Chapter: 6
The Plight of Endangered Languages: The Conclusion

“I dream in Chamicuro,
But I cannot tell my dreams to anyone,
Because no one else speaks to Chamicuro
It’s lonely being the last one.”

(--Natalia Sangama, a Chamicuro grandmother, 1999).

“The only person I have left to talk to is a linguist and talking to a linguist is no fun.”--- An Amerindian woman’s comment to Joshua Fishman (Fishman 2000: 24).

6.0. Introduction

The issue of Language Endangerment has been the talk of Ethnolinguistic study recently and took centre stage after the publication of ‘UNESCO’s Intangible Cultural Heritage Section’s Ad hoc Expert Group on Endangered languages’ report in March 2003. The above statements by two native speakers of two ‘about to die’ languages would further help to understand the gravity of the issue of language endangerment. The statements imply that those languages which are small in terms of population are fast disappearing from the human civilization. Although this phenomenon is ubiquitous, the pace or the number of disappearing languages cannot be predicted. Although it is a matter of debate to predict the exact number of languages which are going to disappear, but in a stern prediction by Michael Krauss (Krauss 1992), it was said that, over 4,000 of the world’s languages will cease to be spoken by the end of the next century.

In the early years of 1990’s the problem of language loss has been brought about to the attention of the world communities by linguists such as Ken Hale, Michael Krauss, Akira Yamamoto and Colette Grinevald, with Krauss (1992) warning the dire consequences of
losing 90% of world languages by the end of 21st century. While Gordon (2005) predicted that this would be 50%. Even if we stand by this prediction, the human civilization would lose 3000 languages by the end of the 21st century. The scale at which we are losing human languages, it has been observed as unprecedented in the history of humanity. This same concern has been intended in the works of some linguists such as David Crystal, Daniel Nettle, Suzanne Romaine, Lenore Grenoble, Lindsay Whaley, Andrew Dalby and many more.128 The UNESCO Red Book, which came into publication in 1993, was also a pioneering effort to make awareness among the people about this misnomer. Then the University of Tokyo started the Clearing Houses for endangered languages in 1995, where they tried to document all the disappearing languages. Then different initiatives were set up with the nomenclature of the Endangered Languages Fund (ELF) in USA (1995), the Foundation for Endangered Languages (FEL) in UK (1995) etc. These bodies have generously offered fund to the research and preserving works of endangered languages across the world.129

6.1. What is endangered language?

A language is referred to as endangered when it is on the verge of extinction, when its speakers cease to use it, cease to use it in their most predominant domains such as home, market, playground, office etc. A language is endangered when the speakers cease to pass on their language to their next generation, when their youngest speakers are the older people. On the basis of language endangerment linguists have attempted many a time to classify and categorize the languages. Terralingua (2000) divides languages into three groups:

1. Moribund (no longer learned by children)
2. Endangered (those languages which would soon cease to be learned by children)
3. Safe (neither moribund nor endangered).

128 Austin, Peter and Simpson, Andrew. Endangered languages, P.5.
129 Moseley, Christopher. Encyclopedia of world’s endangered languages. P.X.
But the UNESCO report (2009) has maintained five parameters to trace out the endangered languages of the world. These parameters are also used to refer to the state of vitality of the languages. They are:

1. Unsafe
2. Definitely endangered
3. Severely endangered
4. Critically endangered
5. Extinct.

According to these parameters a language is said to be safe when all the age groups from children to older generation of the community use the language. This is unsafe when ‘the language is used by some children in all domains; it is used by all children in limited domains’.\(^{130}\) When the language falls in the definitely endangered category ‘the language is used mostly by the parental generation and up.’\(^{131}\) Again when it is severely endangered ‘the language is mostly used by the grandparental generation and up.’\(^{132}\) Critically endangered language is that language where ‘the language is used mostly by very few speakers, of great grand parental generation.’\(^{133}\) And finally extinct languages are those languages which are left with no speakers.

