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**INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP CUM CONFERENCE  
ON  
ENDANGERED AND LESSER - KNOWN  
LANGUAGES (ELKL-13)**

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**BOOK OF ABSTRACTS**

**DEPARTMENT OF LINGUISTICS,  
MADURAI KAMARAJ UNIVERSITY,  
MADURAI**

**In collaboration with**

**CENTRAL INSTITUTE OF INDIAN LANGUAGES,  
MYSURU  
&  
SOCIETY FOR ENDANGERED AND LESSER - KNOWN  
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# **Voices from the Past: Oral History, Identity Reclamation, and Revitalization of Paniya**

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Half of world's languages are endangered. Language extinction erodes cultural heritage, traditional knowledge, and communal identity. Language revitalization sustains intangible cultural heritage and fosters intergenerational transmission. The focus of the study is Paniya, one of Kerala's 36 tribal languages. It is classified as endangered by UNESCO. The study explores the role of oral history in revitalizing Paniya and reclaiming the linguistic and cultural identity. Existing research on Paniya necessitates the creation of linguistic resources for both language learning and revitalization. Available materials on Paniya are limited to a dictionary and some language primers for young learners. Therefore, creating an oral history of the language may give the learners an access to the vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and connected speech. Grounded in indigenous research methodology built on the principles of relationality and reciprocity, the study integrates semi-structured interviews to elicit oral histories, and cultural narratives with the help of Paniya community. The questionnaire is divided into different thematic sections which are further divided into different topics to elicit maximum details.

The findings reveal that (1) oral history is a rich repository of linguistic and cultural content, (2) it evokes feelings of ancestral connection compared to purely structural linguistic documentation and (3) the participatory nature enhances community agency in preservation efforts. This research offers a unique, empirically grounded model by explicitly integrating oral history collection into revitalization efforts. By examining the intersections of language, culture, and identity, this study demonstrates how oral history can inform language revitalization efforts and support community-driven initiatives for linguistic and cultural preservation. Its originality lies in demonstrating the role of cultural memory in reclaiming identity showing that revitalization is as much about restoring belonging as it is about grammar.

***Keywords:*** *Oral History, Language Revitalization, Identity Reclamation, Endangered Languages*

## **Clan names and Nüngo as Identity markers and Speech Register regulators among the Aos**

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**&**

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Among the Aos, the personal name given by parents and grandparents holds great meaning, which is inextricably linked to clan lineage, culture and belief systems. These names are not merely heredity tags but serves as dynamic identity markers, heavily influenced by social behavior and speech registers. In particular, clan names and nüngo (honorific naming) serves as powerful markers of one's ancestral lineage and evokes a sense of belongingness, culturally tying individuals to their ancestral heritage and the status in the community.

Drawing on the methodological framework of Ethnopragnatics as propounded by Cliff Goddard and Anna Wierzbicka, Staurt Hall's theory of cultural identity and Brown and Levison's framework on honorifics, this study attempts to encapsulate the Ao speaker's cultural-internal perspective resulting in ostensible underlying discourse structure of speech register in kinship terms. Additionally, this paper attempts to understand how Speech register reflects the usage of appropriate mode of address, formality level, and social obligations among the Ao Nagas just by knowing someone's clan name and also the rules encircling nüngo (honorific naming), specific clan names and kinship terms uniquely associated only to some specific clan, indicates relational proximities and determine linguistic choices ranging from lexical selection to honorific structures. Furthermore, it will depict how the naming conventions are relevant in the study and comprehension of cultural discourse and identity.

***Key words:*** Culture, Speech Register, Clan names, Honorific naming, Ethnopragnatics.

## **The transition from the Sangpu dialect to the Longsa dialect within the Ao language community**

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Languages are often endangered when speakers shift to a dominant language or adopt bilingual, resulting in a decline in their ancestral tongues. This paper discusses the extinction of Sangpu dialect and its transition to the Longsa dialect. As Mills (2003 to 1926) notes, “Formerly the Sangpur “khel” of Longsa spoke a dialect of their own, but there is now no one alive who knows it” (333). The Sangpu dialect now forgotten has no speakers though few individuals retain a memory of their culture and inheritance. The paper explores the socio-cultural factors underlying the language shift and migration from Sangpuyimti to Sungjung and eventually to Longsa village.

It examines the shift in language preference that led to the adoption of Longsa dialect as their primary language, as it was believed that the people of Longsa preferred to speak a single dialect within the village. By applying Lewis and Simons’ (2010) Expanded Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale and Sasse’s (1992) three phase theory of language death, the study illustrates the phases of language decline to extinction of Sangpu dialect. Additionally, the paper highlights cultural aspects like koralung (crowing stone) and the demon to sprit that used to dwell in the pond called Awatzü, which are significant elements of the Sangpur’s cultural heritage. The central objective of this study is to explore the people of Sangpu and their shift towards the Longsa dialect. Although the Sangpu dialect is no longer spoken, this paper seeks to highlight the past and cultural significance of the Sangpu dialect and its continuous relevance by preserving through written records.

***Key words:*** *Extinct, Language Shift, Sangpu dialect, Longsa dialect, Culture.*

## **Palichi Amman and the Sacred Landscape: Religion and Identity in the Paliyar Tribe**

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The Paliyar tribe of Tamil Nadu, one of the oldest Indigenous communities of South India, has developed a distinctive socio-cultural identity rooted in their close relationship with the forests and mountains of the Western Ghats. Central to their worldview is the worship of Palichi Amman, a forest deity whose presence is invoked annually through elaborate rituals. The oral narratives and songs surrounding Palichi Amman not only reflect their religious beliefs but also serve as crucial vehicles for transmitting cultural memory, tribal vocabulary, and ecological knowledge across generations.

Music plays a central role in Paliyar ritual practices. Instruments such as the flute, kuzhal, thappu, and melam are crafted and played by the community, and the performance of sacred music is believed to summon deities into human bodies. These ritual performances constitute a form of intangible linguistic and cultural heritage, where specific oral expressions, chants, and sacred terms are preserved in ceremonial contexts. Through these traditions, the Paliyars maintain a connection to their sacred landscape, while reinforcing communal identity and continuity.

This paper explores how religion, music, and oral traditions intersect to shape the identity of the Paliyar tribe, with a particular focus on the narratives and rituals surrounding Palichi Amman. By analyzing their ritual vocabulary and sacred performances, the study highlights the importance of language in preserving Indigenous cultural heritage and identity. It also emphasizes the urgent need to document and safeguard the oral and linguistic traditions of lesser-known communities such as the Paliyars, who continue to adapt to modern pressures while striving to retain their ancestral worldview.

**Keywords:** *Paliyar tribe, Palichi Amman, Ritual Identity, Oral traditions, Indigenous religion.*

## An Analysis of Numeral Classifier Usage in Bodo

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Bodo is one of the scheduled languages recognized in the eighth schedule of the constitution and it belongs to the sub-group of TibetoBurman of Sino-Tibetan family. It is spoken mainly in Assam, West Bengal, Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh and Meghalaya states. It is interesting to observe that some morphemes or words found to be present with certain nouns. These grammatical or semantic markers vary according to the nouns that are accompanying with them denoting shape, size and other inherent characteristics of those words. One such obvious feature is numeral classifier.

The presence of numeral classifier is prominent in Bodo language spoken in West Bengal. Hence a field study has been carried out in Kalchini block of Alipurduar. A structured questionnaire consisting of various sentence patterns, word list etc. has been used to elicit the data and they have been analysed. Few examples are exemplified below:

- |    |              |               |                  |                      |
|----|--------------|---------------|------------------|----------------------|
| 1. | <i>aŋne</i>  | <i>Sanei</i>  | <i>bisa:jala</i> | 'I have two sons'    |
|    | I P          | POSS CL two   | son              |                      |
| 2. | <i>ha:bo</i> | <i>manei</i>  | <i>cheyma:</i>   | 'There are two dogs' |
|    | DIST         | CL two        | dog              |                      |
| 3. | <i>aŋne</i>  | <i>goŋnei</i> | <i>no dhon</i>   | 'I have two houses'  |
|    | I P          | POSS CL two   | househave        |                      |

Here one can observe the variation found in the use of classifiers such as *Sa-*, *ma-*, and *goŋ-* based on the nouns that are following although the number of counting is same in all the examples shown. This paper studies in depth in the usage of such classifiers in Bodo spoken in West Bengal which will help to bring out a list of grammatical or lexical markers that are useful to classify the nouns based on their semantic or grammatical qualities.

Sino-Tibetan Family  
Tibeto- Burman Sub family  
Bodo Group  
Bodo  
NumeralClassifiers

**Keywords:** *Linguistic typology, Languages of the Pacific Northwest, Narrative discourse, Main-event line, Morphology*

## **Kui Language and Its Survival**

**Anuja Mohan Pradhan**

Kui is a Dravidian group of language spoken widely in Kandhamal district. The UNESCO code for Kui is “kxu”. Kui language has distinct vocabulary, syntax and grammar of its own. Kui is known for its agglutinative character. Kui has a lot of words in pair which people use in their lyrical hymns. Kui has no hierarchical words, Eenu means You, no other words. Johari is same for all. In oral literature. Kui has rich tradition of songs, hymns, stories, riddles, planting songs, ploughing songs, plant names, Gods, deities and ghosts. Having no officially recognised script, people use Odia script though Odia alphabet is not fully equipped to scribe unique pronunciation of Kui viz. long vowels, long consonants, joint letters, gutturals with regional variations.

The Bible, translated using Odia script with four diacritical marks, OPEPA and KISS use no special signs. KBP method uses two signs extra along with Odia alphabet. At least six set of Kui alphabet which juggle to popularise by some local organisations. Government of Odisha since long tried children education in mother tongue ( kui) but in vain. Besides the non-imparting of education in Kui, many factors responsible for gradual decline. Change in construction of straw thatched houses to tin or concrete roofed houses has pushed back words associated with material, technical and community labour, etc.

Change in dress and fashion, utensils, medicine, antiquities of culture, religion, method of worship and practice of rituals pushed Kui words to oblivion, and brought the concepts and vocabulary alien to Kui language. The poor intergeneration transfer of language, the discontinuity of the community dance and music practice is overshadowed by gushing of Bollywood and Odia movie and album songs. An invert relation is observed between the literate Kui speaking population and creativity. Perhaps, the answer of the problem lies in technological tools of documentation and expansion of language to different genres. Standardisation of writing method is the first step towards creation of Kui written literature.

Kui being a phonetic based language, a slight change of voice modulation completely alters the context and meaning. For example, Daki means Chest, Daaki means skull, etc. Artificial Intelligence (AI) has been successfully used in documentation and translation of other tribal languages. Kui written literature, though meagre in volume, needs to be published and translated. The onus of preservation of Kui language lies on the Kui speaking populace themselves. The language

is a living thing. Unless it is nourished with literature, it is likely to die as many other languages.

**Keywords:** *Kui language, agglutinative, spoken language, oral tradition, script, technology.*

## **Language Policy, Identity, and Education in Jammu and Kashmir: Implications for Endangered and Lesser-Known Languages**

Javaid Aziz Bhat and Arif Hussain Reshi

This paper examines the intersection of language policy, cultural identity, and education in the multilingual region of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K;), with a focus on endangered and lesser-known languages. Recent political reforms and the Jammu and Kashmir Official Languages Act, 2020 have reconfigured the linguistic order by elevating Kashmiri and Dogri to official status alongside Urdu, Hindi, and English, while leaving widely spoken languages such as Gojri, Pahari, Shina, and Balti without formal recognition.

Through historical and policy analysis, the study traces Urdu's entrenched dominance since the late 19th century and its effects on identity, representation, and intergenerational transmission. Education emerges as a decisive arena: while Urdu, Hindi, and English have long shaped curricula, marginalising mother tongues, the National Education Policy (2020) offers an opportunity to expand multilingual education and integrate community languages into early schooling. Case studies from Gujjar, Pahari, and Dogra communities illustrate how linguistic recognition and schooling practices are inseparable from struggles for dignity, cultural pride, and political rights.

The paper also highlights grassroots and institutional initiatives ranging from cultural academies and university centres to community-driven publishing, broadcasting, and digital media—that sustain and revitalise minority languages. By situating J&K;'s case within UNESCO's International Decade of Indigenous Languages (2022–2032), the study underscores both its regional significance and its relevance to global discussions on language endangerment and revitalisation. It argues that safeguarding J&K;'s linguistic heritage requires more than symbolic recognition: it depends on aligning inclusive educational policies with active community participation. Only through such synergy can the region's diverse languages—from Kashmiri and Dogri to Gojri, Pahari, Shina, and Balti—thrive as living vehicles of identity, culture, and knowledge.

