RESEARCH ARTICLE

LANGUAGE ENDANGERMENT: A CASE STUDY OF TIWA, AN ENDANGERED LANGUAGE OF NORTH EAST INDIA

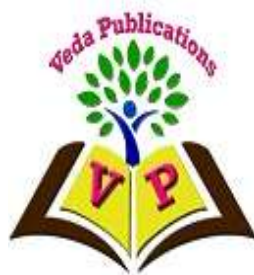Pranjit Dewri [1] , Dr. D. Mary Kim Haokip [2]

[1](Ph.D. Scholar, Assam University, Silchar, Assam.)
[2](Assistant Professor, Assam University, Assam.)

ABSTRACT

The aim of the paper is to discuss the nature and extent of language endangerment with special reference to Tiwa, an indigenous tribal community settled mainly in the states of Assam and Meghalaya in the north eastern part of India. In Assam, Tiwas are found in Karbi Anglong, Nagaon, Morigaon, Dhemaji and Kamrup districts and in Meghalaya, they are concentrated in the Ri-bhoi district. According to the 2011 census of Assam, the total population of Tiwa community was 3,71,000 and out of the total population only 31,421 can speak the language. Linguistically, Tiwa also known as 'Lalung' is a Bodo-Garo language belonging to the Tibeto-Burman sub group of the Sino-Tibetan language family. According to the UNESCO report (2003), Tiwa is one of the endangered languages of the North-East India. This community is settled in three regions, hills, near to the hills and in plains area. Those who are settled in hills are known as *Hajowali,* foot-hills area as *Datiwali,* and in plains area as *Tholuwali* respectively. The paper aims to look into the language endangerment of Tiwa and the causes that leads to language endangerment. The attitudes of the native speakers towards the language will also be assessed and the suggestions to save the language from further endangerment will also be given.

Keywords: *Tiwa, Status of Language, Attitude, Endangerment*

1. INTRODUCTION

An endangered language is a language that is at a risk or fear of extinct or falling out of use. If the language dies then gradually the identity of the community will also die. According to UNESCO report 2021, 40% of the estimated 7,000 approximate languages around the world are endangered, out of which most of them are indigenous languages. The phenomenon leading towards the extinction or loss of a language is known as language endangerment. The primary drivers of indigenous language loss involves different factors i.e. social, economic, and political subjugation of Indigenous peoples, including centuries of social exclusion and poverty, genocide, forced displacement, policies of assimilation etc.

2. TIWA: AN INTRODUCTION

Tiwa also known as 'Lalung' is a Bodo-Garo language, belonging to the Tibeto-Burman sub-group of the Sino-Tibetan language family. Robbins Burling (1983) classifies the North-Eastern Indian Tibeto-Burman languages into three areas: Central, Eastern, and the Western. According to this classification, Tiwa language is placed in the Central Area and comes under the Bodo-Koch sub group having close similarities with the Kokborok language. This language is spoken in the states of Assam and Meghalaya of north east India. In Assam, they are settled mainly in Nagaon, Karbi Anglong, Morigaon, Kamrup (Metro), and Dhemaji districts. In Meghalaya, they are concentrated in the Ribhoi district. The community is known by different names based on their area of settlement:

(1) The people settled in the hills are known as *Hajowali*

(2) Near to the hills as *Datiwali*

(3) Plains as *Tholuwali* respectively.

3. FACTORS RESPONSIBILITY FOR LANGUAGE ENDANGERMENT

UNESCO Ad Hoc Expert Group on Endangered Languages has presented a draft report on 2003 entitled *Language Vitality and Endangerment*. In this draft, they discuss in detail the six major factors for language endangerment but none of these factors should be used alone. A language that is ranked highly endangered according to one criterion may deserve immediate and urgent attention due to other factors. The six factors are: 1) Intergenerational Language Transmission; 2) Absolute Number of Speakers; 3) Proportion of Speakers within the Total Population; 4) Trends in Existing Language Domains; 5) Response to New Domains and Media; and 6) Materials for Language Education and Literacy.