6.2. Vitality of languages

The concept of linguistic vitality refers to the probability of the language sustainability over time. Approximately there are more than 6,000 languages being spoken across the world.\(^ {134}\) Due to the hegemony of some languages which are dominant in their respective areas many small languages are losing out their speakers. They are shifting their languages to the dominant languages available in their region. If this trend continues, it is estimated that by the end of twenty first century about 90 percent languages would be

\(^{130}\) Language vitality and Endangerment, UNESCO’s Ad hoc expert group on endangered languages, 2003
\(^{131}\) Ibid. P.8
\(^{132}\) Ibid. P.9
\(^{133}\) Ibid. P.9
\(^{134}\) Ibid. P.3
replaced by the dominant languages.\textsuperscript{135} UNESCO's \textit{Atlas of the world's languages in danger} (2009) has further states that the number of endangered languages is alarmingly increasing. 'The report provides an updated data on about 2,500 endangered languages, which are classified on the basis of several criteria into five different levels of vitality: unsafe, definitely endangered, severely endangered, critically endangered, and extinct. It states that out of the approximately 6,000 existing languages in the world, more than 200 have become extinct during the last three generations, 538 are critically endangered, 502 are severely endangered, 632 are definitely endangered and 602 are unsafe.'\textsuperscript{136} The atlas specified that India topped the list of endangered languages with 196 endangered languages, but US has identified with the maximum number of extinct languages (53) from 1950s onwards. The factors of language endangerment can also be cited as the factors for language vitality.

To determine the factors of language endangerment and vitality UNESCO report (2003)\textsuperscript{137} has identified nine criteria. They are:

1. Intergenerational language transmission
2. Absolute number of speakers
3. Proportion of speakers within the total population
4. Shifts in domains of language use
5. Response to new domains and media
6. Materials for language education and literacy
7. Governmental and institutional language attitudes and policies including official status and use.
8. Community members' attitude towards their own language
9. Amount and quality of documentation

\textsuperscript{135} \textit{Language vitality and Endangerment}. UNESCO's Ad hoc expert group on endangered languages, 2003, P.3
\textsuperscript{137} \textit{Language vitality and Endangerment}. UNESCO's Ad hoc expert group on endangered languages, 2003, P. 7-16
Although these are major reasons for a language getting endangered, they cannot be hold in isolation and make only one factor responsible for language endangerment.

6.3. Factors of language endangerment

Language endangerment is caused due to various external and internal factors. The external factors may be military, economic, religious, cultural or educational subjugation. The internal factors will include community’s negative attitude towards their language, lack of awareness to preserve their language etc. The reasons for possessing negative attitude could be attributed to the notion that their language is not worth keeping and the prestige and social status are not associated with it. Apart from it, the lack of job opportunities in their mother tongue also plays a reason for not retaining the language. The economic, social and political factors are also responsible for language endangerment. “The economic factors that lead to language death are undeniably important, but they are not uniform. We can say with some certainty that urbanization is a killer of languages, especially if rapid economic change takes place over one or two generations and attracts the rural poor to urban centers in search of work. Not only does urbanization fragment families, especially in post colonial states, where the breadwinner may be constrained to move to the city from a subsistence economy to earn a livelihood in a new major language environment, but it generally fails to provide an institutional basis for maintenance of the non local languages within the new urban environment.”

Moseley has further stated that, “The destruction or decay of a language follows certain reasonably well defined paths. Patterns borrowed from the encroaching language impose themselves on the receding one in a particular order. At the present stage, it would be unwise to state too categorically whether syntax, phonology, grammar or vocabulary are eroded first in an endangered language; what we can say is that the erosion occurs at all levels over time. Unique elements are lost in the processes—features that at first may

138 Moseley, Christopher, Encyclopedia of World’s endangered languages. P.III
appear to be of curiosity only to linguists, but which have implications for the study of human thought and society itself.”

6.4. Tiwa and Deori as endangered languages

If we consider the above mentioned factors responsible for language endangerment, Tiwa and Deori would certainly come under the purview of endangerment. The UNESCO’s *atlas of the world languages in danger (2009)* has well placed these two languages in the ‘definitely endangered’ category. The above factors can also be considered in the context of Tiwa and Deori languages. First of all, a huge chunk of new generation speakers of Tiwa and Deori are not in favor of learning their languages because a section of their parents emphasize that their children should learn either Assamese or English language instead of their mother tongue. Second, in the field survey it came to the notice of the investigator that many people wanted to identify themselves as the member of their respective speech communities; but they were unable to communicate in their languages properly. Hence there is a gap between the actual number of speakers and the actual number of community members. This concept has been referred as ‘foster mother tongue and real mother tongue’ by Abbi (2009). Third, if we consider the proportion of Tiwa and Deori people with the total population of more than one billion population of India, their proportion would be very miniscule. Fourth, the continuous shift of domain usages of language can be regarded the most alarming reason for language endangerment. In case of Tiwa language, the people who live in the plain areas, they don’t even use their language in the home domain. In the domains such as market, school, office, public meeting etc, it becomes difficult for them to retain their language. These domains are fast replaced by the dominant Assamese language or Hindi. And the school domain has been replaced by the mushrooming of English medium schools. So, a severe crisis of language maintenance has arisen. Fifth, the response of the languages for new domains such as electronic medium, technically equipped entertainment industry and towards media is also not encouraging in Tiwa and Deori languages. Although, Tiwa and Deori languages have witnessed some of the activities pertaining to releasing CD-Rom, VCD of late, their