**Keywords:** *Jammu and Kashmir; language policy; endangered languages; education; cultural identity; Official Languages Act 2020; Gojri; Pahari; Kashmiri; Dogri*

## Revitalizing Irula language through Dictionary-Making

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This paper attempts to revitalize the endangered Irula language through creation of a dictionary based on songs as collected from Chengalpattu district of Tamil Nadu during Kanniammal festival. The study adopts ethnography as a method for data collection utilizing participant observation and semi-structured interviews in particular. The dictionary is divided into two sections:

1) the first part focuses on compilation of the structural aspect of dictionary, i.e., documenting the sounds (phonetics and phonology), words (lexical choices), and sentence structure (word order, tense and aspect) of the language,

2) the second part discusses the functional aspects of this language, i.e., the social structure and ideology related to the particular Kanniammal festival. In this context, it is noteworthy that owing to the linguistic dominance of Tamil community in Chengalpattu district a shift has occurred in linguistic choice such that the community uses Irula language only during important occasions, like festivals and other rituals. Therefore, this dictionary attempts to compile Irula language using Tamil script for representing Irula words along with English translations. Following is an illustration of the linguistic data as used in the dictionary-making:

Tamil language with Tamil script	Irula language with Tamil script	English meaning
முனை (Munai)	மோனை (Monai)- change in sound	End
விலக்கு (Vilakku)	வலாக்கு (Valakku)- change in sound	Lamp
பிரசாதம் (Prasadham)	கூல் (Kool)	change in word Blessed food

It is to be noted that the dictionary also includes visual pictures to assist easier learning for young children (particularly those between the age of 3-6). In conclusion, this paper contributes to the revitalization of the endangered Irula language using pedagogy as a framework that emphasizes on the theory and practice of teaching and learning leading to linguistic and cultural transmission

**Keywords:** revitalization, dictionary, linguistics, Irula, Tamil Nadu

## **Endangered Voices: Oral Traditions of the Kattunayakan**

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Tamil Nadu is home to thirty-seven Scheduled Tribes, of which the Kattunayakan community occupies a distinctive place owing to its close association with forests and its rich oral heritage. The term Kattunayakan, meaning "Lord of the Forest" or King of the Forest," symbolizes their identity as guardians of nature and knowledge-bearers of forest life. Classified among the six endangered tribal groups of Tamil Nadu alongside the Todavar, Kothar, Kurumar, Irular, and Paninan the Kattunayakans are experiencing rapid socio-cultural change that threatens the continuity of their traditions. Central to their cultural fabric is oral literature, encompassing stories, myths, songs, riddles, proverbs, ritual chants, hunting and occupational songs, and life narratives. The oral literature serves as a living archive that encodes ecological wisdom, social organization, spiritual beliefs, and moral values, thereby shaping the worldview of the community. The proposed article seeks to explore the oral traditions of the Kattunayakan community as both cultural expressions and identity markers. Employing a folkloristic and ethnographic approach, it will collect and analyze oral texts through fieldwork, engaging with elders, storytellers, and community practitioners. The research will investigate how oral narratives function in everyday life, how they transmit knowledge, preserve collective memory, and articulate resilience in the face of modernization, displacement, and state interventions. In doing so, the study will foreground the agency of the Kattunayakans in sustaining their cultural heritage while negotiating contemporary challenges. By critically analyzing these traditions, the research aims to contribute to folklore studies, anthropology, and tribal studies, while generating knowledge relevant for cultural preservation. The outcomes will not only enrich the academic understanding of endangered oral traditions but also highlight their relevance for inclusive development, heritage safeguarding, and the intergenerational transmission of indigenous knowledge.

***Keywords :*** *Kattunayakkan, oral, ethnographic*

## **Echoes of a Dying Tongue: A Field Report on the Moribund Status of Chakpa Phayeng**

**Aadil Amin Kak and Puspa Thounaojam**

This field report presents preliminary findings on the linguistic status of Chakpa Phayeng, a language spoken by the Chakpa community in Phayeng, Manipur. It belongs to the Luish subgroup of the Sino-Tibetan language family. It is associated with dialectal varieties, including Sekmai and Andro. The fieldwork conducted in Phayeng in February 2025 indicates that Chakpa speakers have undergone an almost complete shift to Meeteilon in daily communication. Younger generations no longer use or understand Chakpa, though the language persists in restricted domains such as rituals, ceremonial and religious contexts like the festival of Lai Haraoba. The present fieldwork involved interviews with elders and ritual practitioners, as well as observation of ceremonial practices where Chakpa is used. The findings highlight the sociolinguistic dynamics of language shift, the symbolic function of ritual language, and the urgency of conservation and documentation efforts.

The analysis of the data reveals that Chakpa preserves distinctive lexical items that set it apart from Meeteilon. For instance, in numerals while Meeteilon uses /əmə/ (one), /əni/ (two) and /əhum/ (three), Chakpa retains the unique forms /həta/, /ki ŋ/ and /som/. In body parts and kinship, Meeteilon uses /kok/ (head), /səm/ (hair), /k<sup>h</sup>ut/ (hand), /ipa/ (father), /ima/ (mother) and /ipu/ (grandfather), in contrast, Chakpa uses /helok/, /humi/, /dak<sup>h</sup>u/, /awa/, /aŋa/, and /oksi/ respectively. By presenting these observations, the paper underscores the importance of recognising Chakpa Phayeng as a distinct moribund language. The study will also attempt to discuss methodological challenges encountered in accessing ritual performances and the need for culturally sensitive approaches to documentation. While elders are attempting to revive fragments of the language by teaching the younger generations, these limited community efforts are insufficient to prevent language loss. The study calls for urgent comprehensive documentation before Chakpa disappears entirely and collaborative initiatives to preserve it as part of India's linguistic and cultural heritage, which, once lost, will be almost impossible to retrieve.

**Keywords:** *Chakpa Phayeng, moribund, language shift, cultural heritage.*

## **Vanishing Voices, Fading Culture: The Veddas of Sri Lanka**

**Subathini Ramesh**

The Veddas (Vanniyaletto), the indigenous inhabitants of Sri Lanka, represent one of the oldest surviving communities on the island. Their unique way of life, rooted in hunting, gathering, and deep ecological knowledge, reflects a cultural identity that has endured for thousands of years. Archaeological and historical evidence confirms their presence long before the arrival of Aryan settlers, with their settlements once scattered widely across the island. For centuries, the Veddas adapted to both internal and external pressures, gradually negotiating their existence alongside dominant communities such as the Sinhalese and Tamils. Between the thirteenth and nineteenth centuries, they played a crucial role as a buffer group between these communities, a position that both shaped and complicated their sociocultural standing. Despite this resilience, the Veddas today face a grave threat to their survival as a distinct cultural entity. The forces of modernization, state-led resettlement schemes, and assimilation into dominant social groups have accelerated the erosion of their traditions. Most critically, their language—a vital marker of identity and heritage—has all but disappeared. Once rich with unique vocabulary and structures distinct from Sinhala and Tamil, the Vedda language survives now only in fragments interwoven with colloquial Sinhala. Contemporary Vedda communities retain elements of their ancestral practices, but these are rapidly fading under the weight of cultural homogenization. This study, drawing on fieldwork, historical documentation, and descriptive linguistic analysis, seeks to examine how much of the original Vedda language and cultural practices persist in present-day communities. The findings reveal an alarming pace of decline, underscoring the urgency of documentation and preservation efforts. The loss of the Vedda language is not only a linguistic tragedy but also a profound cultural erasure that highlights broader challenges faced by indigenous peoples in modern nation-states.

***Keywords:*** *Indigenous inhabitants, Cultural identity, Homogenization, Language loss, Heritage preservation*

## **Typological Correlations and Grammatical Patterns in Kumaoni**

**Radhika Singh**

This paper looks at the structure of Kumaoni, an Indo-Aryan language spoken in the Kumaon region of Uttarakhand, through Lehmann's (1973) framework of constituent order correlations for SOV languages. Using data collected directly from native speakers through fieldwork and classroom elicitation, the study explores how elements like postpositions, genitives, adjectives, relative clauses, adverbs, and auxiliaries are ordered in natural speech. The findings show that Kumaoni largely follows the expected head-final patterns, making it a typical postpositional and suffixing SOV language.

Along with word order, the paper also looks at reduplication and deixis. Reduplication is used in both grammatical and expressive ways, while the deixis system in Kumaoni clearly marks person, place, and time. Interestingly, when it comes to negation, Kumaoni shows both pre-verbal and post-verbal placement, which adds to its regional variation and makes it stand out from the usual SOV prediction of verb + negative.

Overall, the paper places Kumaoni within a broader typological context and highlights how the language fits common patterns but also brings its own unique features. This research not only adds fresh data from a less-documented language but also shows how structure and real-life use come together through field-based study.

***Keywords:*** *Kumaoni language, Typology, Indo-Aryan languages, Constituent order correlations, field-work based study.*

## **Comparative Analysis of two Tribal Language Primers and Their Efficacy in Multilingual Education**

**Rajiv Ranjan Mahto and S. Mohammad Fayez**

Language primers are not merely textbooks, albeit important pedagogical tools that influence young children's literacy and sense of identity. Tribal language primers (e.g., Ho, Mundari, Kurukh, Santali, etc.) play a defining role as they are often the first attempts to codify oral traditions into a written form. Although tribal language primers mark the first formal entry point into literacy for indigenous learners, they remain understudied in educational and linguistic research. In the times when indigenous knowledge in tribal culture/s is being documented for their significance in the Indian Knowledge System, it is unfortunate that tribal language primers are rarely studied critically.

In this paper, we present a comparative analysis of Ho and Santali language primers, jointly developed by the CIIL and the NCERT (2024), to examine their linguistic and pedagogical implications. Although language primers do highlight how pedagogy, culture, and identity are shaped through educational material, this study focuses only on the pedagogical aspects. We assess samples offered through the Devanagari script and through a regional dominant language, for the two languages concerned, viz., Ho-Hindi and Ho-Odiya; Santali-Hindi and Sanntali-Odiya. This comparative analysis of the two tribal language primers offers an opportunity to evaluate their efficacy as a bridge course towards achieving the goals of mother-tongue-based education mandated in NEP 2020 (as underscored in the common foreword and introduction of these primers (CIIL and NCERT, 2024)). To analyse their efficacy in pedagogy, we apply two criteria: (i) the language of instruction and (ii) the language of description. We identify that these primers, for example the Ho-Odiya and Ho-Hindi primers, are good for instructed learning, however, not self-sufficient for independent learning. The study underlines that language primers do function not merely as literacy tools but also as active instruments for negotiating linguistic and cultural challenges in multilingual classrooms.

***Keywords:*** Tribal Language Primers, Ho, Santhali and Multilingual Education.

## Dom Prakrit Of Kandhamal: An Endangered Spoken Language Of Odisha

### Kshetrabasi Manseth

The Doms among 93 categories of the Scheduled Caste Communities who have a special ethnic language of their own. People of Gana, Ganda, Pan Community also use the said language who have identical anthropological identity. About 10lacs people in Odisha use this language. Yet it is an endangered language in view of apathetic attitude of the following generation. Prakrit, sa spoken language dates back to 1st to 8th century AD. It belongs to Indo European linguistic Group under Euroasia Chakra. It has a rich oral tradition & grammar. Grammar

1. Noun i.e pertaining to Name, category, objects, verb, quality.
2. Adjective : Adjectives are used in view of the Nature or physical parts of body of a person are mostly used by prefixing them appropriately.
3. Adjective of Adjective: It is a special feature in Dom oral literature. For each Adjective of Adjective a special nomenclature has been fixed. For example Phakphaka Gura – Fine white colour (man).
4. Pronoun :In case of third person singular numbers of English language only the pronoun changes. But in Dom Prakrit the verve form also changes accordingly. For Example He went = So golo , She went = Sa Gali
5. Person : Three kinds of person in use : I went – Muin gale , You went Tui galish , He went – So golo .
6. Tense :Three tenses i.e present, Past tense & Future tense. In case of present tense the expressions under present Indefinite & present perfect continuous there is deviation than any other Indian standard language.
7. Vocabulary: Dom Prakrit being a primitive language has a very limited vocabulary. But it is capable enough to express all human feelings/need. Most of the words of Dom language have close affinity with Prakrit.

Dom Prakrit	Prakrit	English
Kapat	kapata	Door

8. Charya Geetika & Dom Prakri tDom language as an ancient form of prakrit bears close simil arities with the language of Charya Geetika too.

Dom Prakrit	Charyageetika	English
SO	So	He

Dom Prakrit Charyageetika So So English He Dravidian language & Dom Prakrit : Dom Prakrit uses Aryan as well as Dravidian words used in it. In Kandhamal it is called Dom Language.