3.1. Intergenerational Language Transmission

The most commonly used factor in evaluating the vitality of a language is whether or not it is being transmitted from one generation to the next (Fishman 1991). Endangerment can be ranked on a continuum from stability to extinction. Even "safe", however, does not guarantee language vitality, because at any time speakers may cease to pass on their language to the next generation. Six degrees of endangerment may be distinguished with regard to Intergenerational Language Transmission:

Safe (5): The language is spoken by *all generations.* There is no sign of linguistic threat from any other language, and the intergenerational transmission of the language seems uninterrupted.

Stable yet threatened (5-): The language is spoken in most contexts by all generations with unbroken intergenerational transmission, yet multilingualism in the native language and one or more dominant language(s) has usurped certain important communication contexts. Note that multilingualism alone is not necessarily a threat to languages.

Unsafe (4): Most but not all children or families of a particular community speak their language as their first language, but it may be restricted to specific social domains (such as at home where children interact with their parents and grandparents).

Definitively endangered (3): The language is no longer being learned as the mother tongue by children in the home. The youngest speakers are thus of the *parental generation*. At this stage, parents may still speak their language to their

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children, but their children do not typically respond in the language.

Severely endangered (2): The language is *spoken* only by *grandparents and older generations*; while the parent generation may still *understand* the language. They typically do not speak it to their children.

Critically endangered (1): The youngest speakers are in the *great-grand parental generation*, and the language is not used for everyday interactions. These older people often *remember* only part of the language but *do not use* it, since there may not be anyone to speak with.

Extinct (0): There is no one who can speak or remember the language.

Table 1: Degree of Endangerment

Degree of Endangerment	Grade	Speaker Population
safe	5	The language is used by all ages, from children up.
unsafe	4	The language is used by some children in all domains; it is used by all children in limited domains.
definitively endangered	3	The language is used mostly by the parental generation and up.
severely endangered	2	The language is used mostly by the grandparental generation and up.
critically endangered	1	The language is used mostly by very few speakers, of great-grandparental generation.
extinct	0	There exists no speaker.

3.2. Absolute Number of Speakers

A small speech community is always at risk and a small population is much more vulnerable to decimation (e.g. by disease, warfare, or natural disaster) than a larger one. A small language group may also merge with a neighbouring group, losing its own language and culture.

3.3. Proportion of Speakers within the Total Population

The number of speakers in relation to the total population of a group is a significant indicator of language vitality, where "group" may refer to the ethnic, religious, regional, or national group with which the speaker community identifies. The following scale can be used to appraise degrees of endangerment

Table 2: Proportion of speakers within the total reference population

Degree of Endangerment	Grade	Proportion of Speakers Within the Total Reference Population
safe	5	All speak the language.
unsafe	4	Nearly all speak the language.
definitively endangered	3	A majority speak the language.
severely endangered	2	A minority speak the language.
critically endangered	1	Very few speak the language.
extinct	0	None speak the language.

3.4. Trends in Existing Language Domains

Where, with whom, and the range of topics for which a language is used directly affects whether or not it will be transmitted to the next generation.

Universal use (5): The language of the ethnolinguistic group is the language of interaction, identity, thinking, creativity, and entertainment, and is actively used in all discourse domains for all purposes.

Multilingual parity (4): One or more dominant languages, rather than the language of the ethnolinguistic group, is/are the primary language(s) in most official domains: government, public offices, and educational institutions. The language in question, however, may well continue to be integral to a number of public domains, especially in traditional religious institutions, local stores, and those places where members of the community socialize. The coexistence of the dominant and non-dominant languages results in speakers' using each language for a different function (*diglossia*), whereby the non-dominant language is used in informal and home contexts and the dominant language is used in official and public contexts. Speakers may consider the dominant language to be the language of social and economic opportunity. However, older members of the community may continue to use only their own minority language. Note that multilingualism, common throughout the world, does not necessarily lead to language loss.

