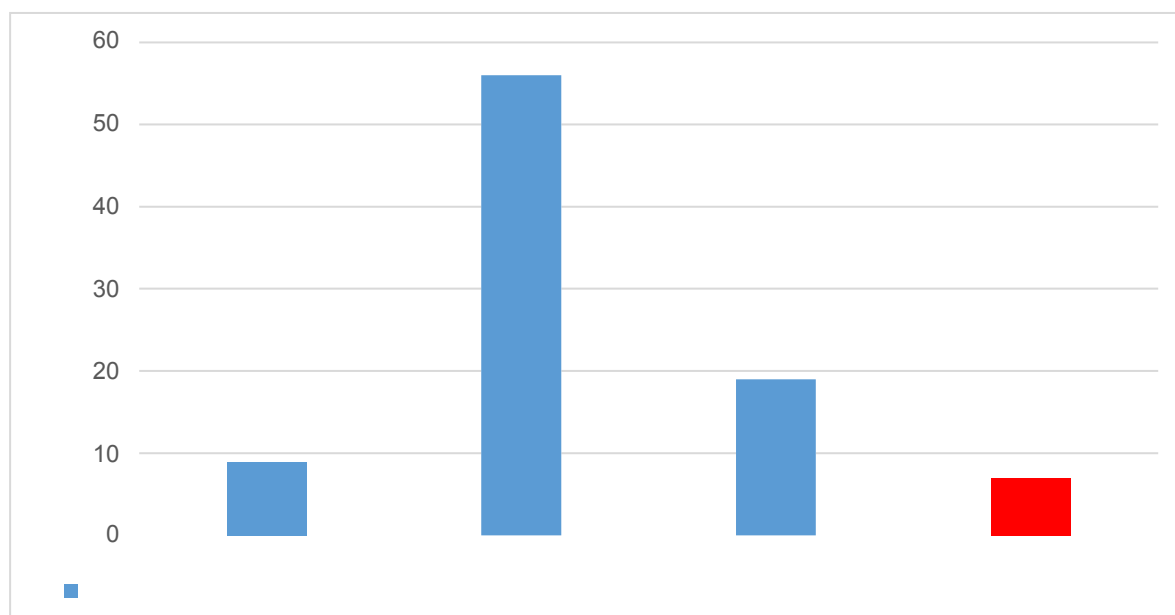


Figure 3.14: Gender distribution of figure no. 3.13

Interpretation: The Figure above shows the extend of the usage of the Manipuri script outside the school, the given chart shows the gender distribution of the respondents who have used, not used and not responded to the question of whether they use the script outside the school. Out of 28 who used the script outside the school, 23 were male, and five were female. 14 and 5 represented the male and female data that have chosen not to answer the question. Moreover, for the total of 44 respondents who did not use the script outside the school, 32 were male, and 12 were female.

It can be said that since that the question regarding the usage of the script is based on written form and not the spoken language, it can be assumed that there may be little or no need for these students to use the script outside the school. However, if the meaning of ‘outside school’ refers to working on homework at home, it will be a different case, and this was not the intention of the question. The question was intended for the usage of the script in cases such as writing names, addresses, notes, and letters.

15. Usage of Manipuri script in social media



	CAN'T SAY	NO	NO RESPONSE	YES
Tota	9	56	19	7
l				

Figure 3.15: Usage of Manipuri script in social media

Interpretation: When the participants were asked whether they use Manipuri script in Social Media, the responses are as follows – 56 out of 91 said they don't use the script in social media, 19 out of 91 did not response to the question, 9 out of 91 couldn't say whether they have used it or not and only 7 out of 91, i.e., 7.6% of the total participants used the script in social media. Keep in mind; there has been an increase in the number of apps that is supported in a different operating systems such as Microsoft's Window, Google's Android and Linux based OS that enables the user to use Manipuri script while typing.

The reason behind the majority of the participants for not using the script may be due to multiple reasons – one being the fact that the receiver may not be able to comprehend the script, inconvenience or software related issues.

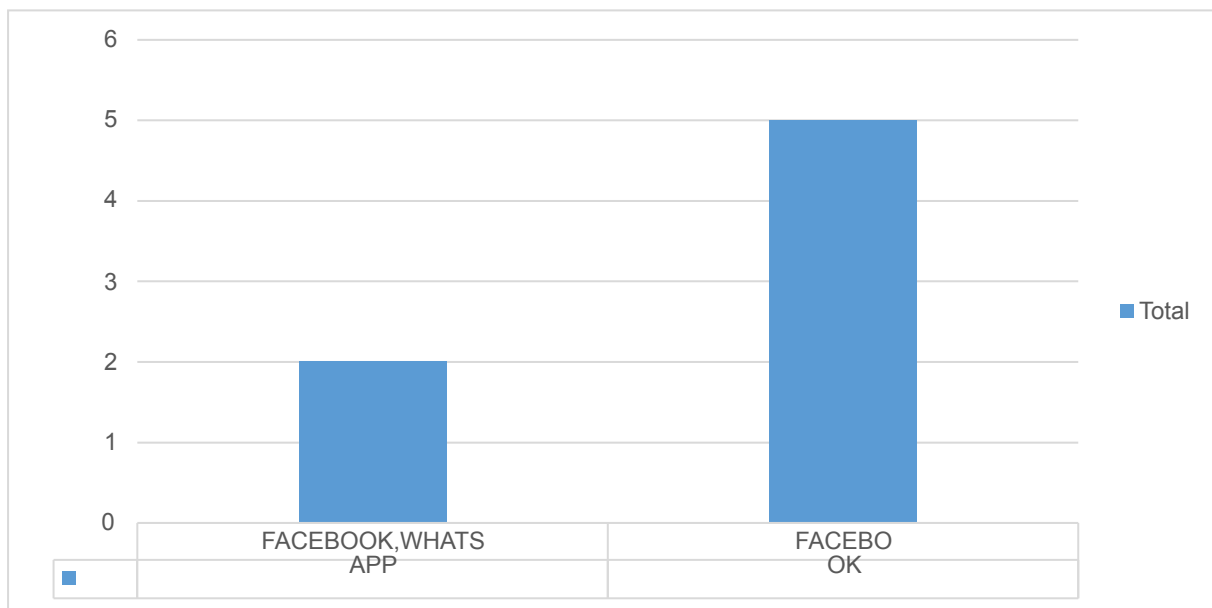


Figure 3.15.1: Distribution in the usage of Manipuri script in mass media

Out of the 7 participants who said they used Manipuri script on social media, five only used the script in Facebook and two on both Facebook and WhatsApp.

It can be said that the popularity of the script in social media is very low and almost negligible.