Tribal groups such as – Paraja, Kisan, Sadri, Halba, Bathudi etc. use similar versions. The Oral literature of Dom Prakrit has abundant Idioms & Phrases, Folktales, Folksongs & Folk Ballads etc.

***Key words:*** Dom Prakrit Language, Eurasia Chakra, Adjective of Adjective, Dravidian Language.

# **Language Contact and Change: A Comparative Study of Gondi**

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The inextricable link between language and power can be studied under what Richard Philipson calls Linguistic Imperialism, which explores the dominance of one language over others. In the Indian context, a hierarchy exists where Scheduled Languages occupy the highest rung of the pyramid, while others are considered socially inferior.

Gondi is one such marginalised Dravidian language, spoken by the Gond Tribe, who make up about 3 crore of the country's population among seven states—Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Maharashtra, and Karnataka. Grierson, in his Linguistic Survey of India, calls Gondi “the mother of all Dravidian Languages”. Despite this, Gondi is considered an offspring of Tamil, Telugu, and others. The word ‘Gond’ itself is attributed to a Telugu word ‘Konda’; but it has its etymology in Gondi itself, where ‘Ganda’ means ‘five’, referring to the five continents in Gondawana land.

After the fall of Gond Kingdom in the 18th century, the language suffered a rapid decline. Even after Independence, the failure to form a state on a linguistic basis and contact with the dominant regional language has led to fragmented varieties of Gondi, often mutually unintelligible. This has led to a hybrid variety of Gondi, for instance, as shown in a survey by Deepa Moni Boruah [5], where the young speakers of Gondi in Madhya Pradesh consider it a dialect of Hindi itself.

This paper attempts to undertake a comparative analysis of the influence of the scheduled languages on Gondi, particularly in lexical, phonological and syntactic aspects. It further aims to inform the recent attempt at standardizing Gondi and the potential strategies to sustain language revitalization.

**Keywords:** *Gondi, Dravidian Language, Linguistic Imperialism, Comparative Linguistics*

## **Language vitality and intergenerational transmission of Koch in Meghalaya**

**Bismita mahanta**

The Koch language, spoken in Meghalaya, and Assam, belongs to the Tibeto-Burman branch of the Sino-Tibetan family. In Meghalaya, Koch speakers are concentrated mainly in the Garo Hills, living alongside larger groups such as the Garo, Hajong, Assamese, and Bengali. UNESCO (2010) classifies Koch as a definitely endangered language, noting that intergenerational transmission has weakened in recent decades. Previous works, including Kondakov's (2014) descriptive study of Koch dialects and Duttamajumder's (2022) analysis of ethnolinguistic vitality, have highlighted both the linguistic richness of Koch and the challenges it faces in a multilingual environment.

However, most existing research has focused either on the structural description of Koch or on its macro-level vitality, with limited attention to how the language is actually maintained or transmitted at the family and household level. There is also a lack of empirical studies linking domain-specific language use with intergenerational practices in Meghalaya, where the Koch remain an understudied minority. Addressing this gap, the present study investigates both community-wide vitality and family transmission patterns in order to understand the micro processes that determine whether Koch is passed on to younger generations.

The present study applies mixed-methods approach, combining a structured survey of 200 respondents from Koch-dominated regions. The survey examines language proficiency, domains of use, and attitudes toward Koch alongside dominant regional languages, while interviews document family histories, marriage practices, and choices related to language use and transmission. The findings reveal that Koch continues to represent cultural identity, especially in rituals and household settings, though its everyday use is declining, particularly among younger generations. By merging domain-use data with family narratives, the study offers a fresh perspective on sociolinguistic research concerning endangered languages in Northeast India and suggests measures to strengthen intergenerational transmission and community-driven maintenance.

**Keywords:** *Koch, language vitality, language maintenance, transmission, Tibeto-Burman*

## **Kinship Terms in Karbi of Kamrup Metropolitan District, Assam**

**Rashmita Rahang**

Karbhis are one of the major and largest tribal communities, and an important ethnic group of Assam. Karbi is the name of the language and its speakers who live in the Northeast, including Meghalaya, Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh, besides Assam. They are also found in Bangladesh and Myanmar. The Karbis are mostly found in Karbi Anglong district in the state of Assam. Linguistically, Karbi belongs to the Tibeto-Burman sub-group of the Sino-Tibetan language family. Ethnically, they belong to the Indo-Mongoloid race. Looking at UNESCO's level of language endangerment, Karbi can be considered as vulnerable. According to Census of India, 2011, there are 5,28,503 Karbi speakers. In terms of number of speakers, it is the third largest minority language of Assam, after Bodo and Mishing. It has basically two dialects- Karbi and Amri Karbi, having ISO codes 'mjw' and 693-3 'ajz', respectively.

Kinship terms are defined as the expressions of language which are used to categories and to identify the people in any family and social circle, based on their relations to one another (Fortes, 2017). Kinship terms reflect both biological relationships and social and cultural structure of society. These also often serve to convey respect and familiarity (Basumatary, 2024). The paper aims to look into the kinship terms in Karbi spoken in Upper Hengrabari area of Kamrup Metropolitan district of Assam. The study included questionnaire and observation methods, including primary and secondary sources of data. The analyses show that in Karbi, kinship terms are well distinguished between certain categories, namely, core kinship terms, ancestral kinship terms, paternal kinship terms, maternal kinship terms, affinal kinship terms, and kinship terms related to one's social status. In addition to that, Karbi also has address and reference terms, which also include honorific terms.

***Keywords:*** *Karbi, Kinship terms, Tibeto-Burman, Kamrup-Metropolitan, Assam*

# **Case Marking and Alignment Patterns in Three Argument Verbs in Chulung Rai Language, a Highly Endangered Language Spoken in Nepal**

**Ichchha Purna Rai  
Man Kumari Limbu**

## **Introduction to the Chulung Language**

The Chulung Rai language spoken in the eastern Nepal is a member of the Rai Kirati under the Tibeto-Burman language family. It is one of the endangered languages of Nepal. To this date, very few speakers from the elder generation – approximately 400 can speak this language fluently. Chulung has SOV word order, all modifiers precede their head. The verb morphology is highly complex; subject and object person markers are realized partly as affixes. There are separate number suffixes and tense markers, some of them followed by a copy of the person marker. Periphrastic tense-aspects (perfect and progressive) are fully grammaticalized. Chulung is morphologically ergative, with a split between 1st person and the rest. Minimal use is made of nonfinite verb forms: Compound verbs consist of two verbs marked for person and tense, subordinators follow inflected verbs' (Limbu, 2007, 2012, Rai, 2007, 2012).

## **Focus on Presentation**

This paper mainly deals with the types of cases found in the Ciling and the case marking in three-argument verbs of the Chulung language. One argument verbs define one argument (S). Two argument verbs define an agent-like (A) and non-agent-like (O) argument. Three-argument verbs define an agent-like (A) and two non-agent-like arguments. Such two non-agent-like arguments are the affected (G) Goal argument or some others say (R) Recipient argument (Poudel, 2009) and the manipulated (T) Theme argument (Bickel, 2010). There are three types of case alignments in three argument verbs. In the first type of case alignments, there are some verbs such as send, cover, etc. in which the Recipient (R) and the Theme (T) are not treated differently from the monotransitive patient (O) i.e., T= P = R. In the second type of case alignments, there are some verbs such as 'block', 'beat', 'smear', 'cut', 'break', 'cover', 'coat', etc. in which the Theme (T) is treated differently from the Recipient (R). In this construction, the Theme (T) is marked with instrumental and the Recipient (R) is unmarked like nominative i.e., T≠ R=O. In the third type of case alignments, there are some verbs such as 'fill', 'keep', 'put', 'fold', 'paint' in which the Recipient (R) is treated differently from the the Theme (T). In this construction, the Recipient (R) is marked

with locative and the the Theme (T) is unmarked like nominative i.e.,  $R \neq T=O$ . These three argument verbs can be categorised into three types: Double Object verb, Primary Object verb and Direct Object verb respectively (Bickel, 2010). Examples from the Chulung language are presented below.

**O=R=T (Nominative)**

- i. Sandes-a ku-cha chithi hakt-e  
Sandes-ERG 3POSS-son [NOM] letter [NOM] send-PST  
Sandes sent his son a letter
- ii. Sandes-a khan tet ma-khum-mett-e  
Sandes-ERG 2SG clothes 3>2-put.on-CAUS-PST  
Sandes made you put on clothes.

**O=R≠ T, OR (Nominative); T (Instrumental)**

- i. kun-a khan tet-a ma-bokt-e  
3SG-ERG 2SG clothes-INS 3>2-cover  
S/he covered you with clothes.
- ii. Sandes-a phendika-a siŋ khel-e  
Sandes-ERG axe-INS firewood cut-PST  
Sandes cut the firewood with an axe.

**O=T≠ R, OT (Nominative), R (Locative)**

- i. kun-a okhati ku-laŋ-mi yokt-e  
3SG-ERG medicine 3POSS-leg-LOC put-PST  
S/he put medicine on legs
- ii. Sandes-a cuwa khore-mi takt-e  
Sandes-ERG water bowl-LOC fill-PST  
Sandes filled the bowl with water.

## Morphophonemics and Morphologically conditioned Alternations in Hrangkhol

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Hrangkhol belongs to the Kuki-Chin subgroup of the Tibeto-Burman language family (Van Bik 2009) and its speakers are approximately 18000-20000 as per the Ethnologue 2019. It has mainly two varieties Sak and Thang. Sak Hrangkhol is found in Dima Hasao district, Assam, and parts of Manipur and Mizoram while Thang Hrangkhol in Hailakandi and Karimganj districts of Assam, and states of Tripura and Mizoram. This paper will focus mainly on the Sak variety of Hrangkhol spoken in Dima Hasao district, Assam, which is identified as the standard dialect of the language.

A total of 300 words has been collected as primary data from Hrangkhol, over a duration of five days from Dima Hasao in Assam and Tripura covering different types of sentences and categories from 10-15 September, 2025. Some of the categories include, verbs, adjectives and narratives. Some of the common stem alternation and morphophonemic change found in the lexical categorization are illustrated in the following table.

Table1: Morphophonemic

Sl.no	Epentheses	Gloss
1	raŋaʈʃak ~ raŋkaʈʃak	gold
2	hor ~ hoŋro	come
3	hero ~ hehiro	excuse

Table 2: Stem alternation

Sl.no	Stem alternation	Gloss
1	dam ~ dâm	healthy
2	ne ~ nek	eat
3	tum ~ tu:m	kiss

The paper will further discuss the more dynamic generalizations that are associated with morphological operation and stem alternation due to the tone or vowel harmony.

**Keywords:** Hrangkhol, morphophonemic change, stem alternation

## **Phonotactic Patterns and Sound-Meaning Mapping in Noiri** **Manali Upadhyay**

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The study examines the distinctive phonotactic configurations and sound-meaning correlations in Noiri, an endangered language spoken by the Noiras (river people) residing along the Narmada Valley in Gujarat, whose cultural identity is deeply intertwined with reverie environments. Although often grouped under the broader Bhili category, Noiri is distinguished by unique phonological features and serves as the dominant language within the home and community, with speakers exhibiting low bilingualism in major regional languages and valuing the maintenance of their vernacular traditions (Verghese and Kumar, 2015). Drawing from fieldwork involving eight informants aged 20 to 70, the study combines natural conversation-based elicitation with a custom questionnaire, focusing on phonological structures in naturally occurring speech.

The phonotactics of Noiri are distinguished by contextual nasalisation in vowels at initial, medial and final word positions, as well as vowel lengthening that forms diphthongs, which is a rare pattern among Indo-Aryan languages. Iconic vowel endings in Noiri map perceptually to the physical attributes of referents, as high front vowel /i/ denotes small/light objects, while back vowels /o/, /u/ correspond to large/heavy ones, and consonant voicing further modulates meaning by object size. Stress assignment deviates from Indo-Aryan norms, where primary stress is typically on syllables with single long vowels and glottalic consonants and is often used contextually for pragmatic emphasis. The methodology integrates distributional analysis of phonological environments, mapping of vowel types to object semantics, and acoustic analysis of tone and stress to inform meaning mapping. These findings suggest that Noiri's prosodic and segmental patterns encode culturally salient indices of gender, plurality, and honorifics, while simultaneously maintaining distinct phonotactic and iconic relationships. The results contribute to both theoretical models of iconicity and documentation of the language.

**Keywords:** *Noiri, phonotactics, endangered language, iconicity*

## **Unmarked and Marked Case Relations in Tai Phake: Evidence from an Endangered Language of Northeast India**

Rita Saha and Najima Begum

Tai Phake is one of the six Tai languages spoken in the Northeastern region of India, primarily in the districts of Dibrugarh and Tinsukia in Assam and in the Changlang district of Arunachal Pradesh. Belonging to the Tai Kadai language family, Tai Phake is a severely endangered language, as listed by UNESCO, with a speaker population of less than 2,000 that is gradually declining. Despite the pressures of language shift and the influence of dominant regional languages such as Assamese and various Tibeto-Burman languages, Tai Phake continues to be a vital marker of cultural identity for the community, serving as a repository of oral traditions, rituals, and collective memory.