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139 Mosely, Christopher, *Encyclopedia of World’s endangered languages*. P.XIV
quantity is almost next to none. The media industry also lacks viewership and readership in these two languages, because of which not even a single endeavor had been successful in this field. Sixth, the education is never being imparted in these two languages. Although, a few literary organizations have tried to conduct some classes to teach their children in their mother tongues as a campaign to preserve their languages, in the long run, these programs rarely achieve their targeted goals because of the lack of enthusiasm, funds, etc from the part of the community members. The quality of the study materials also stands hurdle in this process. Seventh, the government’s linguistic policies at the state and central level do not encourage the people of minor languages to retain their languages. Hence Tiwa and Deori are also not exceptions. Eighth, the most important factor which would discount Tiwa and Deori’s effort to preservation is the community members’ negative attitude towards their own languages. The plain and urban speakers of these two languages are more or less indifferent or neutral towards their languages and don’t feel any responsibility to preserve their tongues. They would rather feel proud if they can send their children to the English medium schools. They would further comment in a neutral way by saying that since their children had gone to the English medium schools, they had to remain detached from learning their culture, languages and everything. This can be attributed their lack of awareness and knowledge for the need of preserving their language and culture. This kind of negative attitude is also said to be emanated because of the socio-economic and political status availed by the people of dominant language groups. And lastly, but not the least, the amount of documentation in these two languages is very little. Their literatures would find a very few people who practice their languages. Lack of good linguistic dictionaries, grammars, short stories, novels, and other literary genres makes these two languages very less accessible among their speakers in terms of documentation. The lack of proper research institutes, archives etc. also indicates the pathetic documentation of these two languages which would push them to the situation of endangerment. After examining these issues, we can definitely support the conclusion of UNESCO report’s categorization of these languages in the category of ‘definitely endangered’ category and safely assume that these languages fulfill all the criteria of being potential endangered languages at present time. Since these
languages are still being transmitted to some of the rural children, taught at home, they are not under immediate threat of extinction.

Since, because of the negative attitude of the speakers of Tiwa and Deori (not all speakers), the governmental policies of state of Assam and the central government, the feeling of having more status and future job security through other languages, opportunity in other languages etc. can be counted as the factors of negligence from the part of Tiwa and Deori speakers which trigger them of in non-retaining Tiwa and Deori languages as their mother tongues. For these reasons, the new generation of these two languages specially residing in plain areas of Assam, do not want to converse in their mother tongue and they have ceased to transmit the languages to their children. Which is why, the UNESCO report on endangered languages has categorized these two languages in the 'definitely endangered' category of endangered languages. If proper measures are not taken, if people are not made aware of the issue of language endangerment like many other small languages, someday, Tiwa and Deori languages will also become a history of the past.

6.5. Need for language documentation and revitalization

When a language dies, it results into a huge loss of human knowledge, loss of unique cultural, historical and ecological knowledge. Each language tells us different and independent human experiences. 'Every time a language dies, we have less evidence for understanding patterns in the structure and function of human language, human prehistory and the maintenance of the world’s diverse ecosystem.'

The irony of the world linguistic situation is that about 97 percent of the world’s populations speak about 4 percent of world’s languages, and conversely, about 96 percent of the world’s languages are spoken by about 3 percent of the world’s people (Bernard, 1996:142). Since the percentage of dominant language speakers is very high and their socio economic and political privileges are much more, the speakers of the endangered

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140 Cited in Language vitality and Endangermnt, UNESCO’s Ad hoc expert group on endangered languages, 2003. P.3
141 Ibid. P.3.
languages feel that it is because of their language inconvenience they had to remain underdeveloped. Most of the tribal speech communities belong to this category. This way they start discarding their own culture, cultural practices, and cultural values along with their languages. This has resulted irrecoverable loss to humanity and human civilization in the form of losing out valuable knowledge. Here the need for proper documentation and revitalization arises.

