Chapter: 1
Introduction

1.0. Introduction

Linguists believe that approximately there are 6,700 languages spoken across the world and half of them are said to be under the threat of extinction. The present linguistic scenario unveils that the small languages i.e. those languages having smaller population are under tremendous threat of endangerment. The distribution of world languages is also very uneven. The 50% of world population speak the top twenty languages of the world. The economic and political power is also concentrated in the control of those people who speak the majority languages. The opportunities and prestige also get associated with the major languages. Hence, the tendency to put aside the mother tongues is coming to the forefront and the speakers of smaller languages are shifting towards dominant languages by discarding their mother tongues.

In the evolution of human civilization changes are inevitable. So are the languages. They also undergo different phases of their life cycle. In this process many languages have vanished forever. That is why David Crystal calls it 'Language death is real'. The committee of Endangered Language Fund of USA has commented “Languages have died off throughout history, but never have we faced the massive extinction that is threatening the world right now. As language professionals, we are faced with a stark reality: Much of what we study will not be available to future generations. The cultural heritage of many people is crumbling while we look on. Are we willing to shoulder the blame for having stood by and done nothing?” The sustainability of languages is depended on various factors such as political and economic milieu, number of speakers, attitude

1 Austin. P & Simpson. Andrew. Endangered languages. P.5
2 Ibid. P.5
towards the mother tongues, practices of language such as its usage in media, literature, education, administration, cultural tradition etc.

1.1. Deori and Tiwa: Two Tibeto-Burman Languages of Assam

The present study deals with Tiwa and Deori languages, two ‘definitely endangered’ languages of North East India which are spoken in the state of Assam. Assam, the land of exquisite natural beauty, enriched with different cultures and traditions, has been the habitation of various tribal communities along with non-tribals for a long time. Almost each and every tribe has their own culture and folk traditions and they have developed them in their own and unique style. They have been also contributing a lot towards the making and well-being of Pan Assamese culture. Apart from Tiwa and Deori; Bodo, Mishing, Kachari, Rabha, Karbi, Dimasa, etc. are some other major inhabitants of this land.

Deori, a Sino Tibetan language, is a daughter language of Bodo group of Tibeto-Burman language family (Refer to figure 1 of 1.3. P.7). The Deori language community could be socially divided into four main groups. They are Dibongia, Tengapania, Bargoyan and Patorgoyan.

Out of these only the Dibongias have been maintaining their own language whereas the other three groups have merged totally into Assamese culture and society. They have also adopted Assamese as their first language. The Dibongias are scattered in the districts of Lakhimpur, Dhemaji, Dibrugarh, Sibsagar, Jorhat, Tinsukia and the eastern parts of Sonitpur district. Previously they were confined only in Sibasagar and Lakhimpur districts of upper Assam whose principal settlements were concentrated on Majuli Island in Jorhat and on the bank of Dikrang River in North Lakhimpur.

Chutiya is another name for Deori community. They are also known as Deori Chutiyas. But some people from Deori community feel that there were two distinct communities

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6 Source: Moral, Dipankar. Gauhati University "Cross Linguistic Phonological features of the languages in the Brahmaputra Valley: An areal study"
with the nomenclatures of Deori and Chutiya. Moreover, the believers of this notion think that the name Chutiya has derogative connotation and therefore they don’t like to be called Chutiyas. The debate for name game is still around and has been always a matter of controversy. Deori community is very rich in culture and some of them are still maintaining their language. It is worthwhile to mention here that Deoris are virtually bilingual speakers with equal competence in Assamese language.

About their language Grierson (1903) remarks, “The Chutiya language, indeed, may fairly claim to be the original language of Upper Assam.”⁷ Although the vocabulary of this language is influenced by the Naga dialects due to its close juxtaposition, as noticed by Grierson, Assamese language has also contributed a lot to its vocabulary. In this context Brown’s (1895) remark can be quoted. “Indeed, it has recently been officially announced to be extinct by the author of the Assam Census Report for 1891. This is by no means the case; for although the Deoris all speak Assamese fluently, and have incorporated a good many Assamese words in their own vocabulary, still they all speak their own language; and rather proud of it, and of the difficulty of learning it.”