This paper examines in detail the case system of Tai Phake, which forms a crucial aspect of its morpho-syntactic structure. The language displays seven case categories: nominative, accusative, dative, instrumental, ablative, associative, and genitive. Among these, the nominative and genitive cases are unmarked, relying heavily on syntactic order and contextual interpretation for their functions. The accusative and dative cases, however, are marked by the same morpheme *ʃa*. The instrumental, ablative, and associative cases are marked through distinct postpositions and particles, which reflect the largely analytic character of Tai Phake, consistent with other members of the Tai language family. By centering on the case system, this study underscores the grammatical strategies through which Tai Phake organizes syntactic roles and semantic relations, highlighting the interaction of marked and unmarked forms, the multifunctionality of morphemes, and the analytic nature of its structure.

***Key words:*** *Tai Phake, Endangered language, Case*

## **Between Archive and Algorithm: AI, Translation, and the Future of Language Documentation in India**

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The emergence of artificial intelligence (AI) and neural machine translation (NMT) technologies has transformed the landscape of linguistic documentation, particularly for endangered and lesser-known languages in India. As automated translation and speech recognition tools proliferate, questions of authenticity, representation, and linguistic equity become increasingly urgent (Bird, 2020; Hellwig & Nordhoff, 2021). This paper critically examines how AI-assisted translation and digital archiving platforms—such as India’s *Bhashini* and *BharatVani* projects—mediate the processes of language documentation, preservation, and revitalization. Drawing on sociolinguistic and digital humanities frameworks (Canagarajah, 2013; Kroskrity, 2009), the study explores the tension between automation and cultural specificity, highlighting the risks of algorithmic homogenization that often accompany machine learning approaches to multilingual data (Hutchins, 2022). The analysis emphasizes the need for hybrid documentation ecologies that integrate community-based translation, human annotation, and ethical technological design. The paper argues that sustainable preservation requires not the replacement of human translators, but their collaboration with AI systems to amplify linguistic diversity and ensure contextual fidelity (Garcia & Wei, 2014). By rethinking “translation” as both a technological and cultural practice, this study situates AI within India’s ongoing struggle to balance linguistic modernization with heritage conservation.

**Keywords:** endangered languages, AI translation, digital documentation, sociolinguistics, multilingualism, India

## **Fieldwork methodologies and innovations in documentation**

**Ishita Chowdhury**

Fieldwork remains a cornerstone of linguistic and anthropological inquiry, providing the empirical foundation for understanding language use, cultural practices, and community knowledge systems. After examines contemporary methodologies and emerging innovations in the documentation of endangered and under-described languages, with a particular focus on integrating technological advances with ethical and participatory approaches. Traditional fieldwork, built on participant observation, structured interviews, and phonetic elicitation has been transformed by digital tools such as high-resolution audio-visual recording, corpus-building software, and mobile data-collection platforms. These technologies enable more precise and multimodal records of linguistic phenomena, from prosodic features to discourse practices, while facilitating open-access archiving for long-term preservation. At the similar time, the paper underscores that methodological refinement must be matched by critical engagement with issues of consent, data sovereignty, and community collaboration. Innovative frameworks now emphasise co-creation of materials, where speakers actively shape the documentation process and its outcomes, ensuring that linguistic resources serve both scholarly and local needs. By bringing together computational advances and community-driven research ethics, this study argues for a dynamic model of fieldwork in which documentation is not merely the capture of data but a reflexive, collaborative practice that enriches both academic scholarship and the communities whose languages are studied.

**Keywords:** *fieldwork methodologies, language documentation, Participatory Research, Digital Archiving*

## **Pronominal System of Kudmali: A brief study**

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This paper is an attempt to describe the pronouns in Kudmali, the language of Kurmi community. It is spoken in some pockets of West Bengal, Odisha, Jharkhand and Bihar and also sometimes confused with the Manbhum dialect. In recent studies it has been recognised as a separate language, which belongs to the eastern Maghi branch of the Indo-Aryan language family. The survey of 2011 census says that 555,465 Kudmali speakers had been identified across the previously mentioned states. Although, due to major influence of the scheduled languages across these states, the majority of the second and third generation speakers do not speak the language (variety) rather opt for Manbhum dialect or other regional variety.

In recent days, there have been several initiatives of revitalization within the community, resulting in publication of some written texts in the form of poetry, novels, folklores and folktales. Linguistic study on the language has not been a focus till date except a few indigenous attempts from within the community. This study focuses on the usage of Pronouns and categorize them accordingly, based on person (first, second and third), number (singular and plural). In this study, it observed Kudmali pronominal system exhibit no gender dependency. This study also put an enquiry in case of Honorific use of Pronoun, distinction based on proximity, animacy and identify case based on personal pronoun usage. The data for this study is extracted from secondary sources and verified by Kurmali speakers. These sentences are then linguistically analysed to reach the desired goal.

***Keywords:*** *Kurmali, Pronominal system, Grammatical Case, Revitalization*

**Land, Language, and Identity: Examining Odiyen Lakshmanan's  
Odiyen and Sappe Kokalu as Documents of Irula Experience  
Gowri Shankar R**

This study examines the literary and ethnographic significance of Odiyen and Sappe Kokalu, two seminal works by Irula poet Odiyen Lakshmanan, within the field of Indigenous Tamil literature. Framed through the dual lenses of creative expression and critical documentation, these texts articulate the cultural, linguistic, and socio-political realities of the Irula tribe, a Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG) in Tamil Nadu's Nilgiris and Coimbatore districts. Odiyen offers an autobiographical poetic narrative that interweaves memory, landscape, and identity, leveraging the Irula dialect of Tamil to evoke a profound ecological consciousness rooted in forest life and ancestral knowledge. Through its lyrical celebrations and laments, the collection confronts the ongoing erosion of tradition caused by displacement, deforestation, and the transformation of livelihoods.

Sappe Kokalu intensifies the engagement with Irula identity by adopting a politically charged poetics, foregrounding the themes of land alienation, systemic discrimination, and bureaucratic marginalization under modern conservation regimes. Employing vivid imagery and metaphor, Lakshmanan's poetry serves as both resistance and reclamation—insisting on the visibility, rights, and dignity of Indigenous communities while reviving the Irula dialect and storytelling forms. Together, these works offer a compelling corpus that enriches academic discourse on Indigenous literature, ethnography, and cultural resilience, foregrounding poetry as a vehicle for both collective memory and political agency.

***Keywords:*** *Irula dialect, Ecological Knowledge, Landscape and Identity, Language Preservation, Land alienation, cultural resistance, Forest rights, ethno poetry*

## **Acoustic Analysis of Kudmali Vowels**

### **Baidyanath Mahato**

Kudmali is a low resource language, spoken in some pockets of West Bengal, Odisha, Jharkhand and Bihar. This language is sometimes confused with the Manbhum dialect but in some recent studies it has been recognized as a separate language belonging to the eastern Maghi branch of the Indo-Aryan language family. In the survey of 2011 census, 555,465 Kurdmali speakers had been identified across 3 major states (West Bengal, Odisha, Jharkhand and Bihar). Although, due to major influence of the scheduled languages across these states, a vast population of the second and third generation speakers do not speak the language (variety) rather opt for Manbhum dialect or other regional variety. Although, in recent times Sidhu Kanhu Birsha University and Ranchi University started Diploma and MA program for Kudmali as a step for language revitalization.

Linguistic study on the language has not been a focus till date except few indigenous attempts from within the community. This study aims to analyze the acoustic phonetic properties of 5 distinct Kudmali vowels (/i/,/u/,/a/,/ɔ/,/e/) and rare inventory of /æ/ vowel. The data were elicited through personal interview using predefined set of readout materials such as minimal pairs of vowels, isolated vowels etc. The data is collected from 12 native Kurdmali speakers (6 Male and 6 Female) of 20-28 years of age. For recording audio Zoom H6 recorder were used with sample rate of 44100 Hz. Acoustic properties such as F1, F2 and vowel duration are analyzed and extracted using Praat Software and the phonemic analysis is carried out based on principles of minimal pairs. Based on the formant analysis a vowel chart of Kudmali is being proposed in this work. This study also found nasal vowel contrast for 4 vowels in Kudmali.

**Keywords:** *Acoustic Analysis, Phonetics, Kudmali, Formant Analysis, low-resourced language.*

**A Social Network Analysis to Evaluating Language Vitality of  
Tai-Aiton  
Debrani Swargiary and N. Ramesh**

This study aims to evaluate language vitality of Tai-Aiton (ISO 639-3: aio) through a social network analysis approach, focusing on actual language use and interactions in the community rather than conventional approaches of existing sociolinguistic models for language vitality assessment. The objective is to provide a dynamic framework suitable for the community to focus on language maintenance, which is often lacked by the existing frameworks. The methodology is based on Zahir and Zahir (2023), who applied social network analysis to assess the vitality of Mitsqanaqan (Ventureño Chumash), highlighting the importance of social interactions in sustaining endangered languages rather than static demographic data. The language community is modeled as a network consisting of nodes representing participants as fluent speakers, learners, and listeners, and edges or ties representing interactions, weighted by intensity or frequency of language use. Key network metrics, network size, number of ties, average degree, average tie value, density, and diameter serve as indicators of vitality. This study is drawn on community survey data that maps relationships and communication patterns among participants, domains, and frequency of language use. This approach emphasizes inclusivity, as both active speakers and partial or passive participants are included to ensure a comprehensive understanding of language use. Analysis of network metrics provides a fine-grained, dynamic view of language vitality. Growth in network size, connectivity, and density indicates increasing vitality, while identification of “influencers” and isolated nodes informs strategic interventions. The study suggests strengthening interactions through cultural, educational, and digital initiatives, supporting central participants as language facilitators, including passive participants in engagement programs, and repeating network analysis periodically to monitor changes. Social network analysis thus offers an inclusive, practical, and sensitive tool for measuring and supporting the vitality of endangered or reviving languages.

***Keywords:*** Community, social network analysis, Tai-Aiton, inclusivity

## **Romani: An Indian language that is endangered abroad and invisible at home**

**Azhar Abbas**

The Romani language, though spoken by millions across the Western world, is deeply rooted in the Indo-Aryan linguistic family of India. Romani is the only Indian-origin language that is entirely diasporic, has no remaining speakers in India, and has evolved separately for nearly a millennium through migration, marginalisation, and cultural adaptation.

Drawing on comparative linguistics, historical migration patterns, and sociolinguistic data, this paper traces the linguistic ties between Romani and Indian languages such as Hindi, Punjabi, and Rajasthani. It highlights lexical and grammatical cognates, while also addressing the influence of languages encountered during the Romani diasporas - Persian, Greek, Slavic, and others.

The current endangered status of Romani in Europe, combined with the absence of a home country recognition and a standardized script, raises critical questions about language preservation, identity, and heritage. The lack of a standardized form and formal education, coupled with systemic discrimination, threatens its survival. Meanwhile, India, the language's birthplace, remains largely disconnected from its linguistic descendant.

This paper aims to reposition Romani within India's linguistic narrative, arguing for its inclusion in the discourse on endangered and lesser-known Indian languages. By acknowledging Romani as a diasporic extension of India's linguistic heritage, we open the door to cross-cultural academic engagement and broader recognition of a language that, though far from home, continues to carry the echoes of its Indian roots.

**Keywords:** *Romani, European Roma, Indo-Aryan, endangered, diasporas, migration*

**Documentation and Interpretation of Namtho Namthar: A  
Repository of Universal Knowledge in the Lepcha Tradition  
Satarupa Dattamajumdar**

The term Namtho Namthar is defined as a record of literary tradition of Lepcha, a Tibeto Burman language mainly spoken in Sikkim and West Bengal. The indigenous Lepcha literature, an integral part of the Indian knowledge system, is believed to be in existence in the land from around 14th c approximately. Tamsang (2007:39) describes the word Namtho as nam meaning 'year' or 'time' and tho meaning 'registration of records'. The second element Namthar is said to have formed from nam meaning 'year' and thar meaning 'to cut bamboo cylinder slantingly' used for preservation purpose.

Nyu-lik Nyusong is one of such Namthar which is the focal point of the present paper. The paper while studying the text, the mythical story, examines the linguistic aspects at different levels and the semantic field by exploring the signifier-signified relationship involved therein. Namthars are the repository of universal knowledge of the worldly existence. The discursive analysis of such Lepcha texts helps us to decipher the secret but universal knowledge of a speech community of the Himalayas, thus contributing to transmission of the Indian knowledge system. Such text traverses the path of knowledge in a 'subterranean manner' towards the possibility of 'linear universal link', "the common denominator, this foundation underlying all knowledge" (Foucault 1966:93).