16. Is the script change favourable?

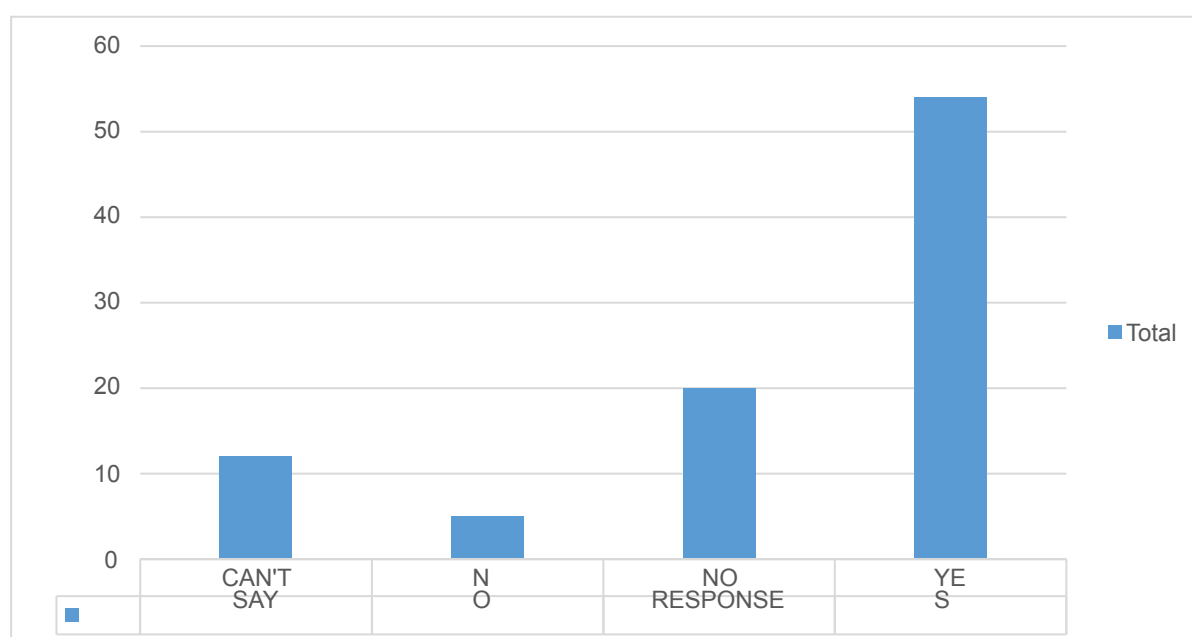


Figure 3.16: Is the script change favourable?

Interpretation: Ever since the State Government decided to remove the Bengali script in 2006 from the syllabus, it has come a long way. Ten years later, there is a whole generation that is educated in Manipuri scripts with little or no knowledge of the Bengali script, thus creating a gap in the generations between the generation that was educated in the Bengali script and the generation that are and will be educated in the Manipuri script. Here, when the question on whether the script change is favourable or not, 54 out of 91 responded that it is favourable, i.e., approximately 60% of the respondents agreed that the shift is favourable, only 5 of the 91 participants chose 'no' as an answer. 20 participants did not respond to the question, and 12 chose 'can't say' for an answer, and 20 out chose not respond to the answer.

This data proves that majority of the student favours the shift from the Bengali script to the Manipuri script, partly because these students have been educated in this script and they want to live in a society where it favours the Manipuri script rather than the Bengali script.

17. Usage of apps based on Manipuri script

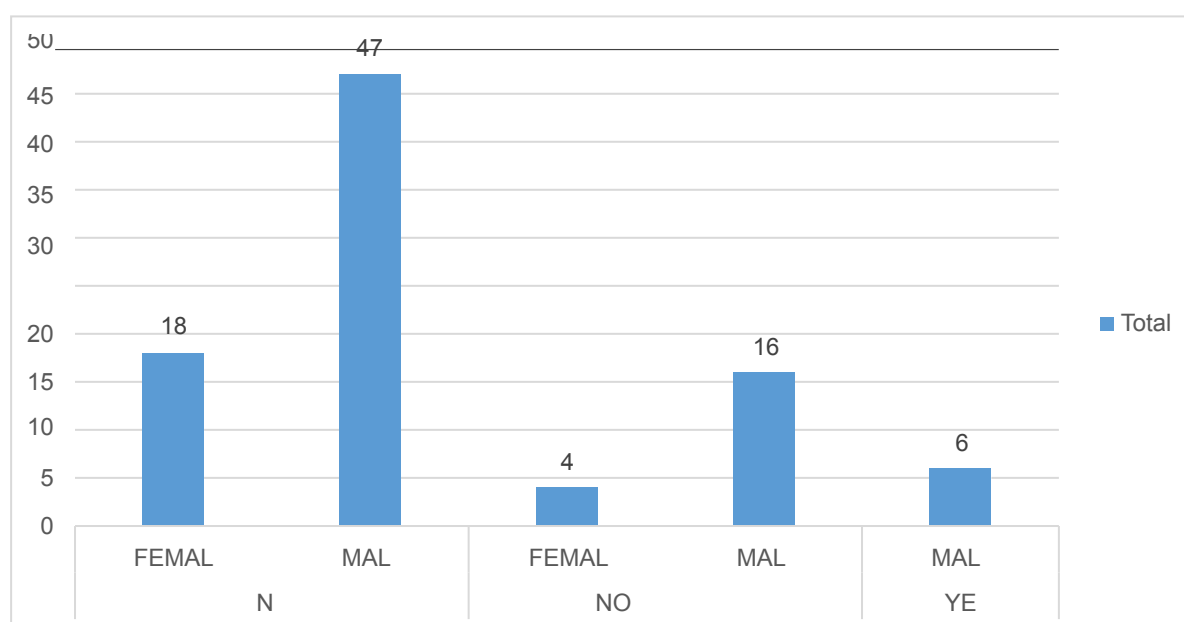


Figure 3.17: Usage of apps based on Manipuri script

Interpretation: Finally the students were asked if they had ever used any of the Manipuri script apps that are available on Google Play and only 6 out of 91 participants said they have used it, 1 in particular mentioned that he had used the Dictionary app. The majority of the participants didn't use these apps, with counting 47 males and 18 females with a total count of 65, a total of 20 participants did not answer the question.

Apart from these data, when the students were asked to transliterate the word 'SCHOOL' in Manipuri script, the results varied. It was found that three sets of spellings of the word were written by the students, further proving the fact that the spelling issue is very real. Later, in qualitative study, this case will be proven by images from textbooks prescribed by the state board.

4.2 Qualitative Analysis

4.2.1 The Language and the Writing System

Even after the 27 letter script was approved by the Manipur Assembly in 1979 under the leadership of Yangmasho Shaiza, the journey of the script coming back to its glory has been a rough ride. The argument of the authenticity of the script is still in the debate by some groups, as a matter of fact, there are groups that's argues that the original script consists of 18-letters, 27-letters, and even 36-letters. But the fact is, no can for sure tell or come up with what is called the “authentic-original” script because the truth is – the chaos that was created during the abandonment of the Manipuri script in the 18th century has made it impossible to track down the original writing, or they are yet to be discovered or what remains of the very little records of the script that was hidden away from the wrath of the king has vanished in time.

The campaign to popularize the use of the Manipuri script has come a long way ever since the revival of the script began in the 1940s and the 1950s and the result of the campaign can be seen, many of the public signage is written in this script, some of the most popular and widely circulated newspapers in the state such as the Poknapham, Sangai Express, etc. have to publish one item or news in the Manipuri script, but they have not gone completely Manipuri yet. However, one newspaper publisher – Hueiyen Lanpao had begun printing newspapers in three writing system – English, Bengali, and the Manipuri script.

In this section of the paper, it will be analysing the usage of the Bengali and the Manipuri script in newspapers, advertisements, the inconsistencies in the spellings and interviews that were conducted with officials from the Government who are responsible for the introduction of the script in the education and a linguistic professor from the Manipur University.