Grierson (1903) emphasized that though the number of speakers is meager in this language, the language deserves proper research on the account of its philological and historical interest. Though this language is sub grouped under the Bodo language, it has many similarities with Dimasa and Hills Kachari of the same group, but it is certainly more archaic in its grammatical forms.

Deori community has long history of rich cultural tradition which is a hidden treasure for the sociologists. The denotative meaning of the word ‘Deori’ is the class of “priest”, a section of the whole Deori-Chutia community. In the first two decades of 13th century, before arrival of the Ahom tribe, the empire of Chutias was spreading towards the river Subansiri.⁸

In the first decades of 16th century, Ahom invaded Chutia’s empire and captured their state. Some of the Chutia people fled away to avoid the invasion, but some of them

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⁷ Grierson 1903. P.118.
⁸ A tributary of river Brahmaputra. which is in upper Assam.
managed to keep marital relationship with the Ahoms. Presently a number of 26,900 people speak this language.  

There are four major classes of Chutias. They are: Hindu, Ahom, Barahi and Deori. The main and important class of them is Deori. Some people argue that the very life-style of the Deoris in the present time also is the same as it was in the 14th century. From this perspective we can imagine how hard they have tried to maintain their own cult and tradition. According to Brown (1895), they preserved their language, religion, customs, traditions, rituals, habits unchanged till the time of Ahom’s invasion. Another source the Census of India report 1902 reveals that till that time Deoris were living in the riverside of Kundil of ancient Sodiya which is situated in the easternmost part of present Assam. The Deori community has firm-faith on God and always prays with great humility and reverence.

**Tiwa**, a Tibeto-Burman language which is also known as Lalung, is spoken primarily in the district of Morigaon and in some parts of Nagaon, Karbi Anglong and Kamrup districts. Even in Khasi hills of Meghalaya there are some speakers of this language. In fact, in Nowgaon there was a belief that they had originally come down from Jaintia Hills, while some other believed that some of their ancestors had immigrated to those places in the reign of Jaintia Raja U-mon Gohain. How and when the Tiwa people came to their present places are hitherto unknown.

The Tiwa community has two types of speech varieties, in the hills and in the plains, which are known as “Hajowali’ and ‘Datiyali/Datiolia’ respectively with marginal variations. It is yet to develop a written form. Like all other tribes in Assam Tiwa speakers are also bilinguals with excellent competence in Assamese language. Quite a few groups of Tiwas in the plains of the valley have adopted Assamese as their first language. As Grierson noted this language is most closely connected to Hajong and Dimasa, two other languages from the same family. According to a census of 1997

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9 http://www.ethnologue.com/14/show_language.asp?code=DER  
10 Grierson. LSI. 1903, P.49
published in the Ethnologue report for language the number of speakers in Tiwa language is 23,000.¹¹

1.2. Linguistic Map¹² of Deori and Tiwa

Following is a linguistic map to show the geographical areas of these two languages--. The name Tiwa is written as Lalung in the map.

¹¹ http://www.ethnologue.com/
¹² http://www.ethnologue.com/show_map.asp?name=Asia
1.3. The language family tree of Tiwa and Deori languages

![Family Tree of Tiwa and Deori Languages](image)

Figure 1: The Family tree of Tiwa and Deori

1.4. Widespread societal bilingualism

In the simplest definition, language contact is the use of more than one language in the same place at the same time.\(^\text{13}\) In the language contact situation, if the languages are mutually unintelligible, the participants might either create a ‘lingua franca’ or they will start learning the dominant language. This is what the situation found in Tiwa and Deori languages context. When the entire society is left with no other option but to learn the dominant language to carry out their normal life, then they learn the language. Because