Ken Hale asserts “The loss of local languages, and of the cultural systems which they express, has meant irretrievable loss of diverse and interesting intellectual wealth, the priceless products of human mental industry. The process of language loss is ongoing. Many linguistic fieldworkers have had, and will continue to have, the experience of bearing witness to the loss, for all time, of a language and of the cultural products which the language served to express for the intellectual nourishment of its speakers.”

Documentation refers to the materials available to study and preserve the language for future generation. In language documentation the importance is given to written text, transcribed, translated, annotated audio visual recordings natural speech etc. The endangerment of a language is relatively depended on the scale and quality of documented stuffs. Following is a scale provided by UNESCO report to measure out the effort as well scales of documentation. These are ordered on the basis of qualitative documentations.

1. **Superlative documentation:** There are comprehensive grammars and dictionaries, extensive texts, constant flow of language materials. Abundant annotated high quality audio and video recordings exist.

2. **Good documentation:** There are one good grammar and number of adequate grammars, dictionaries, texts, literature, and occasionally updated every day media; adequate annotated high quality audio and video recordings.

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142 Cited in Mosely, Christopher. *Encyclopedia of World’s endangered languages.* P.XV
143 Cited in *Language vitality and Endangerment*, UNESCO’s Ad hoc expert group on endangered languages. 2003. P.16
3. **Fair documentation:** There may be an adequate grammar or sufficient amount of grammars, dictionaries and texts, but no everyday media; audio and video recordings may exist in varying quality or degree of annotation.

4. **Fragmentary documentation:** There are some grammatical sketches, word-lists, and texts useful for limited linguistic research but with inadequate coverage. Audio and video recordings may exist in varying quality, with or without any annotation.

5. **Inadequate documentation:** Only a few grammatical sketches, short word-lists, and fragmentary texts. Audio and video recordings do not exist, are of unusable quality, or are completely un-annotated.

6. **Undocumented:** No material exists.

6.6. Measures taken to arrest language endangerment

The policy makers of a dominant language can either play a pivotal role in maintaining non-dominant languages or fuelling the people of those languages to abandon their languages. The members of the dominant language can create a value system where their language is thought to be the best language to be promoted and making it a means for national integrity. This way they will create favorable condition for flourishing their language and encourage the other people as well to use their language. This way the hegemony of that language starts growing. But on the contrary to that, the dominant language community can also formulate policies where other non-dominant languages also have rooms to grow along with the dominant language by making them multilingual. The government can support those languages by giving the status of official language, promoting them as medium of instruction in the respective areas, providing funds for research and documentation etc. But first and foremost, the community members' attitude towards their own language makes all the differences between language maintenance and loss. They may find their language as their identity, if that is the case they will try to preserve and promote it. They may be ashamed of using it, may find it nuisance or then they would prefer to discard it. They may also feel that their
language is not helpful in the overall economic and social progression of the community, in that context, the speakers might discard it. If the later one is the case, it would be hard to save a language from extinction. Christopher Moseley states “Language rescue cannot be imposed from outside; and it is not usually the business of linguists to interfere in political processes. Ultimately communities must help themselves, with informed decisions and the perspective of more than one generation.” On the contrary the speakers may also have positive attitude towards their language. They might feel that their language is their identity through which they can preserve and expose their culture, literature, and media and keep their value system intact. In that context, they would try to maintain and preserve their language along with adopting other functional languages which are needed for economic and social communication.