Dwindling domains (3): The non-dominant language loses ground and, at home, parents begin to use the dominant language in their everyday interactions with their children, and children become *semi-speakers* of their own language (*receptive bilinguals*). Parents and older members of the community tend to be productively bilingual in the dominant and indigenous languages: they understand and speak both. Bilingual children may exist in families where the indigenous language is actively used.

Limited or formal domains (2): The non-dominant language is used only in highly formal domains, as especially in ritual and administration. The language may also still be used at the community centre, at festivals, and at ceremonial occasions where these older members of the community have a chance to meet. The limited domain may also include homes where grandparents and other older extended family members reside, and other traditional gathering places of the elderly. Many people can understand the language but cannot speak it.

Highly limited domain (1): The non-dominant language is used in very restricted domains at special occasions, usually by very few individuals in a community, e.g. ritual leaders on ceremonial occasions. Some other individuals may remember at least some of the language (*rememberers*).

Extinct (0): The language is not spoken at any place at any time.

Table 3: Domains and Functions

Degree of Endangerment	Grade	Domains and Functions
universal use	5	The language is used in all domains and for all functions.
multilingual parity	4	Two or more languages may be used in most social domains and for most functions.
dwindling domains	3	The language is in home domains and for many functions, but the dominant language begins to penetrate even home domains.
limited or formal domains	2	The language is used in limited social domains and for several functions.
highly limited domains	1	The language is used only in a very restricted domains and for a very few functions.
extinct	0	The language is not used in any domain and for any function.

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3.5. Response to New Domains and Media

New areas for language use may emerge as community living conditions change. While some language communities do succeed in expanding their own language into the new domain, most do not.

Schools, new work environments, new media, including broadcast media and the Internet, usually serve only to expand the scope and power of the dominant language at the expense of endangered languages. Although no existing domains of the endangered language may be lost, the use of the dominant language in the new domain has mesmerizing power, as with television. If the communities do not meet the challenges of modernity with their language, it becomes increasingly irrelevant and stigmatized.

In education, assigning criteria can be based on two dimensions: up to what level, and how broadly across the curriculum, the endangered language is used. An endangered language which is the medium of instruction for all courses and at all levels will rank much higher than an endangered language that is taught only one hour per week. All new domains, be they in employment, education, or the media, must be considered together when assessing an endangered language community's response.

Table 4: Response to new domains and media

Degree of Endangerment	Grade	New Domains and Media Accepted by the Endangered Language
dynamic	5	The language is used in all new domains.
robust/active	4	The language is used in most new domains.
receptive	3	The language is used in many domains.
coping	2	The language is used in some new domains.
minimal	1	The language is used only in a few new domains.
inactive	0	The language is not used in any new domains.

3.6. Materials for Language Education and Literacy

Education in the language is essential for language vitality. There are language communities that maintain strong oral traditions, and some do not wish their language to be written. In other communities, literacy in their language is a source of pride. In general, however, literacy is directly linked with social and economic development. Study materials need to cover all the topics and for various age group and for different language levels.

Table 5: Materials for Language Education and Literacy

Grade	Accessibility of Written Materials
5	There is an established orthography, literacy tradition with grammars, dictionaries, texts, literature, and everyday media. Writing in the language is used in administration and education.
4	Written materials exist, and at school, children are developing literacy in the language. Writing in the language is not used in administration.
3	Written materials exist and children may be exposed to the written form at school. Literacy is not promoted through print media.
2	Written materials exist, but they may only be useful for some members of the community; and for others, they may have a symbolic significance. Literacy education in the language is not a part of the school curriculum.
1	A practical orthography is known to the community and some material is being written.
0	No orthography available to the community

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3.6.1. Language Attitudes and Policies

The maintenance, promotion, or abandonment of non-dominant languages may be dictated by the dominant linguistic culture, be it regional or national. The linguistic ideology of a state may inspire linguistic minorities to mobilize their populations toward the maintenance of their languages, or may force them to abandon them. These linguistic attitudes can be a powerful force both for promotion and loss of their languages.