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\(^{13}\) Thomason, S.G, *Language Contact*, P.1.
of this reason, absolute societal bilingualism exists in Tiwa and Deori societies. In this process the minor languages undergo many contact-induced changes. Contact is instrumental of 'any linguistic change that would have been less likely to occur outside a particular contact situation' (Thomason 2001:62). This definition also asserts that through contact situation many foreign elements can be transmitted to a language and affect the structure of a language. Thomason¹⁴ has further stated that 'some changes that occur in some cases of slow language death fall into the category of attrition—loss of linguistic material.' In the contact induced changes a minor language may result into various changes at the lexical level, lexical borrowing, grammatical morphemes borrowing, suffixes etc and finally this will work as slow poisoning in the death of a language. Languages face endangerment not because of only some biological reasons but mostly because of sociological reasons such as deductive societal bilingual condition. It is because bilingualism not necessarily kills a language rather multilingualism is projected as the measure to save languages. It is the gradual shift of language which puts languages in endangered position. Almost all the members of Tiwa and Deori communities are equally fluent in Assamese language. In the domains such as market, school, administration, offices, playground, formal meeting etc they use L2. Only a handful number speakers of Tiwa community who reside in the hill areas of Karbi-Anglong district, can get the opportunity to use their mother tongue explicitly in their home domain. But this is not similar for the people residing in the plains. Even in the home domain, they have to switch to L2 to talk to their children. The younger generation of these two communities feels more proficient in Assamese rather in their mother tongues. This implies that the intergenerational transfer does not exist in Tiwa language in the plain areas.

¹⁴ Thomason, S.G, Language Change and Language contact, P.2.
1.5. Language planning of the Assam Government-specially in the Tiwa and Deori dominated area

A state can never run their activities without the means of communication. The state must have a common language to perform the official activities and function. If a state has more than one language, it has to confront difficulties in choosing one language as its official language. Many a time, this kind of decision is being influenced either by the pressure of the largest speech community, political motivation or as a consensus among the political leaders from different communities or the majority's voice. A. Deumert (2001) defines “Language planning refers to deliberate, conscious and future-oriented activities aimed at influencing the linguistic repertoire and behavior of speech communities, typically at the state level.”

Indian societies and tradition are known for their heterogeneity. India has huge diversity in terms of language, culture and traditions. Almost every state provides shelter to people of various linguistic communities. L.M. Khubchandani (1997) has cited that in India, over 80 languages are used as media of instruction in different states. The constitution of India (article 345) has given the states full freedom to choose any language as the medium of state function and learning which is dominant in that particular state. From Assam, Assamese and Bodo languages are included in the VIII schedule of the Indian Constitution. In Bodo dominated area Bodo language is promoted and used as a medium of instruction. But in other areas of the state, Assamese language is promoted and used as the medium of learning.

Assamese language has not attained the status of medium of instruction in one day. Bengali was the medium of learning from 1836 to 1873. The Calcutta University did not recognize Assamese as a second language till 1905. After independence, the first Chief Minister of Assam, Mr. Gopinath Bardoloi on 26 September, 1947 directed that

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16 L.M. Khubchandani, Language Policy and Education in the Indian Sub Continent. P.179
"Assamese is accepted as compulsory second language in all schools where it cannot be Assamese completely."\(^{17}\)

When the Bengalis residing in Assam complained against the Government’s imposition of Assamese language on them, Gopinath Bardoloi on 23\(^{rd}\) March 1948 replied in the Assembly that: "If you analyze the population of Assam, you will find there is hardly any community in Assam which may be called the majority community. I do not know whether this fact is known....In Assam there is no community which may be called a majority community in which the population of one community is predominantly more than the population of another community....Again, as I said, there are hardly any minorities in the province and that is, I suppose to the best interest of the Province. Nobody can rule over anybody on account of the number of any community and that has probably been one of the reasons why we have lived in such peace and unity."\(^{18}\) The important point to be noted here is that when he made this remark, Assam was not divided into present seven states. So his comment bears the truth that at that point in time, there was no majority community in terms of language.

According to the Assam government’s language plan, the Secondary Education Board of Assam (SEBA), Assam Higher Secondary Education Council (AHSEC) and for higher studies Gauhati University and Dibrugarh University and Assam University are considered as the responsible bodies to maintain and implement the Government’s language plan. The state government owned ‘Assam Prakashan Parishad’ is another body who publish all kinds of textbooks and other books. Irrespective of any other concern, the state government owned schools are bound to take Assamese language as the medium of learning. Although, Assam has been a habitation of different tribes for a long period such as Karbi, Dimasa, Deori, Tiwa, Bodo, Mishing, Kachari, Mech, Rabha, Koch, Hajong, Ahom and many more, except in the Bodo dominated area, irrespective of any tribal identity and language, Assamese language is being taught in the schools. In the

\(^{17}\) M. Kar, *Evolution of Assamese as a medium of Instruction* in Miri. Mrinal (ed) Linguistic Situation in North- East India. P.35.

government school, till graduation, Assamese is used as a (although it is optional at Graduation level) medium of instruction. After matriculation, students can also take up English as their medium. But, that totally depends on students’ discretion.

