

The comprehensive survey of the Linguistic Diversity of Indigenous Languages: Challenges and Preservation Efforts

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ABSTRACT

India's linguistic landscape is a tapestry of diverse languages and cultures. Yet, within this rich mosaic, many indigenous languages have faced the specter of extinction. This paper presents compelling case studies of language revival in India, highlighting the resilience of communities in preserving linguistic diversity. The revival of Sanskrit, one of the world's oldest languages, showcases how educational initiatives have revitalized its everyday use. Similarly, the Bodo community's efforts in Assam have led to the resurgence of the Bodo language, thanks to Bodo-medium schools and cultural events. India's tribal communities are also making strides in preserving their languages, with the Warli tribe in Maharashtra setting an example. Digital technology plays a pivotal role in these efforts, bridging geographical divides and providing access to native languages. Government support through initiatives like "Ek Bharat Shrestha Bharat" and the National Education Policy 2020 further bolsters language revival endeavors. In conclusion, these case studies underscore the intrinsic value of linguistic diversity and the communities' determination to safeguard their heritage. As languages make a resounding comeback, they contribute to India's cultural tapestry, ensuring that linguistic diversity remains a cornerstone of the nation's identity.

Keyword : - Language Revival, Indigenous Languages, Sanskrit, Bodo Language, Tribal Languages

1. Introduction

Linguistic diversity, encompassing a vast array of languages spoken across the globe, constitutes a vital facet of human heritage, culture, and identity. Among these languages, indigenous languages hold a unique and irreplaceable position, serving as repositories of ancestral wisdom, cultural knowledge, and distinct worldviews. This introduction sets the stage for a comprehensive exploration of the challenges faced by indigenous languages and the tireless preservation efforts undertaken to safeguard these linguistic treasures. The linguistic diversity represented by indigenous languages is not merely a means of communication but rather an embodiment of a community's history, values, and lived experiences. Henne-Ochoa (2018) underscores the importance of sustaining and revitalizing traditional indigenous ways of speaking, emphasizing that language encompasses more than just words; it is the very essence of culture and identity. Hinton (2011) reinforces this perspective, highlighting how indigenous languages are repositories of traditional ecological knowledge, crucial for understanding and preserving sustainable practices and ecological systems.

Despite their cultural significance, indigenous languages confront a multitude of challenges that threaten their very existence. Iseke-Barnes (2004) delves into the politics and power dynamics that often lead to the dominance of colonizing languages, pushing indigenous languages to the periphery. The imposition of dominant languages and the suppression of indigenous languages not only erode linguistic diversity but also perpetuate cultural erasure. Jacob (2015) further elaborates on the challenges, emphasizing the detrimental impact of macroaggressions and microaggressions on indigenous languages. Discriminatory practices and attitudes contribute to hostile language environments, dissuading speakers from using their native languages. Furthermore, policies that promote assimilation and prioritize dominant languages exacerbate the precarious situation faced by indigenous languages.

Amid these challenges, a multitude of preservation efforts have emerged, reflecting the resilience and determination of communities, scholars, and policymakers. Jacob et al. (2015) explore policy debates surrounding indigenous education, advocating for a trialectic approach that incorporates language, culture, and identity into educational

systems. This approach recognizes the inseparable connection between these elements and their role in preserving indigenous languages. Community-based initiatives have also proven pivotal in language revitalization, as demonstrated by Meek's (2022) case study from the Yukon. Engaging communities in language recovery efforts fosters a sense of ownership and commitment, strengthening the prospects of success. Furthermore, digital tools and social media platforms have provided innovative avenues for language socialization and learning, as evidenced by Giles's (2022) exploration of technology at diasporic Irish immersion events in Ontario. As we delve into the multifaceted realm of indigenous language preservation, it is essential to consider the holistic efforts made to protect linguistic diversity. The scholars and researchers whose work is referenced here contribute valuable insights into the challenges faced by indigenous languages and the innovative strategies employed to ensure their survival. These languages, intricately woven into the fabric of their respective cultures, remain integral to the preservation of human heritage and the celebration of linguistic diversity. This exploration aims to shed light on the critical importance of indigenous languages, the obstacles encountered on their path to survival, and the inspiring efforts undertaken to revitalize and preserve these linguistic treasures for generations to come.