As a measure to preserve and protect language endangerment, UNESCO professed linguistic diversity and multilingualism across the world. As Hale (1998:192) aptly states, “The loss of linguistic diversity is a loss to scholarship and science....while a major goal of linguistic science is to define universal grammar i.e. to determine what is constant and invariant in the grammars of all natural languages, attainment of that goal is severely hampered, some would say impossible, in the absence of linguistic diversity.” In another publication of UNESCO, it was stated that “Promoting multilingualism consists of encouraging and developing linguistic policies allowing each non dominant linguistic community to use its first language in as many areas as possible while learning the/a national language as well as a language of international communication. Native speakers of a tongue which dominates at the national level should have the opportunity and should be encouraged to learn another national tongue and one or two international languages.” So the government at the helm of affairs should listen to the voice of all linguistic communities and accordingly formulate the linguistic policies. This way the government plays dual role: first, they create a conducive environment where small linguistic groups also get a chance to study and preserve their language and culture along with the national language and maintaining the national integrity and secondly, these

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144 Moseley, Christopher, Encyclopedia of the world’s endangered languages, P.xiii
communities will remain satisfied with government action and feel that their voices were also given importance at the policy making level. Hale again remarked (1998:193) "Without linguistic diversity it would be impossible for us to perform the central task of linguistic science i.e. the task of developing a realistic theory of human linguistic competence, realistic in the sense that it properly reflects not only the limits on the manner in which grammatical structure is determined by the properties of lexical items, for example, but also the impressive diversity of surface form in the observable structures of natural languages." At the schooling level, Multilingual Education (MLE) should be implemented. By implementing MLE method many countries have already achieved success in strengthening their primary education system. As Ajit Mohanty has rightly asserted, "There is hope, since all over the world major international institutions like UNESCO accept multilingualism as a resource, a growing number of nations pledges to honour and foster every child’s home language, indigenous peoples in different parts of the globe strive to revitalize their languages, and smaller nations like Papua New Guinea lead by their success stories of making mother tongues the language of school instruction. MLE is new commitment, one to strengthen the foundations of a necessary bridge—a bridge between home and school, between languages and between cultures. A bridge from the home language, the mother tongue, to the regional language and to the national language as well as world languages like English; an empowering bridge that leads to meaningful participation in the wider democratic and global set-up without homogenizing the beauty of diversity; a bridge that liberates but does not displace."  

The subordinate linguistic community may try to resist the hegemony of dominant language by mobilizing its community members to fortify or revitalize the language. They can achieve it by three ways: A) by language revitalization where the community members can reintroduce their language which previously had limited usage. B) By language fortification where there would be increase use of the subordinate language to counterbalance the dominant language and C) by Maintaining language where the


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speakers would feel the sense of responsibility to retain their language by using their language in more and more domains and writing as well.

Apart from these measures, the speakers of the endangered languages can be made more and more aware of the real consequence of losing their languages. In this context the help or expertise of linguists, educators, social activists and NGOs can be taken. Secondly, those people who are engaged in this kind of endeavor should be imparted good basic and linguistic pedagogical training so that they lead and advice the people of that linguistic community. The people who are interested in practicing literature should also be encouraged and given appropriate platforms. Moreover, the government language policies should be supportive towards the non-dominant languages of the state. The non-dominant languages should also be given enough space where they can facilitate primary education to their children in their mother tongue. The government should provide adequate fund to build the academic curricula in their own language along with national language/s. Lastly like the human rights, the linguistic right also be protected by creating conducive milieu where speakers of a non-dominant language never feel economically and socially backward by being the speakers of that language.

6.7. A common misconception-Tiwa and Deori as dialects

The debate on language Vs dialect has been an old debate in linguistic politics. Many people misunderstand language as dialect. Funk and Wagnall’s Encyclopedia has defined dialect as ‘a version of language differing in some aspects of grammar, pronunciation, or vocabulary from other forms of the same language.’\textsuperscript{147} Dialect is a variety of language which is mutually intelligible to all the speakers from other varieties of the same language. A language may have many dialects i.e. many varieties. Even the standard variety can also be called one of the dialects of that language. Out of all dialects, one dialect is given the status of standard variety which is widely accepted by majority of the people and through which the speakers of that language practice their literature and media.

\textsuperscript{147} http://www.uncp.edu/home/canada/work/alleng/dialect/dialect.htm

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But many laymen carry the misconception that those languages which are small in terms of number of speakers, which don’t have the script, written literature etc., are dialects. And many a time people have negative connotation towards dialects and make fun of those people who speak non-standard varieties of a language. They also put all those small tribal languages in that same category and ridicule those people. This kind of attitude gives rise of a feeling of insecurity and inferiority to the speakers of those languages. Those speakers will also feel that prestige is not associated with their languages and carry a lackadaisical approach towards their mother tongues. This negative attitude also leads a language to the brink of language endangerment.