Cobarubbias\(^{19}\) (1983) had distinguished four dimensions of the language ideology which guide the theorists of language planning and planner. These four dimensions play a pivotal role in shaping the language plan. These are: pluralism, that is supporting the co-existence of different language groups within a state or society; assimilation, that is asserting the dominant language as the medium of communication in the government level marginalizing other languages; vernacularization, that is the selection and restoration of the local indigenous languages and their use in official functions; and internationalization, which is the selection of a non indigenous language for national communication. If we put aside the Government of India’s language plan on the one hand and consider Assam government plan on the other, the assimilation dimension has seemed to be the deciding factor in Assam context. The mother tongue based education and MLE can make the education more fruitful and effective not only in terms of imparting quality education but also in retaining the languages which are not safe. Good quality mother tongue based MLE starts education in children’s first language and gradually introduces second or third languages as subjects, transferring if necessary to the second language of instruction after at least six years (Alidou et al, 2006).\(^{20}\)

Since Assamese language is the state official language of Assam state, being part of Assam, Tiwa and Deori children also have to go to the state run schools where the medium of instruction is Assamese. Once they are in these schools, they not only learn Assamese language, but also use this language to interact with their peers, to express themselves, and also develop an affinity towards this language. They also read the literatures of Assamese language, contribute and some of them contribute by writing various literary pieces in Assamese itself. There are many litterateurs in Assamese who

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\(^{20}\) Cited in Pinnock, H. Mother Tongue based Multilingual Education: how can we move ahead?
actually represent Deori and Tiwa speech communities but are enriching the Assamese literature.

But, of late, like many other Ethnolinguistic communities, people from these two language communities have also started showing negative attitude towards their own languages and sending their children to English medium schools. Although in some schools of Tiwa area Tiwa is taught as a campaign to protect and preserve their language by some volunteers; that lacks adequate structures, institutional support. Those programs are a part of some individualistic endeavors. Initially these kinds of language programs sound plausible and noble and also catch the attention of the people, but in the long run they cannot sustain because of the lack of proper funds, institutional support, infrastructure, attitude, job opportunities and absence of learners. Now a day, like many Assamese parents, Tiwa and Deori parents also want to send their children to the English medium schools. The mushrooming of English medium schools in the small towns like Nagaon, Jagirod, Dhemaji and Lakhimpur which are supposed to be the Tiwa and Deori dominated areas is the proven fact. In fact, this is the latest trend everywhere in India. Tiwa and Deori people are also not lagging behind in this regard. From 70s onwards, Assam has been the boiling pot of consistent unrest and agitation on different issues. Among the tribal societies of Assam, a feeling of deprivation and exploitation by the Assamese speaking mainstream middle class has emerged. Because of various vested interests of some politicians, all tribes have started demanding political and economic autonomy within the territory of Assam state. As a result, the Tiwa Autonomous Council and the Deori Autonomous Council were set up. These kinds of movements also gave birth a feeling of hatred towards the ruling middle class Assamese. As a part of their agitation they also rebuffed the dominance of Assamese language in their respective areas. Since there were no Tiwa or Deori medium schools, they would rather prefer sending their children to the English medium schools than to Assamese medium schools. This way they console themselves for being marginalized by the Assamese political rulers. Although, other reasons such as prestige associated with English language, job prospects, greater exposure of world knowledge, and many more, play an important role
in parents’ decision to send out their children to English schools. This way the perennial threat has been invited to their language and the damage has already been done.

1.6. Assamese language—the dominant language of Assam

Assamese language was given the status of state language in the state of Assam by the constitution of India. Although, there are lots of languages being spoken in this region, because of the maximum number of speakers, this language has attained the status of official language. Before 70s’ and 80s’ when Assam was not divided into seven states, Assamese language used to play the role of a ‘lingua franca’ in this entire region. In fact, in the states like Arunachal Pradesh, Assamese was the medium of learning. But of late, a shift has been noticed from Assamese to Hindi language. This has happened because of certain political misunderstanding or may be driven by the feeling of assimilation to the great Indian identities.