Members of the dominant culture shape the ideological environment, propagating a value system in which their own language is seen as a positive asset, and believed to be a unifying symbol for the region or state. When several larger linguistic communities compete for the same political or social space, they may each have their own conflicting linguistic attitudes. This leads to the general perception that multiple languages cause divisiveness and are a threat to national unity. The fostering of a single dominant language is one attempt to deal with this *real* or *merely perceived* threat. In doing so, the governing body may legislate the use of language. Accordingly, the policies may discourage or even prohibit the use of other languages. National policy, including the lack of overt policy, has in any case a direct impact on the language attitude of the community itself.

3.6.2. Language Attitudes and Policies: Dominant and Non-dominant Language Communities

A country's government may have an explicit language use policy for its multiple languages. At one extreme, one language may be designated as the sole official language of the country, while all others are condemned. At the other extreme, all languages of a nation may receive equal official status. Equal legal status, however, does not guarantee language maintenance and long-term vitality of a language.

3.7. Governmental and Institutional Language Attitudes and Policies, Including Official Status and Use

Governments and institutions have explicit policies and/or implicit attitudes toward the dominant and subordinate languages.

Equal support (5): All of a country's languages are valued as assets. All languages are protected by law, and the government encourages the maintenance of all languages by implementing explicit policies.

Differentiated support (4): Non-dominant languages are explicitly protected by the government, but there are clear differences in the contexts in which the dominant/official language(s) and non-dominant (protected) language(s) are used**.** The government encourages ethno linguistic groups to maintain and use their languages, most often in private domains (as the home language), rather than in public domains (e.g. in schools). Some of the domains of non-dominant language use enjoy high prestige (e.g. at ceremonial occasions).

Passive assimilation (3): The dominant group is indifferent as to whether or not minority languages are spoken, as long as the dominant group's language is the language of interaction. Though this is not an explicit language policy, the dominant group's language is the *de facto* official language. Most domains of non-dominant language use do not enjoy high prestige.

Active assimilation (2): The government encourages minority groups to abandon their own languages by providing education for the minority group members in the dominant language. Speaking and/or writing in non-dominant languages is not encouraged.

Forced assimilation (1): The government has an explicit language policy declaring the dominant group's language to be the only official national language, while the languages of subordinate groups are neither recognized nor supported.

Prohibition (0): Minority languages are prohibited from use in any domain. Languages may be tolerated in private domains.

Table 6: Government Attitudes toward Language

Degree of Support	Grade	Official attitudes toward Language
equal support	5	All languages are protected.
differentiated support	4	Minority languages are protected primarily as the language of the private domains. The use of the language is prestigious.
passive assimilation	3	No explicit policy exists for minority languages; the dominant language prevails in the public domain.
active assimilation	2	Government encourages assimilation to the dominant language. There is no protection for minority languages.
forced assimilation	1	The dominant language is the sole official language, while non-dominant languages are neither recognized nor protected.
prohibition	0	Minority languages are prohibited.

3.8. Community Members' Attitudes toward their own Language

Members of a speech community are not usually neutral towards their own language. They may see it as essential to their community and identity and promote it; they may use it without promoting it; they may be ashamed of it and, therefore, not promote it; or they may see it as a nuisance and actively avoid using it.

When members' attitudes towards their language are very positive, the language may be seen as a key symbol of group identity. Just as people value family traditions, festivals and community events, members of the community may see their language as a cultural core value, vital to their community and ethnic identity. If members view their language as hindrance to economic mobility and integration into mainstream society, they may develop negative attitudes toward their language.