Documentation, analysis and interpretation of this Lepcha Namthar from the semantico linguistic view point will reveal the pan Indian literary and cultural milieu, leading to dissemination of the knowledge acquired by a lesser-known Tibeto-Burman speech community, for the enrichment of human civilization.

The data of the present paper has been collected by conducting field investigation in Kalimpong and Darjeeling districts of West Bengal.

***Key Words:*** *discursive, universal, indigenous, knowledge, transmission*

## **Language Shift and Identity: The Case of Irulars in Northern Tamil Nadu**

**Sowparnika G**

The Irulars are a Scheduled Tribe distributed across Tamil Nadu, traditionally associated with forest-based subsistence, snake-catching, and agricultural labor. Although linguistically classified as speakers of the Irula language, a Southern Dravidian variety, communities in districts such as Villupuram, Tiruvannamalai, Kanchipuram, Chengalpattu, and Cuddalore no longer actively use this heritage tongue. Instead, Tamil has become the dominant and, in most cases, the only language of communication for the younger generations. This paper investigates the sociocultural dynamics of this language shift and its implications for tribal identity. Based on preliminary field observations and community interactions, the study identifies three interrelated factors driving the abandonment of Irula:

- i. integration into Tamil medium education systems, which marginalize non-standard varieties;
- ii. socio economic mobility and migration, which reward Tamil and English competence; and
- iii. the stigma historically attached to tribal identity, which has encouraged assimilation into dominant linguistic and cultural practices.

While some elders recall fragments of Irula in songs, ritual expressions, or ecological terminology, these remnants function more as markers of memory than as tools of daily communication. The case of the Irulars in northern Tamil Nadu demonstrates how cultural continuity can persist even in the absence of linguistic continuity. Tribal identity today is expressed through community rituals, oral traditions, and occupational practices, but these are largely mediated in Tamil. This raises complex questions about the scope of language policy and revitalisation efforts: Should interventions attempt to revive Irula in communities where the shift is complete, or should policy focus instead on empowering Irulars through educational, cultural, and socio-economic support within the Tamil linguistic framework? By documenting this transformation, the paper contributes to wider debates on language death, assimilation, and the redefinition of ethnolinguistic identity in contemporary multilingual India.

***Keywords:*** *Irular, language shift, Tamil, identity, multilingualism*

## Morphological Patterns of Adjectives in Maram Naga

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This paper investigates the morphology of adjectives in Maram Naga, an endangered Tibeto Burman language spoken in Manipur, India. Maram Naga (ISO 639-3: nma) is classified under the Western Naga subgroup of the Tibeto-Burman languages (Mark Post and Burling, 2017). According to the 2011 census, the language is spoken by approximately 37,300 people in Manipur's Senapati district. The study is based on primary field data and provides a systematic description of how adjectives are formed, modified, and marked for degree. Adjectives in Maram Naga occur as simple roots expressing qualities such as size (*kadi* 'big', *katʃaŋ* 'small'), color (*kaha* 'white', *kagaŋ* 'red'), strength (*katai* 'strong'), and temporal features (*katiŋ* 'old', *karanu* 'new'). Comparative adjectives are derived through the productive suffix *-bui*, which attaches to the root and occasionally triggers phonological alternation, such as initial consonant changes (*kadi* → *dibui*, *kataŋ* → *taŋbui*, *katiŋ* → *tiŋbui*). These alternations appear systematic, suggesting a morphophonemic rule that signals the comparative degree while maintaining recognizability of the root. Superlative adjectives are formed through reduplication of the root followed by the suffix *-saŋ* (*kadi* → *kadidisaŋ*, *katʃaŋ* → *katʃaŋtʃaŋsaŋ*), preserving the root while marking the highest degree of comparison. The table below shows some examples of adjectives.

Table 1. Positive, Comparative, and Superlative Adjective Forms in Maram Naga

Maram	Gloss	Maram	Gloss	Maram	Gloss
<i>kadi</i>	'big'	<i>dibui</i>	'bigger'	<i>kadidisaŋ</i>	'biggest'
<i>katʃaŋ</i>	'small'	<i>tʃaŋbui</i>	'smaller'	<i>katʃaŋtʃaŋsaŋ</i>	'smallest'
<i>kaha</i>	'white'	<i>habui</i>	'whiter'	<i>kahahasasŋ</i>	'whitest'
<i>kagaŋ</i>	'red'	<i>gaŋbui</i>	'redder'	<i>kagaŋgaŋsaŋ</i>	'reddest'
<i>kataŋ</i>	'long'	<i>taŋbui</i>	'longer'	<i>kataŋtaŋsaŋ</i>	'longest'
<i>kadui</i>	'short'	<i>duibui</i>	'shorter'	<i>kaduiduisaŋ</i>	'shortest'

The morphological processes extend across multiple categories of adjectives, including qualitative, size, colour, time, age, etc. The

study highlights several productive morphological strategies in Maram Naga: suffixation (-bui, -saŋ), reduplication, and phonological alternation, demonstrating that adjectives are flexible and multifunctional. These patterns reveal that the adjectival system is both morphologically rich and systematic, providing insights into morphosyntactic behaviour within Tibeto-Burman languages. This study confines its scope to base, comparative, and superlative forms of adjectives, while other types of adjectival derivation and extension are excluded and reserved for future investigation. Furthermore, the findings contribute to the documentation of an endangered language by offering a detailed analysis of its adjectival morphology, degree marking, and morphophonemic processes, which are critical for understanding its grammar and typological features.

**Keywords:** *Maram Naga, Morphology, positive, comparative, superlative, Tibeto-Burman.*

## **Origin Myths and Clan Narratives: Structuring Social Memory in Mullukkurumba Oral Literature**

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This study investigates the role of origin myths and clan narratives in structuring social memory among the Mullukkurumba, an indigenous community inhabiting the forested regions of the Nilgiris. Through a qualitative approach that integrates ethnography and literary analysis, the research examines how oral literature - comprising origin stories, ancestral legends, and clan -based folktales - functions as a living archive of Mullukkurumba history, social norms, and collective identity. The study draws upon direct interviews with community elders, field recordings of storytelling sessions, and the curated corpus of local myths, situating these oral traditions within the broader context of Dravidian tribal literature. Origin myths among the Mullukkurumba articulate foundational cosmologies, recounting the migration of ancestors from distant lands, the creation of sacred landscapes, and the establishment of social institutions such as marriage alliances and clan boundaries. Clan narratives, meanwhile, serve as genealogical maps, delineating descent lines, roles within the settlement, and ritual responsibilities. By encoding complex social relationships and customs, these stories perpetuate necessary knowledge about kinship, gender roles, and ecological stewardship across generations.

The oral transmission of myths and clan tales in Mullukkurumba society demonstrates mechanisms of memory that transcend textual forms, relying instead on communal performance and intergenerational teaching. During festivals, funerary rites, and seasonal gatherings, these stories are re-enacted and re-contextualized, allowing for subtle innovations while maintaining core themes that anchor communal identity. The study highlights how the dynamic interplay between narration, ritual, and memory production ensures both the resilience and adaptability of Mullukkurumba cultural heritage in times of social and environmental change. The research argues that origin myths and clan narratives are not merely symbolic tales, but active instruments for structuring memory, legitimizing authority, and negotiating belonging within the changing realities of tribal life.

***Keywords:*** *Myths, Oral Literature, Culture, tales, festivals*

**An Assessment of the Vitality of the Mala Vedan Language: A  
UNESCO Nine-Factor Analysis**

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This paper thoroughly evaluates the language vitality of Mala Vedan, an under-documented Dravidian language spoken by a Scheduled Tribe community in Kerala, India, and listed as endangered by Ethnologue (2023). This study offers a detailed, data-driven analysis of a language under tremendous pressure from the dominant regional language, Malayalam, amid growing concerns about the loss of linguistic diversity worldwide. 34 native speakers from five settlements in Pathanamthitta, Kerala, were interviewed as part of the research methodology, which covered a broad demographic range. The nine-factor model for Language Vitality and Endangerment put forth by UNESCO (2003) serves as the foundation for the analytical framework. All nine factors, intergenerational transmission, speaker population trends, domain use, response to new media, availability of educational materials, institutional support, community attitudes, and documentation quality, are analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative data.

The results show that children are no longer learning Mala Vedan as their mother tongue, indicating a serious disruption in intergenerational transmission. In addition, there is a lack of institutional support, a significant contraction of the domain, and a total absence from digital media and education. The study also shows that the community has strong positive attitudes in spite of these negative indicators, with speakers expressing great pride and a desire to preserve the language. By synthesizing these factors, the paper concludes that Mala Vedan is Severely Endangered. This research underscores the urgent need for collaborative documentation and community-based revitalization initiatives to support the Mala Vedan community's desire to maintain their linguistic heritage.

**Keywords:** *Language Vitality, Language Endangerment, Mala Vedan, Dravidian Languages, UNESCO*

## **Multilingualism and Language Attitudes In Garhwa Bhojpuri: Identity Across Situational Domains**

**Avid Ali**

This study explores how people in the Garhwa district of Jharkhand use different languages and how they perceive them in their everyday lives. It focuses on how Garhwa Bhojpuri functions as both a means of communication and a symbol of local identity across various social and situational domains in urban and semi-urban areas of the district. Garhwa lies at the border of Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, and Chhattisgarh, and this border position has significantly shaped its complex sociolinguistic landscape. The region brings together speakers of Indo Aryan, Dravidian, and Austroasiatic language families who interact regularly. In this multilingual environment, Garhwa Bhojpuri has evolved into a distinct local variety, showing signs of contact with other languages, innovative sentence structures, and flexible patterns of code-switching. Due to long years of migration, trade, marriage mingling, and daily interaction among communities, shared linguistic spaces have been created where Bhojpuri, Magahi, Sadri, Hindi, Urdu, and some tribal languages coexist and influence one another.

The research is based on fieldwork conducted in urban and semi-urban areas of Garhwa, employing a mixed-methods approach that combines questionnaires, formal and informal interviews, and participant observation, involving 250 respondents. The findings show that language choice in Garhwa is context-dependent and shaped by factors such as age, gender, education, and occupation. Bhojpuri is primarily used in informal and interpersonal communication, whereas Hindi dominates in education, administration, and formal exchanges. The frequent use of code-mixing and bilingual speech reflects communicative flexibility and shifting social aspirations among speakers. Attitudinal data suggest that Bhojpuri is associated with authenticity and local pride, particularly among middle-aged and older, as well as rural and semi-urban speakers. In contrast, younger, urban speakers often regard Hindi and English as languages of progress and socio-economic mobility. This study contributes to understanding how multilingualism in Garhwa reflects the balance between tradition and modernity, as well as cultural continuity and social change.

***Keywords:*** *Garhwa Bhojpuri, multilingualism, language attitudes, identity, language contact*

## **Between Archive and Algorithm: AI, Translation, and the Future of Language Documentation in India**

Manisha Sinha and Animesh Mishra

The emergence of artificial intelligence (AI) and neural machine translation (NMT) technologies has transformed the landscape of linguistic documentation, particularly for endangered and lesser-known languages in India. As automated translation and speech recognition tools proliferate, questions of authenticity, representation, and linguistic equity become increasingly urgent (Bird, 2020; Hellwig & Nordhoff, 2021). This paper critically examines how AI-assisted translation and digital archiving platforms such as India's *Bhashini* and *BharatVani* projects mediate the processes of language documentation, preservation, and revitalization. Drawing on sociolinguistic and digital humanities frameworks (Canagarajah, 2013; Kroskrity, 2009), the study explores the tension between automation and cultural specificity, highlighting the risks of algorithmic homogenization that often accompany machine learning approaches to multilingual data (Hutchins, 2022).

The analysis emphasizes the need for hybrid documentation ecologies that integrate community-based translation, human annotation, and ethical technological design. The paper argues that sustainable preservation requires not the replacement of human translators, but their collaboration with AI systems to amplify linguistic diversity and ensure contextual fidelity (Garcia & Wei, 2014). By rethinking "translation" as both a technological and cultural practice, this study situates AI within India's ongoing struggle to balance linguistic modernization with heritage conservation.