In the Figures below are the mast head of three of the most popular and widely circulated newspapers in Manipur. In each of the mast heads, the names of each name are written in both Manipuri script and Bengal script, even though they are completely two different scripts, they are read in the same language. This is a perfect example of transliteration. These three mast head are the newspapers printed in Bengali script only.

In each of the mast heads, there are significant differences in the placement and the significance given to the script. Even though these usages are considerably small, it demonstrates the fact that the readers of these newspapers, which majority of the readers are Manipuris are confronted with two different system of writings in their day to day lives.

Analyzing the three mast heads closely, in Figure 4.1, which is the name of one of the most popular newspaper in Manipur – The Poknapham, letters on the right side of the mast which is written in black fonts are in the Manipuri script, and the letter in the red fonts are written in Bengali script.



Figure 4.1: The Poknapham's mast head

The Bengali and the Manipuri script share no similarities of any kind, the words that are written above are pronounced the same way - “Poknapham” – ‘pok-na-pham,’ which translates to ‘place of birth.’ One of the main difference seen in this mass head is the fact there name “Poknapham” is not written in Roman English. As mentioned in the literature review there have been cases wherein bilingual Russian speakers have alternated between two alphabets in ways that transcend distribution. However, this is not the case here because it is not the language that has changed, it is the writing system.

In Figure 4.2, the usage of the script and the prominence of the script changes completely, in this mast head of another popular newspaper in the state. As seen in the Figure, this particular newspaper has decided to completely remove the usage of the Bengali script and have replaced it with the Manipuri script. However, they haven't done away with the Roman script, to further explain this particular mast head – the name of the newspaper is called “Hueiyen Lanpao” which roughly translates to “the news of the war”, the name “Hueiyen Lanpao” is still written in Roman English even though they have done away with the Bengali script. This can be due to multiple reasons

one brings the fact that for those who cannot read the Manipuri script they will still be able to recognize the newspaper or their target audiences are the young readers who have been educated in the Manipuri script.

In this mast head, the words written in the blue font on the upper left corner represents the first part of the two-part name, i.e. ‘Hueiyen,’ and the word written in the red font which is the given more prominence is the second part of the two-part name, i.e., the ‘Lanpao.’

This is the newspaper publisher that have begun printing three sets of newspapers in three writing system. – Roman English, Manipuri script and the Bengali script, which will be shown later.



Figure 4.2: Hueiyen Lanpao's mast head

In Figure 4.3, is another example of the most popular newspaper in the state – The Sangai Express, ‘Sangai’ is the brow-antlered deer only found in Keibul Lamjao

National Park in Manipur. As seen on the mast head of the newspaper – the characters written in the blue font is the Manipuri script and the fonts written in the black font is the Bengali script. It is seen that the Bengali script seem to be given more prominence compared to the Manipuri script.




Figure 4.3: The Sangai Express's mast head

Leaving the design of the mast head aside, which can be the cause of the differences in the importance given to either of the scripts, it would be more appropriate to look at this from the case of script choice. The cases given above are only meant for illustration purpose, and they are not a part of the data collected for quantitative analysis.

To get a better understanding of script choice in mass media samples were taken from several newspaper advertisements (Angermeyer, 2005), dictates that printed texts have to be monolingual, he further argues that the alteration in the written language can be found only in unregulated, peripheral genres of writing such as graffiti, advertisements or computer mediated communication where in the ideology of language standardization is less powerful, but other exception includes poetry and fiction (Angermeyer, 2005). The advertisement has become a site of language contact and as a rich source for sociolinguistic data. Further advertisements arguably have less controlled by norms and standardization than another form of printed, written language. Sebba theorized that and quoted “the world of written text... as a set of spaces win which the ideology of standardization is imposed at various degrees” he

further described advertisements as a regulated environment where in orthographic conventions can be broken and languages mixed. However, moving away from the hypothesis above, in the case of the coexistence of the Manipuri script and the Bengali script, there seems to be a harmony for far



ɔsɛʌʂɔɔɛɔ ɛʌʌʂ ʂɛɔɔɔʂ ʂɛɔɔ ɛʌʌʂɔɔɛɔ, ɔʂɛɔɔ
JAWAHARLAL NEHRU MANIPUR DANCE ACADEMY, IMPHAL
 (A constituent unit of Sangeet Natak Akademi, New Delhi)
FESTIVAL OF RAAS LEELA
 on the occasion of
219th Death Anniversary of Rajarshi Bhagyachandra
September 23-27, 2017
at Academy Mandap, 3:00 p.m. daily
PROGRAMME
 * September 25, 2017 - **Nata Sankirtana**
 Shri N. Khomeiton Singh, N. Nobo Singh & Party
Vasanta Raas
 by Progressive Artistes Laboratory, Imphal
 * September 26, 2017 - **Nata Sankirtana**
 Shri Th. Nilakanta Singh, W. Naba Singh & Party
Nitya Raas
 by The Manipuri Nartanalaya, Moirangkhom, Imphal
 * September 27, 2017 - **Nata Sankirtana**
 Shri M. Inaoton Singh, K. Biswarup Sharma & Party
Dibas Raas
 by Lianda Folk & Classical Academy, Nagamapal
 Soram Leirak, Imphal.
 HL-F/2047/25 - ALL ARE WELCOME -

Figure 4.4: News advertisement no. 1

Figure 4.4 and 4.5 shows the usage of the usage of multiple writing systems in the same newspaper advertisement.

In Figure 4.4.1, the name of the institution ‘JAWAHARLAL NEHRU MANIPUR DANCE ACADEMY, IMPHAL’ is written in both Roman English as well as in the Manipuri script, which is written in the Roman English. The transliteration of the Roman English words ‘JAWAHARLAL NEHRU MANIPUR DANCE ACADEMY, IMPHAL’ is written as:

ɔsɛʌʂɔɔɛɔ	ɛʌʌʂ	ʂɛɔɔɔʂ	ʂɛɔɔ	ɛʌʌʂɔɔɛɔ	ɔʂɛɔɔ
1	2	3	4	5	6

Figure 4.4.1: The breakdown

Here, to interpret Figure 4.4, the given sentence is broken down into their words, each word are coded as 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 to make it easier. Each word is not the translation of the English word, it is the transliteration of the English word so, the word under the section 1 is still pronounced as ‘JAWAHARLAL’; the word is section 2 as ‘NEHRU’; the word in section 3 as ‘MANIPUR’; the word in section 4 as ‘DANCE’ and the word in section 5 as ‘ACADEMY’ and finally the word in section 6 is read as ‘IMPHAL’. The transliteration of the headlines in classified advertisements is common.