Table 7: Community Members' Attitudes toward Language

Grade	Community Members' Attitudes toward Language
5	All members value their language and wish to see it promoted.
4	Most members support language maintenance.
3	Many members support language maintenance; others are indifferent or may even support language loss.
2	Some members support language maintenance; others are indifferent or may even support language loss.
1	Only a few members support language maintenance; others are indifferent or may even support language loss.
0	No one cares if the language is lost; all prefer to use a dominant language.

3.8.1. Language Attitudes and Policies: Interaction and Social Effects

Attitudes towards the language be they positive, indifferent, or negative, interact with governmental policy and societal pressures to result in increased or decreased language use in different domains.

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In many cases, community members abandon their language because they believe they have no alternative, or because they do not have enough knowledge about the long-term consequences of the "choices" they make. People in such a situation have often been presented with an either-or choice ("either you cling to your mother-tongue and identity but don't get a job," or "you leave your language and have better chances in life"). Actually, maintaining and using both languages will allow even better chances in life.

When languages have an unequal power relationship, members of the subordinate group usually speak both their native language and the dominant language. Speakers may gradually come to use only the dominant language. On the other hand, the subordinate group may resist linguistic domination and mobilize its members to revitalize or fortify their language. Strategies for such linguistic activism must be tailored to the particular sociolinguistic situation, which generally is one of three types:

a. Language Revival: re-introducing a language that has been in limited use for some time, such as Hebrew after the creation of the state of Israel, or Gaelic in Ireland;

b. Language Fortification: increasing the presence of the non-dominant language to counterbalance a perceived linguistic threat of a dominant language, such as Welsh;

c. Language Maintenance: supporting the stable use, in speaking and in writing (where orthographies exist), of the non-dominant language in a region or state with both multilingualism and a dominant language (lingua franca), such as Maori in New Zealand.

For language vitality, speakers ideally not only strongly value their language, but they also know in which social domains their language is to be supported. A positive attitude is critical for the long-term stability of a language.

3.8.2. **Urgency for Documentation**

As guided for assessing the urgency of documenting a language, the types and quality of existing language materials must be identified. This constitutes the factors in the assessment of language endangerment.

3.9.   Amount and Quality of Documentation

Of central importance are written texts, including transcribed, translated, and annotated audio-visual recordings of natural speech. Such information importantly helps members of the language community formulate specific tasks, and enables linguists to design research projects together with members of the language community.

Table 8: Language Documentation

Nature of Documentation	Grade	Language Documentation
superlative	5	There are comprehensive grammars and dictionaries, extensive texts; constant flow of language materials. Abundant annotated high-quality audio and video recordings exist.
good	4	There are one good grammar and a number of adequate grammars, dictionaries, texts, literature, and occasionally updated every day media; adequate annotated high-quality audio and video recordings.
fair	3	There may be an adequate grammar or sufficient amount of grammars, dictionaries, and texts, but no everyday media; audio and video recordings may exist in varying quality or degree of annotation.
fragmentary	2	There are some grammatical sketches, word-lists, and texts useful for limited linguistic research but with inadequate coverage. Audio and video recordings may exist in varying quality, with or without any annotation.
inadequate	1	Only a few grammatical sketches, short word-lists, and fragmentary texts. Audio and video recordings do not exist, are of unusable quality, or are completely un-annotated.
undocumented	0	No material exists.

4. ASSESSMENT OF THE DEGREE OF LANGUAGE ENDANGERMENT FOR TIWA

Based on the factors discussed above regarding responsibility for Language Endangerment, this section tries to discuss the nature and degree of language endangerment in Tiwa.