In consonance with the above views, along with many small tribal languages, many people consider Tiwa and Deori as dialects, not languages. This notion is completely incorrect as Tiwa and Deori themselves have pocket dialects in their ambit. Tiwa and Deori languages are neither varieties of Assamese nor mutually understandable to Assamese at one hand and Tiwa and Deori at another. Since Tiwa and Deori languages have their independent phonological, morphological, syntactical and semantic systems, they can well stand as independent languages.

6.8. Summing up

The thesis is an attempt to understand some linguistic aspects related to Tiwa and Deori languages. This comparative study tries to outline different sociolinguistic aspects, various types of morphological comparisons at the lexical and syntactic levels, semantic domains, various processes of sound changes which are found operational in these two languages from Grierson’s (1903) time to present time and the situation of endangered languages of the world in the backdrop of Tiwa and Deori languages. The study has also extensively delved into the issues of borrowing, loan words, semanticity etc.

The first chapter tries to delineate the social and cultural history and description of these two linguistic communities along with the genealogical features of these two
languages. This chapter also briefs the origin of the words ‘Tiwa and Deori’, mythologies related to these communities etc. Moreover, it also outlines the issue of societal bilingualism and the language planning of the government of Assam. It also gives a description of the existing literature of Tiwa and Deori languages. It also outlines an account of the role of Assamese language as a dominant language in the region. The first chapter also tells us the general ideas associated with the thesis, the structural depiction of the entire thesis through its objectives of the study, methodology, descriptive framework and chapterizations.

The Second chapter entitled ‘Some Sociolinguistic Aspects of Deori and Tiwa’ focuses on various sociolinguistic accounts such as the origins of the words Deori and Tiwa, Tiwa and Deori as speech communities, diglossic situation, issues of language shift and maintenance, borrowing, loan words, code mixing, code switching, bilingualism, societal bilingualism, multilingualism, kinship terminologies, color terminologies, urban and rural form of language, language in contact situation, language policies, issues of dominant and subordinate languages, power and identity politics through languages etc. All these issues have been studied in the context of Tiwa and Deori as linguistic communities. The analysis of this chapter has revealed the following conclusions.

a) Although there is a diminishing trend of speakers in terms of numbers (the actual speakers in opposition to community members) has started, Tiwa and Deori both have fulfilled the criteria of being independent speech communities. The members of each community has their own language, all of them have some shared values, tradition, cultural heritage, social behaviors, attitude, aspirations etc.

b) Diglossic situation has been prevailing in Tiwa and Deori societies for a long period. Fishman’s extended diglossia (1967) can be availed in Tiwa and Deori societies where Assamese plays the H variety in the formal set up and their respective languages as the L variety at the informal domains. The analysis has provided enough specimens to prove the extended Diglossic situation in Tiwa and Deori societies.
c) The second chapter also takes into account two of the most common phenomena of contact language situation that is language shift and maintenance. Tiwa and Deori speakers have to remain in constant touch with other speech community members predominantly Assamese and other groups namely Hindi, Karbi, Arunachali tribes, Mishing, Ahom etc. In this predicament the speakers of these two languages tend to use many borrowing words in their day to day conversation. This has immensely affected these two languages. In fact, because of this, some of the grammatical functions also been affected by Assamese lexicon and syntax. The issue of borrowing and its implication in Tiwa and Deori languages has got wider attention in the consecutive chapters as well.

d) Tiwa and Deori societies are societal bilinguals. Almost all the speakers from both the communities are equally fluent in Assamese language. Apart from this, a huge lot of Tiwa and Deori languages are multilinguals with functional fluency in Hindi, English, Karbi, Mishing, Nepali, Khasi and some Arunachali languages. This aspect also has been addressed in this chapter.

e) Kinship terminologies provide interesting insight to the sociolinguistic study of any language. Both Tiwa and Deori languages use reference kinship terminologies than mere terms of address. The kinship terminologies in these two languages seem to be intact by and large.

f) This chapter has also expressively dealt with the color terminologies available in Tiwa and Deori languages. Deori language has shown the evidence of having four color terminologies and Tiwa enumerates eight primary color terminologies.

g) Languages have different varieties with regard to region, class, economic status, profession etc. The urban and rural varieties are also two kinds of varieties found in many languages. Tiwa language gives us clear distinction of urban and rural varieties where Deori does not account such distinction.