**Keywords:** *endangered languages, AI translation, digital documentation, sociolinguistics, multilingualism, India*

## **Ethnolinguistic Study of the Kota Tribe: Documenting Language and Cultural Identity in the Nilgiri Hills**

**Gomathi C, J. Karisma, Arul Dayanand and T. R. Paarivendhar**

This study documents the Kota tribe's linguistic and cultural heritage. The Kota are a Dravidian speaking indigenous community inhabiting the Nilgiri Hills of Tamil Nadu, India. This study investigates the interrelationship between the Kota language, social structure, and traditional knowledge systems. This illustrates how language serves as a repository of cultural identity. Phonological analysis revealed a ten-vowel and twenty-three-consonant inventory. This is characteristic of Dravidian phonetics, which includes distinctive retroflex sounds. Morphologically, the language has a rich case system. It also has complex noun paradigms that encode kinship, hierarchies, and social roles. Ethnographic fieldwork records the various aspects of social life. This includes kinship terminology, marriage customs, and naming ceremonies, among others.

This emphasizes how linguistic forms reflect patrilineal inheritance and intergenerational relations. Cultural practices are analyzed as expressions of a collective identity. The Nambi and Aynor festivals serve as examples of this. These events were examined for their linguistic and performative elements. Traditional occupations have been studied as lexical domains. Blacksmithing, pottery, and carpentry are key examples of this. These fields preserve Indigenous knowledge and craftsmanship. This study addresses the influence of contemporary socioeconomic transitions on language vitality. These include a gradual shift toward modern employment and education. Current language documentation and revitalization efforts highlight this specific need.

They emphasize community based participatory models to ensure sustainable preservation of the mangroves. This study integrates multiple methodologies: ethnography, linguistics, and digital documentation. It contributes to the broader discourse on several topics. These include Dravidian language documentation, indigenous knowledge systems, and cultural continuity in South India, among others.

***Keywords:*** *kota tribe, nilgiri hills, dravidian language, cultural identity, indigenous knowledge*

## **Teaching and Learning Endangered Languages through Mobile-Assisted Language Learning: A Case Study on the Irula Language**

**Arul Dayanand, T. R. Paarivendhar and Uma Devi**

This study examines the role of Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) in revitalizing endangered languages through community-based digital pedagogy. It focuses on the Irula language, an indigenous Dravidian language spoken in the Western Ghats of Tamil Nadu, India. This study investigates how mobile technologies can bridge the gap between documentation and active language learning in resource-limited contexts. This project adopted a design-based research framework. It engaged Irula elders, teachers, and youth in participatory co-design workshops. These workshops identified culturally grounded learning domains, such as kinship, subsistence practices, and oral traditions. The developed mobile prototype integrates several features. These include bilingual scaffolding (Irula–Tamil/English), voice-first interaction, offline accessibility, and a gamified learning progression.

These features are designed to enhance vocabulary acquisition and pronunciation accuracy. This study used a mixed-methods evaluation. This includes pre- and post-diagnostics, in-app analytics, and community feedback. These methods measure learner engagement and linguistic competence across different age groups. Preliminary findings suggest that the outcomes are positive. Localized and culturally contextualized mobile learning fosters intergenerational language transmission. It also strengthens community ownership of revitalization efforts in the area. This project demonstrates MALL's effectiveness of MALL in several areas. It can incorporate oral traditions, mitigate literacy and connectivity barriers, and provide sustainable learning pathways for endangered-language communities.

This study contributes to ongoing discussions on language documentation, digital revitalization, and Indigenous education. It presents the Irula as a case study. This study proposes a scalable and replicable model. This model integrates MALL into endangered language pedagogy for the first time. It offers adaptable design templates and evaluation frameworks for similar projects to follow.

***Keywords:*** *mobile-assisted language learning (MALL), endangered language revitalization, Irula language, community-based digital pedagogy, indigenous education technology*

**Assessing Language Endangerment among the Mannan  
Community of Kerala: A Preliminary Study**  
**Sikha P P**

The Mannan community of Kozhimala and Kanchiyar in Idukki district, Kerala, represents one of the smallest and least-documented speech communities of the Western Ghats. Traditionally forest dwelling and socio-culturally aligned with Tamil-speaking populations, the Mannans now exhibit significant linguistic shift towards Malayalam and Tamil due to sustained contact, education, and integration into mainstream society (KIRTADS, 2025). This preliminary study aims to assess the status of the Mannan speech variety and the degree of endangerment it faces. This paper presents a preliminary assessment of the endangerment status of the Mannan speech variety spoken by the Mannan community of Idukki district, Kerala. Relying exclusively on secondary sources such as governmental reports, census data, ethnographic studies, and linguistic surveys.

The study evaluates the vitality of the language using UNESCO's (2003) framework of nine factors (Soria, 2017). Findings indicate that the Mannan community, though maintaining a distinct ethnic identity, exhibits rapid language shift towards Malayalam and Tamil, with minimal intergenerational transmission of the traditional speech form. The limited number of speakers, lack of educational or literary resources, and near absence of language use in formal or digital domains suggest a severely endangered status.

By synthesizing existing documentation and demographic data, the paper argues that the Mannan case exemplifies the silent erosion of smaller tribal speech forms in Kerala under increasing bilingual pressure. This study aims to highlight the urgency of field-based language documentation and community-centered revitalization initiatives for vulnerable Dravidian tribal languages in the Western Ghats.

***Keywords:*** Mannan tribe, Kerala, language endangerment, secondary data, UNESCO vitality framework, linguistic shift

## **Erosion Of The Mother Tongue: Language Shift In The Tangsa Community Of Assam**

**Tapashi Barman and Upasana Devi**

The Tangsa community in Assam, with its rich historical and cultural dialects, is facing a significant shift in language use. Traditionally, Tangsa dialects served as a medium for daily communication and the sharing of cultural knowledge, closely tied to the community's identity. However, globalization, formal education, and economic pressures have led younger generations to favour dominant languages like Assamese, Nepali, Hindi, and English, resulting in a growing linguistic gap and diminishing fluency in their native dialects among the youth. The Tangsa cultural legacy is threatened by a shift from mother tongue to other languages, jeopardizing oral traditions and dialects. Language transition in the Tangsa community of Assam is explored using a mixed-methods approach, including surveys, structured interviews with youth, parents, and seniors, ethnographic observation, and language proficiency tests.

The study reveals a notable shift among the younger Tangsa community in Assam from the traditional Tangsa language to more dominant languages such as Assamese and Nepali. While older generations continue to use Tangsa in familial settings, younger individuals predominantly speak the dominant languages. The shift is attributed to the perception that proficiency in major languages enhances educational and employment prospects, leading to their increased usage in various domains. Assamese, Nepali, English, and Hindi are increasingly preferred in social settings like marketplaces and community gatherings, while Tangsa is used in smaller, specific environments.

Media and technology further accelerate this language shift. Notwithstanding these difficulties, the Tangsa language is nevertheless a significant cultural indicator and has symbolic meaning in familial contexts and ceremonies. In the face of changing linguistic dynamics, efforts must concentrate on revitalisation and intergenerational transmission, utilizing both community involvement and policy assistance to uphold and promote Tangsa for future generations.

***Keywords:*** *Tangsa, Modernization, Language, Shift, Mother tongue*

## **Cultural Rituals and Spiritual Beliefs of the Paniya Community in Nilgiris**

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This research paper delves into the intricate cultural rituals and spiritual beliefs of the Paniya tribes, a marginalized indigenous community residing in the Nilgiris district of Tamil Nadu. It posits that these practices, which govern every aspect of life from birth to death, are not merely traditional relics but dynamic systems that actively negotiate continuity and change. The analysis encompasses a range of core Paniya practices, including their unique life-cycle ceremonies like Puttutettu, a vital puberty rite for girls, and Madhe, their sacred marriage institution and their complex worship patterns, which honor both Hindu deities and specific clan deities like Kuliyan, a powerful local spirit. This paper also investigates the deep connection between their rituals and their ecological environment, evident in harvest festivals like Putteri, which underscore their profound relationship with the land.

Finally, the study examines their foundational beliefs concerning purity, pollution, and ancestor worship, which shape their social practices and kinship structures. Through a detailed examination of contemporary transformations, and the resilience of Paniya culture as it adapts to external pressures. Changes such as the adoption of modern names and shifts in ceremonial scale highlight a community that is capable of preserving the symbolic essence of its traditions while embracing modernity.

Ultimately, the findings highlight the critical role of these rituals as living cultural texts that enable the Paniya community to maintain its distinct identity and social cohesion amidst profound socio-economic pressures and also it concludes by underscoring the importance of documenting these traditions to preserve indigenous knowledge systems for future generations.

***Keywords:*** Tribes, Paniya tribes, Culture, Rituals, Festivals

**The Culture and Language Prevalent Among The Kollimalai  
Malaiyali Tribes**

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It worth mentioning that the malaiyali tribes in Tamil Nadu is the largest tribal population. They live in the Eastern and Western Ghats. They are still considered a separate tribe based on their cultural elements and unique identities. Historical evidence of the existence of these tribes can be found since the Sangam period. The lifestyle and culture of the Kolli Malaiyali tribes are unique. They earn their living by collecting the things they find in the villages and selling them in the weekly market. There are many cultural elements in the events and festivals (Ma:si Periyasa:mi, Karuppa sa:mi) held from their birth to death. They speak Tamil among them, although it can be seen that many dialect words are used. Therefore, this article attempts to examine and explains the Kollimalai Malaiyali tribes based on their culture and linguistic features.

***Key words:*** *Language Prevalent, Kollimalai, Malaiyali Tribes, Ma:si Periyasami, Malaiyali tribes Culture, Linguistic features.*

**Kinship terms and numerals as windows into the history of  
Bishnupriya Manipuri  
Shweta Akolkar**

Bishnupriya Manipuri is an Eastern Indo-Aryan language spoken by roughly 100,000 people in Assam and Tripura (India), as well as in Sylhet (Bangladesh) (Singha 1981). The language was once spoken in Manipur—specifically in the southern Imphal Valley (Bishnupur–Thoubal Kakching belt, including the Loktak Lake basin)—but almost no speakers remain there today (Singha 1984). The history of the Bishnupriya Manipuri people and their language is poorly understood and entangled in political controversy. While many community members maintain that their presence in Manipur spans at least several centuries (Singha 1984, i.a.), others contend that it was relatively short-lived (Singha 2024, i.a.). This latter view has often been used to delegitimize Bishnupriya Manipuri claims to Manipuri identity.

As a linguist, I am interested in what the Bishnupriya Manipuri language itself can reveal about the history of its speakers. This talk examines two lexical domains that provide complementary windows into that history: kinship terms and numerals. Drawing on data from elicitation sessions with four speakers in New York City, I show that both systems combine inherited Indo-Aryan material with structural and lexical influences from Meitei, as well as later borrowings from neighboring Indo-Aryan languages. In the numeral system, contact influence extends beyond individual lexical items to the organizational structure itself: Bishnupriya Manipuri retains Indo-Aryan numeral forms but follows a Meitei-type vigesimal (base-20) system, with selective borrowing of higher numerals. More recent contact with Bengali and Assamese, however, has reintroduced a competing decimal system now favored by some speakers. These patterns reveal distinct chronological layers of contact with Tibeto-Burman and Indo-Aryan neighbors. Taken together, the kinship and numeral evidence point to both the historical depth of Bishnupriya Manipuri and its speakers' sustained multilingual presence in the Imphal Valley prior to their relocation to predominantly Indo-Aryan-speaking areas.

**Keywords:** *Bishnupriya Manipuri, kinship terminology, numerals, language contact, historical linguistics*

## **From Heritage to Hashtag: A Digital Pedagogy Framework for the Revitalization of Braj Bhasha**

**Ahmad Siddiqui and Naila Ahsan**

Braj Bhasha is a Central Indo-Aryan language with a long and rich literary and cultural history. Today, it is losing its use very fast, especially among young people in its home region. Modern Standard Hindi is used in schools, media, and daily life. Because of this, Braj Bhasha has become a heritage language. It is not being passed down from parents to children the way it once was. Some documentation work has been done, but there is still a big gap in teaching methods that can help people learn and use the language again in everyday life. This paper proposes a Digital Pedagogy Ecosystem designed to support learning and engagement with Braj Bhasha.

The ecosystem provides a digital archive of cultural content, including the poetry of Surdas and local songs, which can be used as authentic learning material. It also offers structured online learning modules that provide step-by-step lessons and exercises for learners. In addition, the ecosystem includes collaborative tools that allow learners and community members to create and share their own stories and recordings in Braj Bhasha. Finally, an open-access resource bank is provided, containing dictionaries, grammar guides, and other materials to support learners, teachers, and researchers.

This study shows how combining these digital resources and teaching methods can help make Braj Bhasha more visible and usable again. By providing accessible learning materials, opportunities for community participation, and tools for guided learning, the framework aims to move Braj Bhasha from being only a heritage language to being actively used in daily life. It also demonstrates a clear path for supporting language revitalization, documentation, and the use of digital tools in low-resource language contexts.