4.1. Intergenerational Language Transmission

It is important to mention that the Tiwas are settled in three regions of Assam: Hills, foot-hills, and in the plains areas. Those who live in Hills are known as *Hajowali*, those in the foot-hills area as *Datiwali* and those in plains area as *Tholuwali.*

In the case of Hajowali Tiwas, the language is transmitted to the next generation as most of the children are using Tiwa language as their first language. Until they start their formal education, they are mostly monolinguals and are fluent in their mother tongue. In Hajowali Tiwa, intergeneration transmission is still present except in the case of inter marriage. However, in case of Datiwali's Tiwa, intergeneration transmission is declining as in very few families children are using Tiwa as their first language. Datiwalis are multilingual so most of them have shifted to Assamese or the neighboring languages. In Tholuwali areas, the generational transmission is rapidly declining. Only very few old people are the last speakers of the language. Parents are no longer passing down their language to the younger generation. In many homes, the state language, Assamese is replacing their mother tongue and is becoming their first language. Therefore, this language can be said to be as unsafe and is gradually moving towards definitely endangered.

4.2. Absolute Number of Speakers

According to the Ethnologue Report 2001, the total population of Tiwa is 1, 70,622 and out of this only 27,100 can speak the language. In the Assam census report of 2011, the total population of Tiwa is 3, 71,000 (approx.) and out of this population only 31,421 can speak the Tiwa language. Considering the total number of speakers, Tiwa is a severely endangered language.

4.3. Proportion of Speakers within the Total population

Tiwas are scattered in different geographical regions of Assam and Meghalaya of North East India. The Tiwas are found in hilly villages of Karbi Anglong of Assam and Re-bhoi of Meghalaya, they are bounded by the Karbi, Khasi, Nepali and Assamese speaking community. In plains and foothills area of Nagaon, Karbi Anglong, Dhemaji, Kamrup and Morigaon districts of Assam, they are bounded by the Assamese speaking community and thus Tiwa becomes the linguistically minority language and Assamese becomes the dominant language. As a result, the present generation has adopted the dominant language and are gradually shifting to Assamese language and culture. Therefore, this language can be categorized as critically endangered taking the proportion of speakers within the total population in Assam and Meghalaya.

4.4. Shifts in Domains of Language use

Shifting of mother tongue to other neighboring dominant language is a natural process. English and Assamese play very crucial role in this regard. In hills district of Assam and Meghalaya, English is regarded as prestigious and the younger generation prefer to speak English even if they know their mother tongue. Besides English, Assamese also plays a very vital role in plains and Hills regions of Assam as those who pursue their formal education in Assamese medium schools prefer using Assamese. As a result, Tiwas are slowly losing their language because they have started speaking Assamese in inter and intra communication across different generations in everyday interaction. Hence, most of the Tiwa community people are multilinguals. Therefore, we can say that the use of language in different domains is decreasing rapidly.

4.5. Response to New Domains and Media

Tiwa language finds no place in the public domains as it is neither the official language of the state nor is it the language of education. Therefore, the response of the language to new domains and media is

minimal and is somehow managing in some digital media like Facebook, YouTube, etc.

4.6. Materials for Language Education and Literacy

As Tiwa does not have a script of its own, Assamese script was used earlier but now Roman script is used for writing. Tiwa language is not used in formal education even in the primary level. In 2015, Tiwa Autonomous Council with the collaboration of Tiwa literary group *'Tiwa Mathonlai Tokhra'* appointed language teachers to teach Tiwa language in Tiwa dominated areas of different districts of Assam. However, there is no proper planning regarding the teaching materials and the curriculum. Therefore, the language is not used as a medium of instruction, nor does it find any importance in the curriculum.

4.7. Government and Institutional Language Attitudes and Policies

As mentioned earlier, Tiwa language is not the official language of the state or is use in the administrative language in the Autonomous council area. In all the Tiwa dominated areas, Tiwa is not use even in Tiwa Autonomous Council office. In a secular country like India, the constitution safeguards and protects all the minority languages. According to Bendikter (2013), "The constitution of India includes no definition of linguistic minorities. The Supreme Court defines minority languages as separate spoken languages, does not have a separate script or has no script at all. Thus, although the constitution does not mention the 'non-schedule languages' and thus does not explicitly recognise them as minority language; it does contain a general form of safeguard of the smaller language to protect them from discrimination." Articles which are for minority languages are mentioned below.