h) The second chapter also deals with language planning in Assam and the role of Assamese language as the dominant language in this region.
The **Third chapter** focuses on the comparative study of Tiwa and Deori primarily at lexical level and it also deals with some syntactic and phonetic aspects of Tiwa and Deori languages. The basic thrust of this chapter is to find out the genealogical relationship of Tiwa and Deori through which the relationship of sisterhood can further be enhanced and grammatical category to category comparison. In the lexical level comparison, noun, pronoun, verb, adverb etc. are being tested in both languages. Here an attempt is made to check whether those lexicon are replaced by Assamese lexicon or not. The phonetic similarities between the lexicon of these two languages are also checked to figure out the genealogical linkage of these two languages. The analysis of this chapter has brought about the following points.

a) The noun systems of Tiwa and Deori languages have been elaborated from the semantic property dimensions, level of borrowing and phonetic similarities between the two languages. A huge number of nouns have shown phonetic similarity to each other.

b) The pronominal systems of Tiwa and Deori languages have ample phonetic similarities to each other. It has very few exceptions. Both Tiwa and Deori have borrowed the Assamese classifier *bur* in making plural pronouns. The languages also have marked genitive and possessive case marker with pronominals. The important aspect of interrogative pronominals is that these two languages have retained these lexicon intact. But Deori has allowed borrowing in some demonstrative pro forms from Assamese.

c) Both Tiwa and Deori adjectives have been analysed in terms of some semantic properties classified by Abbi and Dixon. The adjectives of these two languages have been categorized in terms of the semantic properties of dimension, physical property, value, age, color, taste, comparison and situation. The languages have shown maximum number of adjectives with the first semantic property dimension.

d) While analysing the vowel morphology of Tiwa and Deori, the data have shown that neither Tiwa nor Deori has any marked GNP distinctions. The auxiliary or the verb never undergoes any changes with the change of gender,
number and person (GNP). But in terms of vowel Causativization, both languages show distinctive morphology to mark the Causativization. Apart from them, Deori has shown a specific verbal affixation to indicate the manner of the verbal action. This was not found in Tiwa morphology.

e) The adverbial systems of these two languages are affected by Assamese borrowing. Yet some of the structures give us the evidence of reduplicated adverbials.

f) The lexicon representing conditionals in these two languages are by and large replaced by Assamese conditionals.

g) The conjunction in Tiwa and Deori languages are placed either in the middle of two nouns, two phrases or two simple sentences. But the lexicon for this category have been borrowed from Assamese language.

h) Tiwa and Deori both have displayed a series of spatial deixis. Evidences of place deixis, proximal forms of deixis are found in good numbers both in Tiwa and Deori. But lots of spatial deictic lexicon of Tiwa and Deori have been replaced by Assamese deictic lexicon.

i) Some of the quantifiers in Tiwa and Deori languages also have borrowings from Assamese language.

j) Tiwa and Deori languages have displayed ample evidences of phonetic similarities. Cognate identification is made possible with the help of phonetic similarities. In the analysis, it was observed that there are many phonetically and semantically similar words in both languages. The phonetic similarities vary from one sound to four sounds similarities. Since there were huge number of words found which are phonetically and semantically similar, it can be safely concluded that these two languages have strong genetic relationships.

k) This chapter has extensively dealt with the issue of borrowing and loan words. While collecting the data for lexical analysis, it was found that there was a huge presence of Assamese lexicon in Tiwa and Deori languages. They were either in the form of borrowing with lexical modification/adaptation or in the form of loan words. Tiwa and Deori have shown the tendency of
borrowing more words than loan words. Both the languages have nativized a huge chunk of Assamese borrowing words. They have simply not only borrowed the noun words, there is also an enormous presence of other grammatical words in their languages. These two languages have also borrowed many lexicon from other neighbor languages and media languages such as Hindi and English.

The **Fourth chapter** takes into account some semantic domains and their semantic fields which are used in day to day conversation. When a language is severely affected by a surrounding dominant language not only at lexical level but also at the syntactic level, that language is bound to lose many lexicon and their domain usages. This phenomenon has posited serious threat to Tiwa and Deori for long survival by eroding the semanticity of those lexicon. This chapter is an attempt to address all these issues and it also analyzes how Assamese lexicon are fast replacing the Tiwa and Deori lexicon in various domains. In this chapter five common semantic domains and their usages have been tested. The analysis has shown that out of 130 tested semantic fields Tiwa and Deori have borrowed 28% and 40% lexicon respectively from Assamese language. We can also put in other words that these two languages are converging towards Assamese language and are in the path of losing that same amount of lexicon from their body of lexicon. The analysis has also given us the fact that in the influence of other dominant languages, Tiwa and Deori have already lost 12% and 8% lexicon respectively representing various semantic fields.