Even after that, especially in Assam, Assamese language has remained the dominant language. The reason is that, many Tibeto-Burman language speakers do not understand their very neighborhood language. The older generation and the uneducated people have very little exposure of either Hindi or English language and left with no option but to use Assamese language to interact with people outside their language community. This further makes this language as dominant language.

Another noteworthy point is that Assamese language has a long tradition of written literature and culture. Being the member of the Indo-Aryan language family, the speakers of this language have better access to the other Indo-Aryan languages’ literature than any other languages of this region. Assamese language has equally good literature like the other mainstream languages such as Hindi, Punjabi, Bengali or Oriya. The creative writings of the writers from Lakshminath Bezbarah, Padmanath Gohain Baruah and Birendra Nath Bhattacharya to modern age writers like Bhabendra Nath Saikia, Homen Borgohain, and Chandra Prasad Saikia to Mamoni Roysam Goswami gave the Assamese language a new dimension and a new identity in the realm of Indian literature.
In terms of linguistic study also, this language can claim to be at par with the other modern Indian languages. It was Banikanta Kakoti, who by publishing his epoch-making thesis ‘Assamese, its formation and development’ (1935) established the supremacy of Assamese language in this region and proved the notion of Assamese being a dialectical form of Bengali wrong. Even after that, many linguists undertook lot of research works on different aspects of Assamese language and contributed to the well-being of Assamese language. Moreover, various individual endeavors to write and compile Assamese grammars and dictionaries were attempted in time to time and got due attention not only from the native speakers but also from the global researchers. Out of them ‘Hemkosh’ the first Assamese dictionary, then ‘Chandrakanta’, ‘Jyoti dwivaxik abhidhan’, ‘Adhunik Assamiya Abhidhan’ etc are noteworthy examples of Assamese dictionaries. At present to be at par with the other languages in the technical and modernized world, the work of first online Assamese dictionary cum thesaurus and encyclopedia ‘www.xobdo.org’ is going on too. A group of young Assamese living in different parts of the world has been working on this project. All these structured and organized studies of Assamese language have been helping to remain it as a dominant language of this area.

1.7. Objective of the study

The area of research I am concerned here is an attempt to have a comparative study of Tiwa and Deori at lexical and morphological levels. It also outlines some of the important sociolinguistic issues such as linguistic community, language shift and maintenance, loan words, borrowing, bilingualism, multilingualism, diglossia, urban and rural varieties of language, color terminologies, kinship terminologies, etc. which are associated with these two languages. It also attempts in documenting some lexicon through a specialized list of lexicon in five different semantic domains. The lexicon in this semantic analysis were collected for the semantic domains of ‘objects in the sky’, ‘stages of life’, ‘emotion’, ‘physical action’ and ‘location’ in the format of multilingual glossary where along with English gloss, Assamese lexicon were also taken into account. Moreover, through this study an effort has also been made to look into the observable
synchronic sound changes of these two languages occurred in the last 100 years. The publication of Grierson’s phenomenal work ‘Linguistic Survey of India’ has been used as the source for those linguistic data and the year of publication of this book i.e. 1903 has been considered the base year for this comparative study.

The aim of the study is (1) to seek reestablishment of these two linguistic communities as separate and independent linguistic communities through systematic and scientific sociolinguistic studies, (2) to see the influence of Assamese language on the morphological, phonological and syntactic systems of these two languages and have a detailed comparative analysis at lexical level. And also to see the level of convergence towards Assamese language, (3) to check some of the very important domains of language usages whether the lexicon of those domains and their fields are still being used or replaced by their Assamese counterparts, (4) to verify the sound changes that have taken place from the beginning of 20th century to the early period of 21st century. And at last, but not the least, (5) to consider the present plight of endangered languages of the world in the backdrop of these two tribal languages.

The analyses of these concerns will bring out the relevant Ethnolinguistic information of these two communities from sociolinguistic perspective. This will also give us the lexical encroachment on Tiwa and Deori languages by Assamese language along with the domain usages of some important but routine lexicon. This study is also expected to provide us the significant evidences of synchronic sound changes that had been taken place from a particular time period to the present time that had been pervading for last hundred years.