Article 29 (1), and (2) are meant for the *'protection of interests of minorities'* which is included in the *'cultural and educational rights'*

In Article 29(1) any *section of the citizens residing in the territory of India or any part of having a distinct language, script or culture of its own shall have the right to conserve the same.*

(2) No citizen shall be denied admission into any educational institutional maintained by the state or receiving aid out of State funds only of religion, race, caste, language or any of them.

Here from the above articles, both are applicable for the Tiwa because, it has own distinct and culture and for which they must have right to conserve for it.

In 'Right *of minorities to establish and administer educational institutions'* and which is also a '*cultural and educational rights'*, of

Article 30(1) states that *All minorities, whether based on religion or language, shall have the right to establish and administer institution of their choice.*

(1a) *In making any law providing for the compulsory acquisitions of any property of any educational institution established and administered by a minority, referred to in clause 1, the state shall ensure that the amount fixed by or determined under such law for the acquisition of such property is such as would not restrict or abrogate the right guaranteed under the clause.*

(2) *The State shall not, in granting aid to educational institutions, discriminate against any educational institution on the ground that it is under the management of a minority, whether based on religion or language.*

In connection to Article 30, the Tiwa community and their pressure groups are fighting for their own educational institution and which is their right, but the government of Assam and India has not taken any necessary steps as per the article.

Article 350(A) is for 'Facilities *for instruction in mother-tongue at primary stage'*, where in detail it states that:

'*It shall be the endeavour of every State and of every local authority within the State to provide adequate facilities for instruction in the mother tongue at the primary stage of education to children belonging to linguistic minority groups; and the President may issue such directions to any State as he considers necessary or proper for securing the provision of such facilities.'*

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Article 350 (A) can be implemented in Tiwa language; although the community people are aware the government is not supportive to minority linguistic groups as per the constitution.

4.8.   Community Members' Attitude towards their own Language and culture

At present, community members' attitude towards Tiwa can be considered as positive in hills area and negative in foot hills and plains area. This can be seen from the fact that the literary organization 'Tiwa Mathonlai Tokhra' and Philanthropic organization are trying hard to develop awareness programs for safe guarding the language and culture. All Tiwa Students Union (ATSU) are also taking some necessary steps like awareness camps for further studies, counselling programs for the students and also for the parents. Many independent scholars of the community are also taking necessary steps for writing and publishing different books in Tiwa language. Centre for Tiwa studies has also taken various projects on documentation of the language. At present, the younger generations are also taking active role in social media for promoting and preserving the language.

4.9.   Type and Quality of Documentation

There is a very limited written literature available in Tiwa language. There are a few books written about the culture in Assamese language. Therefore, we can say, with regard to the type and quality of documentation the language, it is inadequate and still needs a lot of support.

Based on the above discussion, the degree of language endangerment in Tiwa may be summed up in the following table.

Table 9: Estimated Degree of Endangerment of Tiwa

	Grade	Assessment
Intergeneration Language Transmission	4	Unsafe
Absolute number of speaker		27,100
Portion of speaker within the total population	4	severely endangered
Shift in domains of Language use	2	Limited or formal domains
Response to New Domains and Media	1	The language is used in only a few new domains
Materials for Language Education and Literacy	2	Written materials exist but they may be useful only for some members of the community; for others, they may have a symbolic significant. Literacy education in the language is not a part of the school curriculum.
Government and Institutional Language Attitudes and Policies including Official status and Use.	3	Passive assimilation No explicit policy exists for minority language; the dominant language prevails in the public domain
Attitudes of Community Members towards their Language	5	All members value their language and wish to see it promoted.
Type and Quality of Documentation	3	There are some grammatical sketches, wordlist and texts useful for limited linguistics research but with insufficient coverage.

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5. Factors responsible for Endangerment of Tiwa

The factors responsible for language endangerment vary from language to language in certain socio-linguistic settings.