***Keywords:*** *Language Revitalization, Braj Bhasha, Digital Pedagogy, Language Education, Technology-Enhanced Learning*

## **Jewish Marathi as a Case Study for Revitalization of Jewish Languages**

**Sarah Bunin Benor and Jacob Kohn**

This paper examines the revitalization and transformation of Jewish Marathi, a dialect of Marathi spoken by the Bene Israel community of India. Drawing on interviews with speakers in India and the global diaspora, it traces how successive migrations and consistent multilingual contact with other Indian communities have guided the language's structure, vocabulary, and usage. Facing endangerment amid the trend toward English, modern Hebrew, and other contact languages, Jewish Marathi is being actively preserved through community initiatives such as transliterations of Hebrew texts, musical revivals, newsletters, and archival documentation. More broadly, the paper aims to present how documentation and community-led practices can be a model for efforts surrounding other Jewish languages, whose speakers seek to sustain cultural memory while allowing the language to adapt through community practice.

***Keyword:*** *Bene Israel, Jewish Marathi, Indian diaspora, Jewish languages*

## Linguistic Borrowing and Structural Convergence in Indian Dhimal

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This study explores the impact of language contact on Dhimal, an endangered Tibeto-Burman language spoken in the Darjeeling district of West Bengal. Surrounded by languages such as Bangla, Nepali, and Rajbanshi, Dhimal has borrowed extensively from all these languages, both lexically and morphologically. The primary focus of this study is on how long-term contact with dominant Indo-Aryan languages restructures the lexicon and grammar of the minority Tibeto-Burman language, Dhimal. This study is mainly based on first-hand field data from the Dhimal-speaking village in West Bengal, India.

Appel & Muysken (2005) state that words from one language are introduced into another language almost unconsciously through intensive bilingualism. Dhimal people are multilingual who unconsciously borrowed from Bangla, a dominant language in the region. Dhimal exhibits both direct loans (e.g., pahar ‘hill’, hã ta → handi ‘walking’) and loan blends, where Bangla and Dhimal morphemes combine (e.g., siŋ-t<sup>h</sup>okra ‘woodpecker’, from Dhimal siŋ ‘tree’ + Bangla t<sup>h</sup>okra ‘pecker’). Borrowed lexical roots regularly take native Tibeto-Burman affixes, as in

- (1) Kia cali-ṭa ihi  
hen roof-LOC AUX ‘  
(The) hen is on the roof’

Here cali (< Bangla cal ‘roof’) bears the Dhimal locative marker /-ṭa/.

Morphosyntactically, Dhimal exhibits convergence with neighboring Indo-Aryan languages. Linguists have often interpreted morphosyntactic borrowing as an outcome of strong sociolinguistic pressure exerted by a dominant language on a less dominant one (Whitney 1881; Haugen 1950; Moravcsik 1978; Thomason & Kaufman 1988; Field 2002). The genitive case marker /-ko/ in Dhimal is directly borrowed from the Nepali language. The syncretism between the Dhimal accusative and dative markers /-eŋ/ parallels that of Bangla /-ke/ and Nepali /-lai/:

- (2) beʒan-t<sup>h</sup>oi ojaʒan-eŋ nalke  
girl-CLF boy-ACC knew  
‘The girl knew the boy’  
(3) ka minu-eŋ kagoʒ pig<sup>h</sup>a

I minu-DAT book sold  
'I sold the book to Minu.'

Such a pattern of case marking is uncommon among most other Tibeto-Burman languages of the region, including Bodo, Dimasa, Kok-Borok, Rabha, Garo, Tiwa, and Mising (Brahma 2013; Mahela & Sinha 2018).

These findings reveal that long-term contact has not only increased lexical borrowing but also reshaped Dhimal's morphosyntax. Such structural diffusion underscores the sociolinguistic pressure exerted by dominant Indo-Aryan languages, contributing to the gradual attrition of Dhimal's typological distinctiveness.

**Keywords:** *Dhimal, Language Contact, Borrowing, Morphosyntactic Convergence*

## Aspect paradigm in Toto verbs

Anushkha Saha, Benu Pareek and Shyam Ratan Yadav

Toto is a critically endangered Tibeto-Burman language spoken in a specific area of Alipurduar in West Bengal. The language is of The Toto Tribe of Totopara (a small hilly area near Bhutan). The language has classic Tibeto-Burman features along with neighbor language influences. Existing literature has already established that the tense markers of Toto verbs are- “-mi”, “ na”, “-ro” (present, past, future) and they get added after the root. Adding onto this, current study will focus deeply into the verse of Toto verbs in terms of unusual changes in tense markers with respect to the duration of the verbs i.e. Aspects like progressive (“-daŋna”/ “ daŋmi) and perfect (“-aptena, / “-aptemi”) and the exchange of markers depending on type and meaning of the verb. Like- for the infinite verb “to give” – [picako], root – “pica-” generally:

present	picami
past	picana
future	picaro
present progressive	picadaŋna
present perfect	picaptena
past perfect	picaptemi
Past progressive	picadiŋmi
With modals (should, may, want)	Picnero, pickocuro, picadaŋbena
imperative	Pica:

Here, 15 people from three age groups (18-30), (30-50), (50+) were taken for translation tasks of 900 sentences (Bengali/Hindi/English to Toto). From the results, we will see, though there is a general rule for tense and aspect markers, depending of the type of verb (intransitive, transitive, ditransitive/ stative, active etc.) the markers can come into one another’s place (except future), even they can overlap if duration is too small. For example, present perfect and near past can be interchangeable which can be mistaken as variation. The modality factor (may/should/want etc), finiteness or imperativeness can also affect the formation.

This study will try to describe all the possible distributions of Toto verbs and discuss the influencing environments. This will open an empirical dimension of actual use of the verbs in real life.

**Keywords:** *Toto, Endangered Language, Aspect marker.*

## **Language maintenance and vitality of Marma language** **Marak, Jesi Daiji, Mallik and Srabani**

Marma[rmz] language, also known as Magh or Arakanese belongs to the Lolo-Burmish group of Tibeto-Burman branch of Sino-Tibetan language family (Bradley, 1997; Grierson, 1904; LaPolla & Thurgood, 2016; Matisoff, 1991; K. S. Prue, 2000). The present article has developed from a project which tried to identify the features and underlying factors of language maintenance among the Marma community of Bangladesh. Language contact and endangerment studies observe that an ethnic community which is surrounded by powerful languages requires conscious effort to prevail and thus this sociolinguistic phenomenon deserves equal research attention as a study of language shift.

Joshua Fishman used the term language maintenance and shift in the academic years of 1963 (de Vries, 1992; Lee & Way, 2018; Pauwels, 2016) and he defined the terms according to the relationship between change and stability in habitual language use and it is opined that the state of language contact situation is one of the major considering factors for language maintenance and language shift study (Fishman, 1964). Language maintenance can be taken as the counter activities to reverse language shift (Dwyer, 2012). Mufwene (2017) argues with a strong proposition that language shifts and language maintenance are the two sides in the school of thoughts in language loss. It implies that the study of language maintenance along with language shifts provide a comprehensive picture of language situations. Therefore, this paper intends to present features of language maintenance and score of language vitality to build a better understanding on the state of Marma language.

To find out the significant features and underlying factors of language maintenance among the Marma community, the project used Key Informant Interview, Focus Group Discussion and a sample survey as research tools. The primary purpose of the current paper is to develop a comprehensive understanding of the present state of Marma language maintenance by revealing Marma language maintenance features and subsequently by assessing language vitality in the frameworks known as vitality and endangerment scales.

Research findings show that intergenerational transmission and domains of use are intake for Marma language community but vitality scores indicate that Marma language is one of the vulnerable languages of the world since it has no official status. But other remaining factors like intergenerational transmission, presence of language in formal domain and new domain show good score which

implies that within the realm of vulnerable language; the Marma language community is taking conscious effort to keep their language alive, by definition these conscious initiatives are known as language maintenance activities in sociolinguistics.

***Keywords:*** *Language maintenance, vitality scale, intert-generational transmission*

## **Nominals in Mewati**

### **Mohd Akbar and Mohd Yasir**

The paper is a study of the morphosyntax of the nominal categories in Mewati (commonly known as Meo) spoken in Haryana. There exists many versions of the origin of the 'Mewatis' concentrated in the Mewat region extending over Haryana, Rajasthan and U.P. The earliest references of the 'Mewatis' are traced in the court chronicles of Delhi Sultanate, namely, Minhaj Siraj's *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri* and Ziauddin Barani's *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*. In both these accounts, Mewatis are described as a plunderer and predatory tribe unleashing great trouble on the people of Delhi as well as for the Sultans of Delhi ((Bharadwaj, 2017)). However, following Firozshah Tughlaq's death in the later-half of the 14th century these regions underwent a major transformation under the Khanzadas (1390-1527 CE). The Khanzadas played an important role in the transformation of Mewatis to peasants.

The Khanzadas were defeated by the Mughals and it was during Akbar's reign that Mewat region came under the Mughal rule. At present, the 'Mewatis' or 'Meos' are believed to be Hindu Rajputs, who converted to Islam between the 12th - 17th century. They follow both Hindu and Muslim cultural practices. At present, they are found over an extended region covering the three states of Haryana, Rajasthan and U.P. The data for our study comes from the Nuh district in Haryana. The data was collected using 'sociolinguistic interviews' and 'participant observations' utilized in studies of speech communities pioneered by Labov (1984).

The main objectives of this paper are: (i) to describe the nominal categories in Mewati and (ii) to analyze the number, gender and case marking in Mewati nominal categories. This will enable us to study the Mewati variety in Nuh vis-à-vis the other linguistic varieties spoken in the region. We will be able to see whether Mewatis have been able to maintain a distinct linguistic identity or have merged with the other dominant speech communities existing in the region.

*Keywords: Mewati, nominals, number, gender, case,*

**Documenting Oral Traditions and Sociolinguistic Variation in the  
Ao Tribe for Language Preservation  
Imchaaien, Sulagna Mohanty and Mahesh M**

The Ao tribe of Nagaland, located in Northeast India, presents a significant case study in linguistic diversity, characterised by its rich dialects, including Chungli and Mongsen, as well as village specific variations. Historically, Ao included a now-extinct poetic register conveyed through sung poetry, used for instructions, storytelling, and cultural transmission. With no indigenous script, the Roman alphabet was adopted post-Christianity, shaping current written forms. The Ao language is currently facing urgent sociolinguistic threats, including inter-tribal marriages, the dominance of English and Nagamese, urban migration, and declining youth engagement. These factors are endangering the vitality of the language, making the need for preservation more pressing than ever.

This study, which combines ethnographic documentation of oral poetic traditions with sociolinguistic methods, including sociophonetic analysis, aims to capture variation in language usage, particularly across generations. Interviews and recordings with elderly and younger speakers not only document poetic forms but also phonetic, phonological, and usage shifts induced by these social factors. By integrating culturally embedded oral literature with sociolinguistic data, this research seeks to bridge generational gaps, reinvigorate youth interest, and strengthen the Ao linguistic identity. This multi-method approach contributes to decolonial knowledge production and broadens indigenous language preservation discourse, highlighting oral poetic heritage as a cornerstone for reversing language endangerment.

***Keywords:*** *Ao tribe, oral literature, sociolinguistics, sociophonetics, language preservation*

## **The Koraga Case System: A Comparative Analysis (Anonymized)** **Sayeegeetha, Niranjana Uppoor and Pangala Babu Koraga**

This research provides an analysis of the Koraga case system on comparative grounds. Koraga is a lesser-studied Dravidian language spoken in the coastal regions of Karnataka. Tulu and Kannada are the sister languages of Koraga which are also the languages of wider communication in the coastal regions of Karnataka wherein Koraga is spoken. Tulu and Kannada, being the major languages of the region, tend to affect the grammar of Koraga and they are channels for borrowing from other languages such as English. Genetically, Koraga is argued to be closely related to Tulu. Further, although Koraga-Tulu is placed in the South subgroup of the Dravidian family (the other subgroups being South-Central, Central, and North), the subgrouping of Koraga-Tulu is uncertain (Krishnamurti 2003). Considering these sociolinguistic and diachronic aspects, the present study explores the case system of Koraga in comparison with Tulu and Kannada. Some case forms attested in these three languages which are under study in the present work are as follows: Nominative: Koraga ‘-Ø’, Tulu ‘ Ø’, Kannada ‘-Ø’; Accusative: Koraga ‘-nu’, Tulu ‘-nu’, Kannada ‘-annu’; Instrumental: Koraga ‘-du’, Tulu ‘-du’, Kannada ‘-inda/-alli’; Dative: Koraga ‘-(K)a’, Tulu ‘-(K)u’, Kannada ‘-(K)e’; Ablative: Koraga ‘-(T)anta’, Tulu ‘-du’, Kannada ‘-inda’; Locative: Koraga ‘-du’, Tulu ‘-du’, Kannada ‘-alli’; Allative: Koraga ‘-(K)a’, Tulu ‘-de/(K)e’, Kannada ‘-(K)e’; and Possessive: Koraga ‘-(/n/d/t/)a’, Tulu ‘-(/n/d/t/)a’, Kannada ‘(/n/d/y/)a’, (K) represents the natural class of velar stops, and (T) represents the natural class of dental stops independent of voicing and gemination. The overall analysis suggests that the Koraga case forms are phonetically and structurally similar to the Tulu case forms, suggesting a close genetic link between Koraga and Tulu. Structurally, the Koraga case system is similar to the Tulu and Kannada case systems and there are many general Dravidian case features such as the nominative-accusative alignment, non-nominative subjects, and differential object marking. The data of this work are drawn from ongoing research on Koraga.