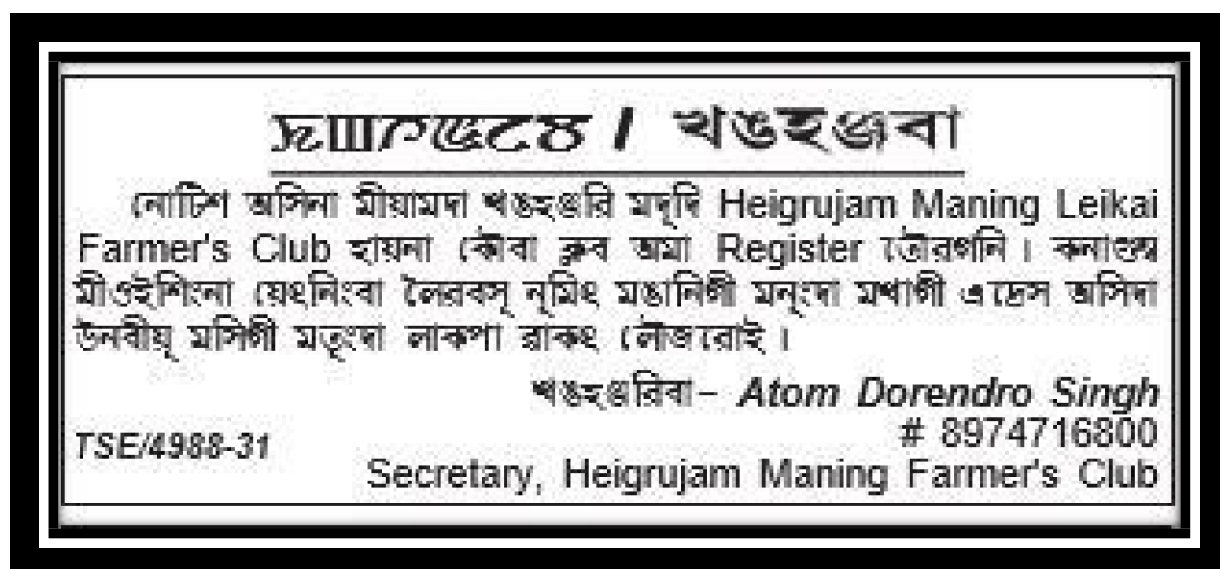


Figure 4.5: News advertisement no. 2

The advertisement in Figure 4.5 is the transliteration of the Bengali script – which is written on the right side of the notice to Manipuri script which is on the left side of the notice. Both words are pronounced in the same way, and the meaning remains the same. Since these two writing scripts do not share any similarities in the writing system, there have been no cases where in the letters from this two writing system are used at the same time. Instances where in two different scripts has been used together has been recorded among the Russian – American bilingual communities (Angermeyer, 2005), studied the script choice of the bilingual community of Russian – American, he found that transliteration of Russian words which are written in Cyrillic into Roman script is very rare. It is found only with Russian words that are usually a part of proper names or particularly when the target audience includes non-Russian speakers. However, the

transliteration of English words in Cyrillic is less predictable – proper names and even English words may either be transliterated into Cyrillic script, or they will maintain their original spellings

in Roman English script.

Another considerable variation found was found while analyzing the transliteration of scripts between the Roman English, the Manipuri script and the Bengali script is that there is considerable variation between this writing system when it comes to proper nouns and certain words that exist in the English vocabulary that is either really hard to transliterate in either the Manipuri script or the Bengali script. This is illustrated in Figures 4.6 and Figure 4.7, these images were taken from the same newspaper publishers who have been publishing newspapers both in Bengali and Manipuri scripts, more or less, and these two publications carry the same news.

Figure 4.6, is an image of an article that was published in the newspaper which is printed in the Bengali script, it is about some of the widely affected diseases that are common in rice paddies. Here, the two articles have the same information but if you look closely

- certain proper English words – **Blast, Pyricularia Oryzae** are printed in the Roman script, even though the rest of the content is printed in Bengali script. If you look closely enough, the word English word BLAST, the transliteration of this word is also written in the Bengali script as **ব্লাস্ট** which is also pronounced as ‘Blast,’ and it is not the translation of the English language to Manipuri language. This could be because some of the words that are transliterated from the English to Bengali may not be pronounced in the same way that the writer wants it to pronounce or another reason could be - to ease the difficulty of comprehending the word ‘Blast’ when transliterated in Bengali script. In this particular article, the usage of English words that are proper nouns continues – scientific names such as Conidia, Tricyclazole 75% WP, Kresoxim methyl 50%, Metominostrobin 20- maintain the English orthography in Roman script, proving the fact that there are instances of “geographical code-switching” (Banu & Sussex, 2001).

লৌমীশিংগী কাখল

ফৌনাদা থোকহনবা লায়নাশিং

ডাঃ এম থোইথোই সিংহ

ব্লাস্ট (Blast):
লায়না থোকহনবা কোকফাই: Pyricularia Oryzae
ফৌদা তাবা লায়নাশিংগী মনুংদা ঝাইদগী হেনা শাখিবা
অমসুং মালেমগী ফৌ থারিবা মফম খুদিংদা থেংনবা লায়নানি।
লায়না অসিনা কুমজা ১৯১৯দা টামিল নাদুয়া য়ায়া শাখিবা চাক
তাঙবা অমা থোকখিবতা নতনা কুমজা ১৯৫৫দা চিটোর
লিষ্টকিত্ত একর ৫,০০০গী লৌ, পোথোক অমত্তা পুথোক্তনা
শা-ধণগীদমক থাবা ওইনা থোকহনখি। মণিপুরগী ফৌ
থারিবা মফম খুদিংদা থেংনবা ঝাইদগী হেনা মরুওইবা
লায়নানি।

লায়না :
ফৌ পাহিগী মথক থংবা শরক পুন্নমত্তা লায়না অসি তাই।
ফৌগী মনা, মতাং, ফৌ চরোংগী তোঙন তোঙনবা মফমশিং
অমসুং ফৌ মরুদা লায়না অসি ড়া ফংই। মফম খেদবগী মতুং
হেনা ঐশ্বোয়না লায়না অসিবু তোঙন তোঙনবা মণিং খোজি।
লায়না অসিনা ফৌগী মনাদা তারগদি লিফ ব্লাস্ট, ফৌগী মতাংদা
তারগনা নোড ব্লাস্ট অমসুং চরোংগী মজত্তা তারগনা নেক ব্লাস্ট
হায়না খঙনৈ।

ফৌগী মনাদা পীশক পীল্ল মেং মেং লাওনা কোন্ট্রিং মচুগী
দাগ মাদা উরুদগী মতেন অনীমক ইতুং তুয়া লৌবা দাগশিংদু
অসুম অসুম চওখোরকই। দাগকি মপান নাপু মচুদা ঙাংতক
তোনা লৈ। মধ্যাদা ঙৌরুননা লৈগনি। ব্লাস্টনা ফৌগী মতাংদা
অরবদি তারিবা মতাং অদু মুশিল মনা খামদেকপা থেংনগনি।
কিতমসিদা পাহিগী মচিঞ্জাকশিংদু ফৌ মতেন য়োনা পুরকপা
জমদবদগী ফৌ মরু চহনবা জমদে, ফৌহাম শাংহলি। ফৌ
চরোংগী মজত্তা লায়না অসি লানশিল্লবদি চরোংগী মজুক