The following factors are responsible for the endangerment of Tiwa language.

1.   Languages are threatened by external forces such as economic, political, religion, cultural or educational subjugation, or by internal forces such as a community's negative attitude towards its own language. At present, for Tiwa, the increasing migration, intermarriage, and rapid urbanization often bring along the loss of traditional ways of life and a strong pressure to speak a dominant language, which is perceived to be necessary for full civic participation and economic advancement.

2.   The rich indigenous culture of Tiwa is gradually disappearing due to globalization, modernization, westernization and urbanization. Only in the Hills area, people are preserving the tradition and culture. This is due to the influence of the dominant culture, urbanization, westernization and globalization.

3.   The older people in Hills area use all the lexical items related to culture, food habits, flora-fauna including medical plants, games, house hold materials etc. However, when in the Plains Tiwa, they do not use any Tiwa lexical items rather they use Assamese language, leading to further language endangerment.

4.   There is no Tiwa medium educational institution for learning or imparting mother tongue education. Therefore, students go to English and Assamese medium schools further leading to language shift and language endangerment.

5.   Tiwa has no script or writing system of its own and this leads to lack of written literature in Tiwa language.

6.   Borrowing is a very common phenomenon among the educated and younger generation. Here, the state dominant language and English languages can be considered as the main killer of the indigenous languages.

7.   Use of folk songs, dances, proverbs and religious practices are almost extinct among the plains area Tiwa, but in Hills area they are still practising and preserving their own cultural rituals.

6. OBSERVATIONS

Tiwa is one of the endangered languages of North East India, as intergenerational transmission is declining due to pressure from the dominant languages. In the hills, Tiwas are multilinguals as they are fluent in their mother tongue, the neighboring language (Karbi) and the state dominant language, (Assamese). They used the three languages in different domains. However, in the plains, they generally speak Assamese in all the domains. Due to this reason, there is shifting of language due to the dominant state language.

There is no mother tongue education and so in plains Tiwa, there is no scope for learning the language. Therefore, it is very important to implement mother tongue education in the formal educational institutions especially in Tiwa dominated areas.

There is an urgent need to improve and develop the status of the language and for which proper planning and documentation is very important for the survival of the language.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

1.   If language dies, the culture and identity of the people also dies. Therefore, it is very important to safeguard the endangered languages and the older generation must pass the language to the younger generation.

2.   Practices of own cultural rituals is very important for preservation of the culture and langauge. Therefore, the community members must continue to practise and preserve the rich cultural and religious heritage.

3. Awareness program about the importance of language and cultural preservation must be organized.

4. Learner's books, dictionaries, grammar books and literary books related to language and culture in Tiwa must be written and published for enriching the literature.

5. Documentation of language, folk songs, folk dances, folk music, cultural rituals etc. are important and it must be available to the younger generation for learning.

6. Workshops related to cultural activities like folk songs, dances etc. can be conducted in different Tiwa villages.

7. The state educational curriculum should give importance to Mother tongue education for protection and preservation of minority and endangered languages like Tiwa.

8. Native speakers also have a major role to play in the maintenance and preservation of the language. They should preserve their language by using it in different domains.

9. Native linguists and language experts can help in the preparation of primers, dictionaries and grammars in the language.

10. Modern technology like online digital archiving can be used for documenting and archiving the language and culture. This can later be used for teaching and learning purposes.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, we can say that language endangerment is increasing due to globalization, modernisation and many other factors. This is particularly true of languages with less number of speakers, like Tiwa, where shifting to the dominant neighboring language is a very common phenomenon. A language is in danger when the native speakers no longer pass their language to the future generation. If the elder generation do not take important measures now, one day all the present endangered languages will also die. Therefore, proper steps should be taken and awareness programs must be conducted regarding all these issues. Keeping this in mind, the present paper attempted to discuss various issues with regard to language endangerment and suggested measures for safeguarding the language and culture of the Tiwas of Northeast India.

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