Of late, although the community members of these languages have become more concerned about their dilapidated socio economic condition and consequently under the leadership of some educated people they have acquired self autonomous rights. Their plans and programs are more inclined towards the elevation of their socio-economic condition. Like many other tribal and minority language speakers, they have also come to the notion that the condition of their community would be elevated only through the education imparted through other dominant languages such as Assamese, English and
Hindi. In this process of self and community elevation they have totally neglected their languages and cultures. This predicament is very much common in other minority tribes as well. They are unaware of the fact that in spite of pursuing their education through other languages they can still maintain and practice their language and culture. Once the community builds the negative and indifferent or neutral attitude towards their own language and culture, it would be very difficult for them to retain their culture and language intact. This aspect has also been given immense importance in this study.

1.8. Methodology

In this research, as far as the methodology is concerned, the most popular method of field linguistics that is the interview method was adopted to collect the data. The speakers of these two languages were interviewed and accumulated the necessary data for the study. The first field trip was conducted in January 2007 in the hilly areas of Karbi-Anglong and plain areas of Nogaon, Morigaon, Dhemaji, Lakhimpur and Guwahati. And the second trip was conducted in January 2008 in those same areas but data were collected from different informants. While taking interviews, Sony MP3 recorder was also used to record the data.

The questionnaires were heavily based on the model questionnaires given in Abbi’s (2001) “A Manual of Linguistic Fieldwork and Structures of Indian Languages”. Since this book has extensively dealt with the Indian languages, their structures and phonetic, morphological, syntactic and semantic processes from a holistic point of view, it was thought that the questionnaires would well suit in data elicitation in Indian context. But for the semantic domain part the questionnaire was based on the domain templates given as supplementary in the book ‘Making dictionaries: A guide to lexicography and the multi-dictionary formatter’ by Coward, D.F and Grimes, C.E (2000).

Apart from them, for secondary source materials different books, study materials, journals, periodicals found in the University library and other libraries of Assam have been consulted. Moreover, various online articles, journals, books especially Google
books, periodicals have also been consulted for the theoretical parts of this research work.

1.9. Descriptive Framework

All the chapters have been described and analyzed on the basis of ethnolinguistic and structural perspective of linguistic study. The data used in the analyses are obtained from the normal day to day conversations. Since, this is a comparative study of two languages, and the societal bilingualism has been prevailing there for a long period of time, the informants were given enough contextual references in Assamese language so that they can relate it in their own language context and express it by using proper lexicon.

The descriptive methodology was also used while elucidating the chapter on semantic domain. The aim of the study was to retrieve all the lexical items which are used in a certain domain to express an idea. Moreover, it also checked the level of lexical replacement in the form of borrowing from Assamese or other languages. This also gives us a clear picture of word loss in those semantic domains and fields. Usually, a semantic field which is referred very frequently should be represented by a series of lexicon. But each and every lexicon may not be remembered in the time of providing data if the informants are not given the contextual reference. Because of this reason, the questionnaire made for semantic domain was equipped with ample number of contextual Assamese lexicon which the informants are familiar with.

The chapter which was meant for sound changes also required contemporaneous data which can be compared with the data preserved in Grierson’s ‘Linguistic Survey of India’. Since, the use of Assamese lexicon in many domains has been conventionalized and nativized, in the real practice; the speakers were given the time to bring back the lexicon to their mind. Moreover, the list of words and lexicon given in Grierson’s book is a specialized list with the character of universalism. To get back the exact and appropriate lexicon the informants were given the semantic background of those lexicon. But, the emphasis was given in their instant revelation of lexicon which also indicates the
thought process of the speakers and in what way they are affected by the dominant languages.

Another noteworthy descriptive phenomenon is that the representation of informants from various age groups. The study of endangered languages would not be complete without taking into consideration of generation study. In this research, the informants were taken selectively where there was representation of all age groups. The minimum age of the informants started from 18 to maximum 101 years old. On an average, the bulk of samples were considered from the parent generation in sound change, comparative lexicon and semantic domain chapter. And to have an understanding about the language attitude and other various sociolinguistic issues, the responses of young generation have been preferred so that we can have the assumptions through the lenses of new generation.