শাংথবা)
(ঘ) নুমিাদা দিগ্ৰি সেলসিয়স ২৬ অমসুং
মসিদগী তাথবা।
(ঙ) য়ায়া কুপ্পা মতম শাংথনা নেং তাবা।
(চ) অতিয়াদা নোংনা কুপশিন্দুনা হায়বদি
মজুদুনা লৈবা।
মথকী কিতমশিংসিদা কোকফাই শুজা অসিগী
মরু (Conidia) পুথোকপা, শাদোকপা অমসুং
কোকফাই মতেন থোকহন্দুনা পাহিগী সেল মনুংদা
চঙলকপা জমহলি। তেজবা মতম খরগী মতুংদা
লায়নাসি মফম শিনবা থুনা শাদোকই।
জাকথোকপা উপায়শিং :
১) লায়নাসিবু জাকথোকচবা জমজবা ফৌ
মখলশিং থানবা হোংনগনি। মতম অমদা
জাকথোকচবা জমজবসু তুং কোয়দবা যাওই।
অনৌবশিংগী মরুতগী খনগনি।
২) নাইট্রোজেন হায়গী চং হেনগংপগা লায়না
অসি তাবা হেনগংপগা মরী য়ায়া লৈনবা মরুদা
অকরুবা চংদা নাইট্রোজেন মচি মচি ওইনা চং হুনা হাপকনি।
৩) অফবা মশক খঙলবা ফৌদিভমক শীজিগনি।
৪) লায়নগী লায়ণ্ড ওইলবা মফম অমদা, চাংচো মনা অমদা
দাগ ৪/৫গী চংদা উরবদি মথা তনা কোকফাই শুজা অসিগী মরু
শাদোকপা হাদাক কাপথোকনি।
Tricyclazole 75% WP গ্রাম ৭৫ শজম অমা চাউবা
লৌফমদা কাপথোকনি। দিশিং লিটার ১৫ খুদিংদা হাদাক গ্রাম ১০
যানগনি। নংত্রগা Kresoxim methyl 50% মিলিলিটার ১০০
শীজিগনি নংত্রগা Metominostrobin 20 মিলিলিটার ১২৫
চঙগনি। শজম অমা চাউবা লৌফমগীদমক দিশিং লিটার ১০০
চঙগনি।

Figure 4.6: Article 1

Another interesting and similar findings that have come across during the course of my research is the instances of “geographical code-switching” also occurs in the Manipuri writing system as well, Figure 8, is the same article which was published in the Bengali script newspaper but this is printed in the Manipuri script, it shows similar example of inserting English words within the Manipuri writing system – the reason behind could be similar to the ones mentioned above – making easier for the readers to comprehend for some of the scientific names are not easy to transliterate into Manipuri script, even if it is done so, the interpretation of one writer will not be similar to the transliteration of another writer.

This article is the complete transliteration of the Bengali script into Manipuri script, but truth be told it can go either way, transliteration of this two writing system goes

both ways, either from Manipuri to Bengali or Bengali to Manipuri. Similar to the usage of English words within the Bengalis wiring system, the words such as –Blast, Pyricularia Oryzae, Conidia, Tricyclazole 75% WP, Kresoximethyl 50% and Metominostrobin 20, are written in English orthography using Roman script.

দেউল ফাটলত তেউলগীষ

দেউল ফাটলত তেউলগীষ

হুত্ৰেং (Blast):
 তেউল ফাটলত তেউলগীষ **Pyricularia Oryzae** হৈছে তেউলগীষৰ প্ৰধান প্ৰজাতি। ইয়াৰ লক্ষণ হৈছে পাতৰ ওপৰত বগা-বগা বিন্দুৰ সন্ধান পোৱা। ইয়াৰ লক্ষণ হৈছে পাতৰ ওপৰত বগা-বগা বিন্দুৰ সন্ধান পোৱা। ইয়াৰ লক্ষণ হৈছে পাতৰ ওপৰত বগা-বগা বিন্দুৰ সন্ধান পোৱা।

তেউলগীষ:
 ইয়াৰ লক্ষণ হৈছে পাতৰ ওপৰত বগা-বগা বিন্দুৰ সন্ধান পোৱা। ইয়াৰ লক্ষণ হৈছে পাতৰ ওপৰত বগা-বগা বিন্দুৰ সন্ধান পোৱা। ইয়াৰ লক্ষণ হৈছে পাতৰ ওপৰত বগা-বগা বিন্দুৰ সন্ধান পোৱা।



১) ইয়াৰ লক্ষণ হৈছে পাতৰ ওপৰত বগা-বগা বিন্দুৰ সন্ধান পোৱা। ইয়াৰ লক্ষণ হৈছে পাতৰ ওপৰত বগা-বগা বিন্দুৰ সন্ধান পোৱা। ইয়াৰ লক্ষণ হৈছে পাতৰ ওপৰত বগা-বগা বিন্দুৰ সন্ধান পোৱা।

২) ইয়াৰ লক্ষণ হৈছে পাতৰ ওপৰত বগা-বগা বিন্দুৰ সন্ধান পোৱা। ইয়াৰ লক্ষণ হৈছে পাতৰ ওপৰত বগা-বগা বিন্দুৰ সন্ধান পোৱা। ইয়াৰ লক্ষণ হৈছে পাতৰ ওপৰত বগা-বগা বিন্দুৰ সন্ধান পোৱা।

Tricyclazole 75% WP প্ৰতিটো পাতৰ ওপৰত বগা-বগা বিন্দুৰ সন্ধান পোৱা। ইয়াৰ লক্ষণ হৈছে পাতৰ ওপৰত বগা-বগা বিন্দুৰ সন্ধান পোৱা। ইয়াৰ লক্ষণ হৈছে পাতৰ ওপৰত বগা-বগা বিন্দুৰ সন্ধান পোৱা।

Kresoximethyl 50% প্ৰতিটো পাতৰ ওপৰত বগা-বগা বিন্দুৰ সন্ধান পোৱা। ইয়াৰ লক্ষণ হৈছে পাতৰ ওপৰত বগা-বগা বিন্দুৰ সন্ধান পোৱা। ইয়াৰ লক্ষণ হৈছে পাতৰ ওপৰত বগা-বগা বিন্দুৰ সন্ধান পোৱা।

Metominostrobin 20 প্ৰতিটো পাতৰ ওপৰত বগা-বগা বিন্দুৰ সন্ধান পোৱা। ইয়াৰ লক্ষণ হৈছে পাতৰ ওপৰত বগা-বগা বিন্দুৰ সন্ধান পোৱা। ইয়াৰ লক্ষণ হৈছে পাতৰ ওপৰত বগা-বগা বিন্দুৰ সন্ধান পোৱা।

Figure 4.7: Article 2

Such cases of using two different writing system has been the subject of debate for many researchers studying bilingual speech, linguist differ in their interpretation of the processes that lead to the usage of these words in their given context, some linguist have term the usage of such words in the writing system as “alien” origin that distinguishes these words from the structures in which they appear. For instance, (Muysken, 2000) categorized the processes of “inserting alien words or constitute into a clause” and “entering alien elements into a lexicon.” The acknowledgment of lexical

(relating to the words or vocabulary of a language) items is a crucial issue for research on language contact phenomenon (Angermeyer, 2005).

The Figures 4.6 and 4.7, give instances of ‘geographical code-switching’, but code-switching generally, in contrast, is illustrated by examples used by individuals speakers in particular contexts, especially when the argument is made that an “alien” word is inserted in order to invoke specific social connotations that are associated with the word’s language of origin (Auer, 1998).

Another instance where the Manipuri writing system and the Bengali writing system are printed in the same newspaper and appear on the same page has been sighted. The image in the next page is an illustration of such instance where in different stories are printed in a different writing system; this is a picture of the newspaper at page 7 from the local newspaper – The Sangai Express. To demonstrate further, the text which is within the red borders are printed in the Manipuri script and the texts outside the red borders are printed in the Bengali script. It is illustrated below.