2. The Importance of Linguistic Diversity

Linguistic diversity, characterized by the coexistence of numerous languages, plays a pivotal role in preserving and celebrating humanity's rich cultural tapestry. This essay underscores the profound significance of linguistic diversity, with a focus on the importance of safeguarding indigenous languages. Drawing on the works of scholars and researchers referenced above, we explore how linguistic diversity not only shapes our worldviews but also contributes to the preservation of traditional knowledge, cultural identity, and ecological wisdom.

Linguistic diversity is a testament to the vast mosaic of human cultures that have evolved over millennia. Henne-Ochoa (2018) aptly emphasizes that language is not just a tool for communication; it is a repository of culture and identity. Indigenous languages, in particular, encapsulate the essence of their respective communities, conveying their histories, values, and unique perspectives on the world. Hinton (2011) further illuminates this point by highlighting the role of indigenous languages in preserving traditional ecological knowledge. These languages encode generations of wisdom regarding sustainable practices, medicinal herbs, and ecological systems, which are essential for the well-being of communities and the planet. The profound importance of linguistic diversity becomes even more apparent when we consider the challenges indigenous languages face. Iseke-Barnes (2004) discusses how politics and power dynamics have historically led to the dominance of colonizing languages, often at the expense of indigenous languages. The suppression of these languages not only marginalizes indigenous communities but also jeopardizes the transmission of invaluable cultural knowledge. Jacob (2015) sheds light on the harmful effects of macroaggressions and microaggressions, which can create hostile language environments, leading speakers to abandon their native tongues. Furthermore, policies that prioritize dominant languages can accelerate language loss and erode cultural identities.

In light of these challenges, preserving linguistic diversity is not merely a matter of linguistic survival but also an urgent call to protect cultural heritage and ecological sustainability. Indigenous languages hold within them the stories of ancient traditions, the voices of ancestors, and the keys to sustainable living. As Jacob et al. (2015) argue, a holistic approach that integrates language, culture, and identity in education is crucial for revitalizing indigenous languages. It recognizes that these elements are interconnected and that language revitalization is inseparable from cultural preservation. Community-based efforts have emerged as a powerful force in indigenous language preservation, as demonstrated by Meek's (2022) case study from the Yukon. Engaging communities in language recovery projects fosters a sense of ownership and pride, making it more likely that these languages will flourish once again. Additionally, technology and digital tools have opened new avenues for language revitalization, as shown by Giles's (2022) exploration of technology's role in language socialization at Irish immersion events.

3. Challenges to Indigenous Languages

Indigenous languages, repositories of cultural heritage and traditional knowledge, face an array of formidable challenges that imperil their very existence. This essay delves into the multifaceted challenges encountered by indigenous languages, drawing insights from a wealth of scholarly research and references provided. Iseke-Barnes (2004) highlights how the historical imposition of colonizing languages has marginalized indigenous languages, undermining their usage in daily life and education. Such language suppression perpetuates colonial legacies and marginalizes indigenous communities. Jacob (2015) underscores the harmful effects of macroaggressions and microaggressions on indigenous languages. Discriminatory practices and attitudes create hostile language

environments, discouraging speakers from using their native languages. Policies that promote assimilation and prioritize dominant languages accelerate language loss and erode cultural identities, as Jacob (2015) argues. These policies often undermine the intergenerational transmission of indigenous languages.

Limited Language Documentation: The preservation of indigenous languages is hindered by limited language documentation efforts, as mentioned by Henne-Ochoa (2018). Many languages lack comprehensive written records and documentation, making revitalization efforts more challenging. Ferguson (2022) discusses the challenges related to language vitality among indigenous communities. Perceptions of language vitality can affect whether speakers choose to continue using their native languages or switch to dominant languages.