1.1.0 Existing research and literary works in Tiwa and Deori

Though the linguistic study across the world has taken a considerable shape in its own, it is unfortunate to mention that in Tiwa and Deori languages very little work has been done and it would not be an exaggeration to label those works as non-depth studies with a very few exceptions. For example in 1903 Grierson had given an elaborate account of these two languages with some grammatical information in his monumental work, "Linguistic Survey of India". After that, there were no serious studies undertaken in these languages. In Tiwa, the most significant work was compiled by Balawan, M. in 1975. His endeavor 'The Outlines of Lalung Grammar' Shillong: Don Bosco Technical School, was a pioneering work in this language. In Deori also very few number of books have been recorded. These are Brown, W.A's 1895, An Outline Grammar of the Deori Chutiya Language, published in Shillong, and the other one Goswami, Upendra Nath's 1994, An Introduction to the Deuri Language, Gauhati: Anundoram Borooah Institute of Language Art and Culture. Apart from these, a literary organization of Assam 'Assam Sahitya Sabha' had published two mini dictionaries 'tiwa xxbdo xmb'ar', a collection

21 His name was Singmon Mithi. He has almost lost his vision of his eyes and was the nominal headman of the village.
of Tiwa words, 1981 and ‘deori chu dagareba--deori xɔbdɔ jyoti’ a collection of Deori words in 1981: each one contains some 1200 words. They were published as a part of the campaigning to preserve and promote the tribal languages of Assam. These dictionaries can never serve the linguistic purpose. Except the meaning of the words it lacks other linguistic information. Moreover, some publications in the form of booklets could also be traced at individual level. These include in Tiwa: ‘tiwa jɔnjati aru bɔuxar itihax’ (the history of Tiwa tribe and its language) (1988) and ‘tiwa bɔasane sajɔn arɔ mitul bɔh’ (A collection of essays and their translation) (1999) both by Maneswar Deori Fangso, ‘tiwa matpadi’ (Tiwa dictionary) a small trilingual dictionary by V. Len. Kholar, ‘The Lalungs’, a book on the socio economic life of Tiwa tribes by Dr. G.C. Sarma Thakur, ‘tiwa mat sigaine polɔn lai’ a booklet grammar of Tiwa by Bidyaram Pator and ‘tiwa matau ɔp sigai lai’ a small collection of words by D. Uphing Maslai are some books found in Tiwa language. Although these are noteworthy they are all amateurish in nature and lack scientific approach. In Deori the first Deori grammar by a native speaker of Deori ‘jimc'aya c'o ic'areya’ 1981, by Mr. Nripen Deori could be placed as a publication with some amount of significance. Apart from this there are a few number of publications came up at the individual and organizational levels. This includes: ‘deori kristi aru səmu itihax’ (Deori culture and a short history) 1950, edited by Sarat Chandra Deori Bharali and Baturam Deori Bharali, ‘deori pat’ (a small Deori grammar) by Biswa Kanta Deori, 1962, ‘deori xɔpskriti’ (Deori Culture) 1964, and deori xad'u (Deori Short Stories) 1977, by Dambarudh Deori, jimc'aya bisu sajeba, by Nripen Deori, 1973, deori c'utia, by Paban Chandra Saikia, 1974, etc. are noteworthy. The quarterly magazine nizimena 1978 also helped in the growth of this language. The 80’s and 90’s of 20th century also have witnessed a few publications. This period includes books like kɔbe nizimena (Let’s Learn), 1987, kariku jugiba, (Chronology) 1987, by Nripen Deori, deori xɔbdɔmala (Deori words) 1981, and An introduction to the Deori language (1994) by Upendran Nath Goswami,
Jimc'ayay c'uyc miboru, (Text on Deori learning) 1986, by Golap Deori etc. Some of the books are also published by deori c'u c'eba c'egsa (i.e. the literary organization of Deori literature). It includes jari nijisiya 1986 etc. Other books by Kishor Kumar Deori’s, jimc'aya jugiba and c'u peremag, 1997, Bidyadhar Deori’s deori sajeba Pratap Singh Deori Bharali’s deori git etc are important publications. A few individuals have also tried to compose some poems in Deori language. Among them, Xaranan Deori is the most conspicuous.

1.11. Organization of the study

The entire study has been divided into six chapters. Apart from the introductory and concluding chapters it has four major chapters. The chapters are systematized and organized on the basis of different linguistic aspects. Following is a chronological outline of the chapters included in the study.