ਫੈਕਟਰਾਂ ਦੀ ਸੂਚੀ : ੧੭੭

The uses of the Manipuri script and the Bengali script in newspapers does not have any inconsistencies in terms of how many spaces are reserved for the Manipuri script in the Bengali newspapers, in the above illustration, out of thirteen news articles, excluding the two advertisements on the bottom and two listings on the bottom right hand side, four out of thirteen stories are in Manipuri script and the remaining nine are printed in Bengali script. So the usage of these two completely different writing system in the same newspaper is a cause for concern among the readers, reason being, different stories are printed in two separate writing system – increasing the divide between the readers who can read the Manipuri script and the people who cannot read the Manipuri script. This approaches could be the fact that many of the young generation of readers are educated Manipuris.

In another case, the same news story is printed in both the Bengali script and the Manipuri script in the same newspaper but different pages – Figure 4.8 and Figure 4.9 illustrates this particular scenario – the highlighted news in Figure 4.8, shows the news stories printed in the Bengali script which is on page on 6 of the newspaper, the name of the newspaper is called SANALEIPAK, which is another local newspaper publisher in the state. Again in Figure 4.9, the highlighted section of the newspaper is the same news story printed in the Manipuri script, here, in this case, it can be said that the publishers have catered to both the Manipuri readers and Bengali readers.

In this quantitative study, the survey conducted by the students found a considerable degree of spelling inconsistencies, in Figures 4.10, 4.11, 4.12 and 4.13, illustrate the consistencies in the spellings in the text books prescribed as a part of the syllabus in the 6th grade by the State Board – Board of Secondary Education, Manipur. In Figure 4.10, the word SCHOOL and KILOMETER are printed in English orthography maintaining the English script. The reason behind the using these words in the book that is meant for Manipuri script, according to many of the language expert is that there are no letter or combination of letters in the Manipuri script that can make the phonetic sound of “sku:l”, even if they do, the variation in the combination of the letters to make the phonetic sound of the word differ from person to person, this will be proven by using the data collected from the survey. Similar situation is applied to the words that are written in English, in Figure 4.10, the words written in English orthography are – SCHOOL, KILOMETRE, NOTE, CINEMA; it appears that these words are intentionally printed in English orthography to eliminate the confusion and the difficulty that it will create if they were transliterated in Manipuri script which may not adhere to the phonetic sounds it has to make. It is not impossible to transliterate these words in Manipuri script, it is possible but, it will or may not the make the intended phonetic sounds.

In Figure 4.11, the highlighted words are names of places in Manipur – BISHNUPUR and CHANCHIPUR are printed in the same case as above, maintain the English orthography. Similarly, in this case, the usage of English words in these contexts could be the fact that when these – BISHNUPUR and CHANCHIPUR are transliterated into Manipuri script, the differentiation in the phonetics of these words may cause difficulties among the readers.

Figure 4.12 can be used to illustrate the extend of using English words to compensate the lack of standardized spellings in the orthography of the Manipuri language, if you look closely, the words – POLICE is written in English orthography four times in the first paragraph, but the facts is there is a Manipuri translation of the word POLICE in the Manipuri language. So, the reason behind using words in English orthography to compensate the lack of letters or standardized of spelling for the transliteration to Manipuri script becomes absurd, so from the findings, there seem to be contrasting approaches when it comes to scripting choice. In total, the word, ‘POLICE’ is repeated six times. Other words that are used in the content of the page are – SCHOOL, CLASS, PERIOD, NOTICE, and HEADMASTER. This usage of English words without transliteration into the Manipuri language is a subject of many debates among educationalist, writers, and linguists.

In Figure 4.13, shows another illustration of using words written in English orthography within the Manipuri writing system, here, in this case, the words used are

- PRONOUNE, RELEXIVE PRONOUN, INTERROGATIVE, INDEFINITE, DEMONSTRATIVE AND INTERROGATIVE, here the word ‘PRONOUN’ is repeated multiple times. The case here is not the fact that certain words are repeated multiple times but the usage of English orthography to define grammar definition, it is acknowledgeable that these words if they were transliterated into Manipuri script, the result may not adhere to the majority of the readers, but it is not impossible to do so.

[illegible][illegible][illegible][illegible]

(27)

Figure 4.12: Text book 3

Figure 4.13: Text book 4

মীতৈ/মৈতৈবু সেদুল্ল ট্ৰাইব লিষ্টতা চলহন্নবা ফমখিবা মীয়ামগী অচৌবা মীফম

‘ৰেকমেদেসন ওক্টোবৰ ২০ ফাওবদা থাগদবনি’

ইফল, সেপ্টেম্বৰ ২৪ (এচএনএস): মীতৈ/মৈতৈবু লৈবাক অসিগী সেদুল্ল আইবকী লিষ্টতা চলহন্নবনি হায়বা দিমাপদী শৰুক অমা ওইনা ওসি সেদুল্ল আইব দিমাপ কন্মিটি, মণিপুর (এস টি দি সী এম)না শীন্দনা ওসি পেদেলস কন্পাউন্দনা লৈবা হৰোয়াইমা শুমাং লীলা শঙ্কলেন্দা মীয়ামগী অচৌবা মীফম অমা ফমক্সে।

মীফম অদুদা ৰাৱেপ অনীৰক লৌখি। ৰাৱেপশিং অদুদি অহানবা-মণিপুর গভৰ্ণমেণ্টনা মীতৈ/মৈতৈবু এস টি লিষ্টতা চলহন্নবা ষ্টেট লৈজাকী ৰেকমেদেসন গভৰ্ণমেণ্ট ওফ ইন্দিয়া লাফিৰা ওক্টোবৰ ২০ ফাওবগী মনুদা থাগবনি অমসুং অনীশুবা-মখকী ৰাৱেপ নম্বৰ-১দা পীৰিবা মতমগী মনুদা মণিপুর লৈজাকী থবক্তা ওহোত্ৰবদি মখল মখা কয়গী অকনবা ষোঙাঙং চঙশিন্নবা অমতা ওইনা লেপ্পৰে হায়বনি।

যৌৱম অদু সেদুল্ল আইব দিমাপ কন্মিটি, মণিপুরগী প্ৰসিডেণ্ট মুন্না মোহেন্দ্ৰ, এস টি দি সী এমগী ৰাৰ্কিং প্ৰসিডেণ্ট মোহিৰাংথেম নোংদালেন-থোম্বা, এস টি দি সী এমগী জেনেৰেল সেক্ৰেটাৰি লাইশ্ৰম লোকেন্দ্ৰ অমদি এস টি দি সী এমগী ভাইস-প্ৰসিডেণ্ট পি সোমামনিনা মথংশিনা ময়্য তাবেল লৌদনা পাঙথোকবি।

মীফম অদুদা এস টি দি সী এমগী

পাব্লিসিটি সেক্ৰেটাৰি দৱি়য় আনন্দনা হায়বি, সেদুল্ল আইব দিমাপ কন্মিটি, মণিপুরনা মীয়ামগী লোয়ননা মীতৈ/মৈতৈবু লৈবাক অসিগী কন্সটিটিউশনগী আৰ্টিক্ল ৩৪২ (১)গী মখাদা এস টিগী লিষ্টতা চলহন্নবা য়েলহেইমী ফুৰুপ অমা ওইবগী মশাগী শক্ত কজনা জাকৌ পীলু হায়বসি মীয়ামগী দিমাপনি। কন্মিটি অসিনা লানখংবিবা মেমোৰেন্দম অমগী পাউবু ওইনা কুমজা ২০১৩গী মে ২৯দা ইন্দিয়া গভৰ্ণমেণ্টনা মণিপুর লৈজাকী মথৌ তাবা দোক্লেমেণ্টশিংগা লোয়ননা ৰেকমেদেসন থাৱকজ হায়না চেইৱকবিবা লৈছে।