**Keywords:** *Koraga, Tulu, case, Dravidian, nominal*

## **Building ASR Systems for under resourced and Endangered Languages: A Case of Toto and Irula**

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With the recent advancements in speech and language technologies (especially advancements in transfer learning and fine-tuning of existing larger systems), the development of speech systems such as automatic speech recognition for under resourced and endangered languages has become possible with the use of relatively lower amounts of data. However, the full advantage of this progress can be realised only with the availability and democratisation of resources and infrastructure that would make it possible for linguistic communities and language researchers to build such systems across a large number of languages.

In this paper, we present our efforts in developing Matra Studio, a no-code user interface, which enables communities and researchers to build, use, publish, and share their own speech-to-text models through a simple user interface (Figure 1). This system is an extension of the Hugging Face Auto Train module, wherein we add the capability to train speech models, specifically ASR models, to the existing system. The interface allows users to upload data from three different sources –

- Directly upload their existing speech recordings and their transcriptions
- Use the dataset hosted on public repositories such as Hugging Face Hub
- Use the data collected and processed through web apps such as Life Suite.

Once the data is uploaded, one can select a pre-trained speech model and fine-tune that model on their own dataset. The trained model can be uploaded back to the Hugging Face repository or other apps, such as Life Suite, for use in downstream tasks.

We have used this system to co-create the ASR models for two of the critically endangered languages - Toto and Irula. Toto is a Tibeto-Burman language spoken by a few hundred speakers in Totopara, part of the Alipurduar district in West Bengal. Irula is a Dravidian

language spoken by a few thousand speakers in the Nilgiri hills across Tamil Nadu and Karnataka. We worked with the community to collect a dataset of approximately 30 hours in Toto and 20 hours in Irula, transcribe those and then train and test the models using Matra Studio. We will discuss the development of Matra Studio and ASR systems in detail in our talk and present it as a replicable model for building speech technologies for other endangered languages.

**Keywords:** *Automatic Speech Recognition (ASR), Under resourced Languages, Endangered Languages, Matra Studio, Community-driven Language Technology*

**Patterns in Loanword borrowing in two Endangered Dhimalish  
Languages of India; Toto & Dhimal  
Bornini Lahiri**

Toto is a language spoken by Toto community which dwells in an isolated village at the foothills of Himalayas called Totopara, located in the state of West Bengal, India. Dhimal is another language of West Bengal mainly spoken in Darjeeling district. Dhimal is the name of both the community and its language. Dhimal settlements can be found in India as well as in Nepal. However, this work focuses on the Dhimal of India which is spoken by 85 families (Census 2011) staying in 3 villages of West Bengal. Both Dhimal and Toto has been identified as endangered languages (UNESCO 2010). King (1994) also marked that Toto is the closest relative of Dhimal. Driem (2001) grouped Dhimal together with Toto under Dhimalish group. The present work focuses on loanwords in light of a range of other borrowing phenomena in Toto and Dhimal.

Both the languages are spoken by multilingual speakers and hence due to contact many words are being borrowed in both the languages. In this paper I present the pattern of borrowing that is found in both these languages. The study shows that inter-genetic borrowings make inevitable consequences in the languages; it brings change in the phonological and morphological patterns of the languages. Most importantly loanwords bring changes in the overall worldview of the speech communities. After analysing the dataset, it was observed that in Toto borrowing was less compared to Dhimal whereas Dhimal often uses loanwords from Bangla, Maithili or Nepali for words which Toto uses presumably native vocabulary. This might be a result of Totopara's isolation. However, in certain domains the borrowings are more for both the languages. Following are few examples of borrowed words of Dhimal where Toto has maintained the native word. Toto Dhimal English /hindamina/ /kapal/ Source language forehead /koro/ Nepali /aŋgli/ finger /bo Maithili/Tharu t̪ɕɔŋ/ shoulder /kand<sup>h</sup>e/ /dəina/ right (vs left) /daŋkre/ Bangla Table 1: Loanwords in Dhimal Nepali The present study is mainly based on primary data collected from both the languages between 2014 to 2024. The study also takes help from the secondary sources to look at the cognates. The dataset for both the languages was created which was compared with the cognates of the Tibeto-Burman languages. The mismatches of the cognates were compared with the neighbouring Indo-Aryan languages to establish the borrowing.

**Keywords:** *Toto, Dhimal, Loanwords, Inter-genetic Borrowing, Cognates*

## **Tense and Aspects in Gtaʔ**

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Gtaʔ (ISO 639-3:gaq) is a South-Munda Austroasiatic language with approximately 3000 - 4500 speakers, thus categorised as severely endangered by UNESCO. The language community has historically been habituated in the hills and plains of the southern districts of Odisha, namely Koraput and Malkangiri. However, with time, younger generations have started to move out, resulting in influence and dilution from Remo (bfw) and Gorum (pcj), as well as in the Desia dialect of Oriya spoken in the Koraput Munda region. Couple that with the limited research on the South Munda language, our understanding of the complex linguistic features, such as Tense and Aspects, among these languages is minuscule.

The present paper focuses on the Tense and Aspects of gtaʔ, which categorises times as in Past and Non-Past. In addition, the language exhibits three Aspectual markers (-diŋ; -te/ke; -læʔ/bɔ) which assist in the formation of the gtaʔ tense paradigm. The analysis of these aspectual markers plays a vital role in our understanding of the porous distinction of time in the gtaʔ languages. More interestingly, the study reveals that native speakers perceive the continuum of time through these aspectual markers, yet spatial displacement and reference significantly influence how tense and aspect are interpreted, regardless of when the action occurs. At last, the paper also shows how these aspectual markers extend their scope beyond tense and dominate how semantic interpretations are constructed through specific cases where aspect markers are not permissible.

***Keywords:*** gtaʔ, Munda languages, Austroasiatic, Tense, Aspect

**Transmitting Tradition: Theatre, Music, and the Performative  
Reproduction of Cultural Knowledge**

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This paper looks at how theatre and music help preserve and share cultural knowledge. Using examples from Indian performance traditions like Nautanki, Yakshagana, Baul, and Qawwali, it shows how these art forms carry stories, community memories, and traditional wisdom that shape cultural identity. The study uses ideas from performance studies, ethnomusicology, and cultural anthropology to show that these performances are more than entertainment—they are living archives where traditions are kept alive, reinterpreted, and shared with new generations. It also explores how digital media and recording methods are helping preserve these performances in today's fast-changing, globalized world. Theatre and music, the paper argues, are not just ways to express culture, but also important tools to pass knowledge across generations, languages, and regions, keeping traditions relevant in the present. Overall, this research highlights the importance of theatre and music in protecting intangible cultural heritage. It shows that these performances are vital for keeping community identity, stories, and traditions alive and emphasizes the need to include them in modern heritage preservation strategies.

**Keywords:** *performance, theatre, music, cultural transmission, oral tradition, intangible heritage*

## **Reclamation as a Sociolinguistic Imperative: A Study of the Irula, Muduga, and Kurumba Languages of Attappadi**

**Anjali V Kumar**

The linguistic ecology of Attappadi, Kerala, provides a distinctive context for examining the relationship between multilingualism, marginality, and language change. This study focuses on the endangered languages of the Irula, Muduga, and Kurumba communities in Attappadi, utilising a blend of ethnographic observation and structural linguistic analysis. The findings indicate that the endangerment of tribal languages in Attappadi does not stem from linguistic inadequacy but is instead a consequence of historical marginalisation, socio economic changes, and systemic neglect. Through phonological, morphological, and syntactic analysis, patterns of continuity and adaptive change are revealed. Additionally, oral traditions, ritual discourse, and kinship communication illustrate the ongoing linguistic agency and identity within these communities. The study argues that effective language reclamation must go beyond mere documentation; it should also promote active usage, community involvement, educational integration, and institutional collaboration.

This approach redefines language reclamation as a dynamic sociolinguistic process that affirms the right of communities to speak, teach, and preserve their languages. The experience in Attappadi highlights the necessity of recognising tribal languages as essential components of India's rich linguistic heritage. The research highlights the moral and political significance of preserving these languages as vital components of the country's diverse linguistic landscape.

***Keywords:*** *Attappadi, Irula, Muduga, Kurumba, language reclamation, sociolinguistics, multilingualism, marginality, linguistic diversity, empowerment*

**Bridging the Linguistic Divide: the Impact of Bilingual Education  
on Language vitality of Nilgiri Tribes**

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The Nilgiri district is a microcosm of Linguistic diversity, home to several particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs). Such as the Toda, Kota, Paniya, Kurumba, Kattunayakka and Irula. Despite government efforts to promote education, a significant challenge remains the linguistic mismatch between the home language of tribal children and the dominant medium of instruction, which is typically Tamil or English. This paper explores the effectiveness of bilingual education as a strategy to mitigate language to gloss and improve academic outcomes. It analysis case studies of pilot programs that integrate tribal languages into early primary education, examining their impact on students cognitive development, Cultural identity, and school attendance.

The findings will provide empirical evidence for the need to adopt a culturally sensitive pedagogical approach that validates indigenous languages, thereby fostering a more inclusive and effective learning environment for tribal students. The study hypothesizes that integrating tribal languages into the formal education structure, particularly in early primary education, can serve as a powerful pedagogical tool. It analyzes case studies of recent pilot programs implemented in the region that utilize a bilingual model. The core objective is to empirically examine the impact of these culturally sensitive programs on several key indicators: students' cognitive development, the strengthening of their cultural identity, and a measurable improvement in school attendance and retention rates. This approach fosters a learning environment where the children's inherent linguistic and cultural capital is leveraged, rather than marginalized.

The comprehensive findings of this research provide empirical evidence for the urgent need to transition from monolingual, assimilations educational practices to a more culturally sensitive pedagogical approach. Ultimately, this paradigm shift is necessary to ensure a more inclusive, equitable and effective learning environment

for PVTG students, thereby preserving their unique linguistic heritage while simultaneously improving their opportunities for academic success.

***Keywords:*** *Bilingual, Education, Language Documentation, Cognitive Development, Cultural Preservation.*

## Clause-Initial Discourse Markers as Main-Event Line Indicators in Miluk and Alsea

Callum Burgess

In narrative discourse across the world's languages, a fundamental distinction is made between clauses that advance the story the main-event line (MEL) and those that provide background information or elaboration. The MEL typically consists of a sequence of temporally bounded, thematically central, and realis events that form the narrative plot (Labov & Waletzky, 1967; Hopper, 1979; Payne, 1992). In many morphologically rich languages, the MEL is encoded through verbal morphology. I examine Miluk and Alsea, two indigenous languages of Oregon which diverge from this norm, relying on clause-initial discourse markers despite rich TAM systems. Miluk (Coosan) employs clitics such as *wii=* and *tsu=*, which encode a foreground/background distinction. (Douglas-Tavani, 2024) Alsea (isolate, \*Penu tian) uses fixed combinations of discourse particles, especially *tem+m'unh'u*, to systematically mark MEL status. (Shirtz, 2024) These systems represent a typologically distinct strategy: verb morphology encodes semantic features (i.e. duration, telicity, modality), while discourse markers signal pragmatic roles in the narrative sequence. This contrasts with other languages with rich and complex TAM morphology, where verb forms are the primary MEL indicators. While some languages with rich discourse markers such as Swahili (Contini-Morava, 1989) or Yagua (Payne, 1992) balance verb forms with discourse structure, Miluk and Alsea shift the burden thoroughly to clause-initial markers. This division of labor challenges conventional typological models, inviting further investigation into the range of grammatical resources available for narrative discourse. Beyond typology, these insights have practical significance. Discourse markers such as *wii=*, *tsu=*, and *tem+m'unh'u* are perceptually salient and syntactically accessible, making them effective tools in revitalization and pedagogical contexts for communities.

**Keywords:** *Linguistic typology, Languages of the Pacific Northwest, Narrative discourse, Main-event line, Morphology*