1.11.1. Chapter I: Introduction

This chapter introduces Tiwa and Deori languages as the members of greater Tibeto-Burman language family with a note on endangered language issue. This chapter also provides us a historical account of these two languages along with the social structure of these communities. It also shows the location of these languages through a linguistic map and the genealogical tree of Tiwa and Deori. It has also reviewed some sociolinguistic parameters existed in Tiwa and Deori societies. This includes the issues of pervasive societal bilingualism, language planning of the Assam government and the Union government, the concept of dominant language in the background of Assamese language as a dominant language etc. The chapter has also outlined the objectives and aims of the study, the methodology adopted in the thesis and clarified the descriptive framework of the study. It has also taken into account the literature reviews and the existing linguistic works of Tiwa and Deori languages. Finally, it tries to give a replica of the entire thesis, the basic guidelines of the study through Chapterization where the body of the study is being reflected.
1.11.2. Chapter II: Some Sociolinguistic Aspects of Deori and Tiwa

The title of the chapter itself indicates that this chapter deals with various sociolinguistic issues revolving around Tiwa and Deori languages. This chapter gives a brief account of the ethnolinguistic history of Tiwa and Deori communities, where they are spoken, the socio-economic status of these two communities etc. It also talks about the semantics of the words ‘Tiwa and Deori’ separately. The basic sociolinguistic issues which are addressed under this chapter are the speech community, the diglossic situation prevailing in Deori and Tiwa societies, the issue of language shift and maintenance, borrowing, loanwords, code mixing and switching, bilingualism, societal bilingualism, multilingualism, kinship terminologies, color terminologies, urban and rural form of language, power and language identity etc. All these issues were considered from the descriptive point of view.

1.11.3. Chapter III: Deori-Tiwa-Assamese: A Morpho-Phonemic study

The third chapter presents various lexicon of Tiwa and Deori languages representing different grammatical categories for comparative analyses. These lexicon are analyzed from the point of view of lexical semantics and comparative parameters. Along with the lexical comparison, the comparison is also extended to the phonetic level to find out the genealogical correspondence of these two languages. The data reveal that many functional grammatical words have been replaced by Assamese lexicon and there are phenomenal similarities between a number of lexicon from both the languages which have reaffirmed the close proximity of these languages and strengthened the concept of close sisterhood. This chapter has also brought about the deep rooted impact of Assamese borrowing and loan words in their body of lexicon.

1.11.4. Chapter IV: Deori-Tiwa-Assamese: A Lexico Semantic Study

This chapter considers some basic semantic domains and the explanation of their various fields. It tries to explain different lexicon for semantic domains of ‘objects in the sky’, ‘stages of life’, ‘emotion’, ‘physical action’ and ‘location’. The study had found out that various mundane lexicon representing domain usages have been lost at an alarming rate
in due course of time. Those semantic words have been replaced either by Assamese or any other dominant languages, thereby, ringing the death bell of these languages.

1.11.5. Chapter V: Sound Change

All human languages undergo sound changes over time. Change is the rule of the nature. In the evolution of languages, changes are inevitable. When the change results into negative convergence in the context of a language; it might push that language to the position of endangerment. In this chapter, the issue of language changes has been expressively dealt with. Taking Grierson’s ‘Linguistic Survey of India’s’ publication year 1903 as the base year, from there to till now various processes of sound changes such as epenthesis, ellipsis, nasalization, paragoge, lexical shift, elision, syncope, apocope, vowel shift, diphthongization etc have been extensively discussed. This synchronic study has also covered the study of number systems of these two languages, borrowing and loan forms of changes etc. The study has found that these two languages have undergone a huge amount of sound changes during this period of time and have evidences of excessive convergence towards Assamese language.

1.11.6. Chapter VI: The Plight of Endangered languages: the conclusion

The final chapter of this study delineates the present scenario of endangered languages across the world in the backdrop of Tiwa and Deori languages. It discusses various issues of language endangerment, factors of endangerment, language vitality, need of documentation and the repercussion of language death on the linguistic community, measures taken to preserve and revitalize languages etc. This chapter also explicates whether Tiwa and Deori should be brought into the purview of language endangerment or not. Moreover, this chapter also summarizes the fact and findings of the entire study in a precise way.

At last, it is followed by a list of selected bibliography and the model questionnaires which are used to collect various data for this research work.