অদুৰ ওসি ফাওবা মণিপুর লৈজাকী পাউবু অমতা পীবিদনা লৈরি।

মহাক্ৰা মখা তানা হায়বি, মণিপুরদা বি জে পিগী চুংশিন্নবা অমৌবা লৈজাক অমা লিংলবা তুন্দা

লৌখিবা ৰাৱেপশিং :

অহানবা-মণিপুর গভৰ্ণমেণ্টনা মীতৈ/মৈতৈবু এস টি লিষ্টতা চলহন্নবা ষ্টেট লৈজাকী ৰেকমেদেসন গভৰ্ণমেণ্ট ওফ ইন্দিয়া লাফিৰা ওক্টোবৰ ২০ ফাওবগী মনুদা থাগবনি।

অনীশুবা-মখকী ৰাৱেপ নম্বৰ-১দা পীৰিবা মতমগী মনুদা মণিপুর লৈজাকী থবক্তা ওহোত্ৰবদি মখল মখা কয়গী অকনবা ষোঙাঙং চঙশিন্নবা অমতা ওইনা লেপ্পৰে।

লৈছে। ঐশোয়না কৰিগীদমতা শোখদুনা লৈহৌবনি হায়বসি পুনা ৰম্মিমৰগা থবক্তা ওহোত্ৰবদি মখল মখা কয়গী অকনবা ষোঙাঙং চঙশিন্নবা অমতা ওইনা লেপ্পৰে।

কুমজা ২০১৩দা ইন্দিয়া গভৰ্ণমেণ্টনা পীৰিবা এস টি দিমাপ অদু ওসি ফাওবা ফব্বা ওমদনা লৈরি। প্ৰাইম মিনিষ্টাৰ নৱেন্দ্ৰ মোদীনা লুচিংবা গভৰ্ণমেণ্টনা হফতুস লৈবাক অসিদা চননৱা ও বি সিগী চাকথুং দৌ-থোক্ৰা নেসনল বেকৱাৰ্ড ক্লাসেস অমা ওইনা কন্মিসন অমা শেখৰা হোংনৰি। সেণ্ট্ৰেল গভৰ্ণমেণ্টনা পায়খংলিবা যৌৱাং অসিনা মথং চইদিগীদি হাৱা ও বি সি চাকথুং ফলে হায়দুনা নুঙাইৱশিং অদু মখা তানা ফাওবগী ...মখা লামায় ৩ কলম ৪

Figure 4.15, Lead story on Hueiyen Lanpao on 25th September 2017 in Bengali script

To make the comparison of these news stories, segments of the newspapers lead story is taken into account and are illustrated in Figures -

In this illustration, I will start by breaking down the headline of each story word by word, keep in mind that the words are transliterations of Manipuri script to Bengali script and vice versa.

‘মীতৈ/মৈতৈবু সেদুল্ল ট্ৰাইব লিষ্টতা চলহন্নবা ফমখিবা মীয়ামগী অচৌবা মীফম’

1 2 3 4 5

The headline of the story in Manipuri script

Figure 4.16

‘রেকমেন্ডেসন|ওক্টোবর|২০|ফাওবদা|থাগদবনি’
A B C D E

The headline of story written in Bengali script

Figure 4.17

In this illustration, focusing on the transliteration of Bengali script to Manipuri script and vice versa, the headlines in Figure 4.17 and Figure 4.18 are in Manipuri script and Bengali script respectively and to translate in English would be “**recommendation should be sent before 20th October**”, earlier in Figure 4.4.1, It was explained how the transliteration of the proper nouns – JAWARHARLAL NEHRU MANIPUR DANCE ACADEMY, IMPHAL into Manipuri script occurred in the headings of a newspaper advertisement. Here, even though it is a similar scenario, the transliteration is between the orthography of Manipuri script and the Bengali script.

In Figure 4. 17 the sentence has been broken down the sentence into each word and are number coded, and in Figure 4.18 similarly, the sentence is broken down into each word and are letter coded to make the comparison easier for those who are not familiar with neither of the script. The numbers in Figure 4.17 corresponds to the letters in Figure 4.18 i.e., the word in 1 is pronounced the same way as the word in A, 2 is also pronounced similarly as in the word in B and soon.

To get a better idea it is illustrated below -

রেকমেন্ডেশন → ᱫᱷᱟᱱᱵᱟᱫᱽ

In the above illustration, both these words are the transliteration of the English word “RECOMNDATION, ” and they are read or pronounced as it would be pronounced in the English language as “RECOMMENDATION, ” and it still does convey the same meaning of recommendation. Of course there will always be significant differences in the orthography of two writing system and it may and will be a cause of confusion of two writing system are used in the same language, but the point here is this, unlike the textbooks that are mixed with English words in English orthographies, it seems not the case in newspapers.

Continuing the breakdown of the headline, next the second word in the sentence coded 2 and B, as illustrated below-

ᱦᱚᱱᱚᱛᱤᱨᱫᱽ → ওক্টোবর

Both these words are again the transliteration of the word “October” they are both pronounced similarly to the pronunciation of the English vocabulary, again a classic example of transliteration. Next in the Figure..... Follows another transliteration between the Bengali and the Manipuri script, but there is a catch, it is the number system that had been transliterated – the number 20 (twenty), in the illustration code 3 in Figure no..... is written in the Bengali numerical which represents the value of 20 (twenty) and similarly in Code C of Figure no.... the numerical value of 20 (twenty) is represented in the Manipuri numerical system of 20.

The remaining two words in each of the Manipuri script and the Bengali script – 4 with D and 5 with E are vocabularies in the Manipuri language; this is further explained below,

দৈল্লচন → ফাওবদা

These two words in the Manipuri vocabulary which means ‘within,’ but the meaning differs from the usage of this word in the sentences. The actual pronunciation of the word is “fou-ba-da” or “pho-ba-da” in the Manipuri vocabulary. Moreover, the last words in each of the headlines in the Manipuri and the Bengali, i.e., code 5 and code E are also a transliteration of a word in the Manipuri vocabulary which according to this particular sentence means “should be sent” or “must be sent.”

The illustration given above shows the usage of two writing system in the Manipuri language especially in newspapers and the inconsistencies in orthography when it comes to textbooks prescribed in the schools by the State Board, which possess a great threat if they are not rectified as soon as possible.