The **Fifth and penultimate chapter** entitled ‘Sound Change’ has extensively looked into the observable sound changes from the time of publication of Grierson’s monumental work ‘Linguistic Survey of India’ i.e. 1903 to the present time i.e. till the time of collecting data in 2008-09. The study has displayed a huge amount of sound changes that had taken place during this period in the forms of complete lexical shift, epenthesis, devoicing, aspiration, assimilation, dissimulation etc. Following are some of the findings:
a) The nomenclatures of the number systems of both Tiwa and Deori languages have undergone various sound changes (please refer to the Appendix 1). In Tiwa except a few numeral lexicon most of the numerals have been replaced by Assamese corresponding numerals. They were also represented with the classifier \( t^a \). Some numerals have also undergone changes by sound insertions. In the Deori numeral data, there are various evidences of sound changes at individual numeral level, but the conspicuous observation has been the deletion of \( mu \) classifier in many numerals such as four, five, six, seven etc. The numerals words have also shown vowel raising and vowel lowering phenomena in some instances. There are also instances of complete lexical shift to a new word.

b) The frequency of words, neighbourhood density and semantic priming play enormous role in adopting and shifting towards a new lexical item. The new lexical items are invention of time. And sometimes it is done by dumping the older word. Tiwa and Deori have displayed a huge complete lexical shift phenomenon. During the last period of more than hundred years, these two languages have lost lots of old lexicon and adopted new lexicon to fill those semantic and lexical vacuum. The analysis has revealed that in terms of complete lexical shift Tiwa has more number of shifts than Deori with 26% complete shift in comparison to 20% Deori shift.

c) Both Tiwa and Deori lexicon have undergone epenthesis sound changes with sound insertions like nasal, plosive etc.

d) The paragoge kind of sound change where a vowel sound is added at the end of the word, have been observed only in Tiwa evidences.

e) Many lexical items both in Tiwa and Deori have been replaced by Assamese borrowings and loan words. This indicates the loss of all those indigenous words from the lexicon of Tiwa and Deori languages.

f) Tiwa and Deori both the languages have undergone sound changes from voiced to voiceless and vice versa. Deori seems to be more vulnerable of this process of sound change.
g) Tiwa and Deori also undergo the nasalization process of sound change where the vowel sound juxtaposes to the nasal sound gets tended to have nasalized. Both the languages have shown evidences for this process.

h) Degemination process of sound change is found only in Deori language, not in Tiwa.

i) Another type of sound change i.e. morphological ellipsis where a morpheme of a word gets lost in due course of time is found to be operational in both Tiwa and Deori languages. Deori has shown a number of morphological ellipses while Tiwa also gives us substantive number of examples.

j) Morpheme addition is another kind of sound change which has been a widespread practice of sound change in both Tiwa and Deori languages. In this form of sound change, an extra morpheme is being added in any position of the word.

k) Tiwa and Deori languages have also undergone a few sound changes in the form of elision, aphaeresis, syncope and apocope.

l) Along with the sound changes, some instances of semantic shift have also been noticed in both the languages. The languages have recorded evidences for semantic shift and overextension.

m) Tiwa and Deori have also shown some miscellaneous sound changes such as changes from alveolar fricative to velar fricative, palatal to alveolar fricative etc.

n) Tiwa and Deori both have also come across many evidences for vowel shift, vowel shortening and diphthongization in some of the words in comparison to Grierson’s lexicon.

Having discussed all these above linguistic issues relating to Tiwa and Deori languages, one can come to the conclusion that both the languages are showing credible tendency to have converged with the dominant Assamese language. Assamese is not only affecting the lexical repertoire of Tiwa and Deori languages, it also influences and replaces the grammatical words of these languages along with converging some syntactic aspects through grammaticalization. The sociolinguistic phenomena such as language shift,
language loss with the initiation of lexicon loss, continuous flow of borrowing and loan words from the nearby dominant language etc. can lead a language to the endangered situation. The above discussions have well explicated that Tiwa and Deori languages are also moving towards the status of endangered languages.