In this part of the paper, we will be discussing and interview that was conducted with an official spokesperson from the Directorate of Language Implementation and Planning, Government of Manipur, the governing body that is responsible for the implementation of the Manipuri script in the education system back in 2006. According to Santosh Sanasam (Sanasam, 2017), the introduction of the Manipuri script as a part of the syllabus marks a crucial change in the Manipur, although the spoken Manipuri language has been the official language of the state, the script has been the subject of protests and public unrests for so long. Ten years after the introduction of the script, the students have graduated high schools and pre-university with no knowledge of the Bengali script, and for the first time in these students will be the first batch of generation which will be enrolled in colleges wherein they will be using the Manipuri script if they chose to the language as a part of their syllabus such as MIL (Major Indian Language) or as an elective, earlier the language was in Bengali script. To facilitate these new batch of ‘Manipuri’ educated folks, the textbooks that were printed in the Bengali script have undergone the process of transliteration, for now only the text books which are meant for the initial semester are

transliterated as these students go higher up in their semester, i.e. the next semester, the prescribe textbooks shall be transliterated in time. But there is a catch, the teachers/lecturers who will be assigned to take the classes for these students are not well equipped with the knowledge of the Manipuri script, meaning – even though there the Manipuri script has been part of the syllabus, majority of the students chose the Bengali script version of the Manipuri subject in colleges, but with the removal of the Bengali script version of the Manipuri, there will be a sudden rise in the number of students and the teachers who were teaching the Bengali script version of the Manipuri will have to undergo special training program to learn the script, keep in mind the language remains the same, the script changed.

He further added that there has been concerned and queries raised by the students as well as the parents on how equipped or trained the lecturers are who will be assigned to teach the language, but he assured that all the necessary steps have been taken care and if anything more has to be done, it shall be done at the earliest. Training programs and orientation programs have been conducted to train the teachers and assured the students that they are in good hands.

He also added that, since Manipur is a state wherein there are many ethno-linguistic communities, the imposition of this Manipuri language as a compulsory paper is absent, and it cannot be done so, since most of these ethnic communities, here, tribal communities have their mother tongue. There are cases wherein most if the Manipuri students whose mother tongue is Manipuri have opted Additional English as an elective paper and most of these tribal students whose mother tongue is not Manipuri have chosen the Manipuri language as an elective and surprisingly these tribal students have secured the highest positions in exams. Here the context of the attitude towards the language by the Manipuris becomes a question.

When the question of inconsistencies in the spellings was brought up, he added that the department is aware of the problem, but he commented that this is a minor issue and can be rectified, the question of how and when wasn't answered, rather he points out that the issue with the spelling occurred only the words that are not an apart of the Manipuri language vocabulary.

Another interview with Prof Yashawanta Chungkham from the Department of Linguistics, Manipur University reveals a different perspective on the subject of inconsistencies in the spelling (Chungkham, 2017). He mentioned, there is many issues in the Manipuri writing system when it comes to writing words that are not a part of the Manipuri vocabulary – he terms them

as ‘borrowed phonemes’, words such as “structure”, “class”, etc. are not part of the Manipuri vocabulary but they have become a part of the language with time, there is no problem with incorporating words that are not part of the vocabulary, it has to be incorporated – with changing times.

The problem with the spellings is not new to the state, when the Bengali script was introduced in Manipur in the 18th century, there was issue with words in the Manipuri vocabulary where the letters in the Bengali script were not able to make the right phonetic sound, this was rectified in the early 1920s when a committee was formed to come up with a standard set of words that were meant to put an end to the issue of spelling. Moreover, so the present day writing system of the Manipuri language in Bengali script does not have any difficulties with any ‘borrowed words.’

He further added, in the case of the Manipuri script, the situation is the same but the extent of the issue is tremendous, the script was made mandatory in the school syllabus in 2006, it has been ten years now, and there has not been a single attempt from the Government. He affirms that the books that are printed as prescribed syllabus text book in schools have many spelling errors and thus year, i.e., 2017, the script will be introduced in college replacing the Bengali script and this will create even more issue.

He made another comment in the issue with transliteration with regards to the problem with the spellings, he explained, for a student who has been taught and educated in the Manipuri script with no knowledge of the Bengali script, he/she cannot be told to refer only to the books that are only transliterated by the Government for the sake of ‘syllabus’ purpose only, for instance, there is a book on History published only in the Bengali script and not in any other script, he or she who has no knowledge of the Bengali script will not be able to read the book at all, and even if through extensive campaigns and resources poured into the process of transliterating these books from Bengali to Manipuri, the issue with the spellings will come in and will create havoc. He also mentioned that most of the books that have been transliterated had been recalled because there were so many errors made in these books to such an extent that the books had become unreadable.

He believes that it is a waste of money and time only to teach and educate these young generations without fixing the issue with the spellings first, leaving money and time aside, 10

years ago marked the creation of a new set of generations, the educated ‘Manipuris’, they have learnt this writing system with the issue of spellings for 10 years, the concerned governing body should have rectified this issue before the time of implementation of the language because hopefully this issue shall be rectified and these folks who have graduated prior to the rectification of the spellings shall suffer if new spellings are introduced.

“It is late but not too late,” he quoted, the concerned authorities should have fixed this issue a long time ago, the most concerning part is, there seems to be no cooperation between the Government and the experts of the language in bringing about an end to this madness.

He further added that it is not credible to take data from newspapers right now if a research in the cosmology, orthography, etc.. has to be conducted because the truth is these newspaper publishers who are publishing in Manipuri script faces many issues when it comes to typing words that are ‘borrowed’ and some of these borrowed words differ from one newspaper to another.

To give you a better idea on his comment, take an example of a book that you are going published in Manipuri script the spellings in these books for certain words will become the writer’s own interpretation and thus become bias, better yet, the readers may not interpret these ‘words’ in the way the writer intends to. So the spelling becomes one’s personal choice since there is no standardization in the spellings of these ‘borrowed’ words. This has also been one of the major cause of concern when it comes to writing exams and in dictionaries of Manipuri script – he asserted, what is the point of referring to a dictionary other than looking for the meaning – to check the spellings as well, the English dictionary has a standard set of words with definite spellings, here in the case of Manipuri, no standardization of spellings on words means different spellings in different dictionaries – causing more trouble than results.

5. Conclusion and Summary

Digraphia is not a new phenomenon, and from the literature reviews the reality is clear, a language may die but the script may not (Berlanda, 2006). The usage of the Roman English and the Cyrillic scripts in newspapers advertisements and public signage draws similar conclusion can be in the cases of the Manipuri script. Moreover, the shift from Urdu to Devanagari among the population of Old Delhi which has a lot to do with cultural and nationality can be taken as a

reflection of what happened during the revival of the Manipuri script. What was presumed the death of the Manipuri script in the 18th century is rising back to its original glory, and shortly the Manipuri script will have replaced the Bengali script completely, but it is hard to tell when? The study gave a good insight on the current linguistic situation of the Manipuri language, though the ultimate aim of the study is to learn to what an extent the usage of two different writing systems can have an impact on the everyday lives of the Manipuris, the study found more questions than answers – taking the data from the responses from the high school students on the usage of the Manipuri script outside school, which it turns out to be almost negligible and the usage of Roman words in English orthography within the writing system of the Manipuri Language begs the question – will the language be truly able to adopt to the changing time without losing its identity.

5.1.Limitations

- The survey size should have been large.
- Most of the newspaper publishers refused to comment on this trend of shifting from one script to another.
- The time constraints made it difficult to interview scholars and experts on the script.

5.2.Scope for future studies

The steady shift from the Bengali script to the Manipuri script is relatively a new scenario in the state, and it has been ten years since the script was made mandatory in school, so there will be cases of adult illiteracy affecting the script choice in the future among the millennials. Moreover, the matter of spelling constraints, and script choice can open up more scope of researches.

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