The forces of globalization and urbanization exert pressure on indigenous languages, as discussed by Feliciano-Santos (2021). The migration of indigenous peoples to urban areas often leads to language shift as dominant languages predominate. The endangerment of indigenous languages is a pressing issue, as pointed out by Nettle and Romaine (2000). Many languages are classified as endangered, with a diminishing number of speakers

4. Preservation Efforts for Indigenous Languages

Indigenous languages, facing numerous challenges, have prompted dedicated preservation efforts aimed at safeguarding these linguistic treasures and the cultural heritage they encapsulate. This essay explores the multifaceted strategies and initiatives undertaken to revitalize and preserve indigenous languages, drawing insights from a wealth of scholarly research and references provided. **Community-Based Language Revitalization:** Community involvement is fundamental to the preservation of indigenous languages, as demonstrated in Meek's (2022) case study from the Yukon. Giles (2022) illustrates the role of technology in language preservation. Digital tools and social media platforms provide innovative avenues for language socialization and learning, allowing communities to connect, share, and learn their native languages in modern contexts. Policy changes are crucial for indigenous language revitalization. Jacob et al. (2015) emphasize the importance of integrating language, culture, and identity into educational policies. Such policies acknowledge the inseparable connection between these elements and create an environment conducive to language preservation. Immersion events, as observed by Giles (2022), create opportunities for language socialization and cultural reconnection. These events offer participants the chance to use indigenous languages in authentic contexts and foster a sense of cultural pride. The documentation and archiving of indigenous languages play a critical role in preservation, as highlighted by Henne-Ochoa (2018). Comprehensive records, including audio, video, and written materials, ensure that future generations have access to their ancestral languages. Early childhood language programs, such as language nests, immerse young children in indigenous languages, providing them with a solid foundation in their native tongues (Hinton, 2011).

Collaborative research efforts, as seen in Granadillo and Orcutt-Gachiri's (2011) ethnographic contributions, bridge the gap between scholars and indigenous communities. These partnerships enhance language documentation and revitalization efforts. Training programs for language teachers are essential for ensuring a cadre of educators who can effectively teach indigenous languages in schools and communities (Hinton, 2011). Online courses and resources enable broader access to indigenous language learning, allowing individuals to study at their own pace and convenience. Encouraging inter-generational language transfer within families helps ensure that children learn their native languages from their elders (Giles, 2022). Advocacy campaigns and awareness-raising initiatives aim to promote the value and importance of indigenous languages within broader society (Carpenter & Tsykarev, 2020). Reviving traditional practices, including storytelling, ceremonies, and rituals conducted in indigenous languages, helps reinforce the cultural and linguistic connection (Feliciano-Santos, 2021).

Standardizing indigenous languages through language planning efforts can facilitate communication and education (Schreyer & Wagner, 2022). The incorporation of indigenous languages into the educational curriculum is pivotal for transmission to younger generations (Kadel, 2017).

Establishing cultural centers and museums dedicated to indigenous languages and heritage creates spaces for language learning and cultural preservation (Henne-Ochoa, 2018). Workshops that train community members in language documentation techniques enable communities to actively participate in preserving their languages (Granadillo, 2022). Grassroots movements and language revitalization initiatives led by indigenous communities themselves play a significant role in preserving languages (Iseke-Barnes, 2004). Engaging community members in language planning decisions ensures that revitalization efforts align with community needs and aspirations (Schreyer & Wagner, 2022). Recognizing linguistic and cultural rights of indigenous communities, as emphasized by

Carpenter and Tsykarev (2020), is a critical step in language preservation. Implementing inclusive language policies that acknowledge linguistic diversity and promote multilingualism fosters an environment conducive to language preservation (United Nations, 2017).

Table 1.1 comparative studies of Traditional Indigenous Languages vs Foreign Languages

Aspect	Traditional Indigenous Languages	Foreign Languages
Importance	Deeply connected to cultural heritage and traditional knowledge	May result from historical migrations and colonial influences
Challenges	Limited resources for education, systemic biases	Variation, dialectical differences, and globalization
Identity	Integral to cultural identity and activism	May be a part of diaspora communities and globalization
Resistance	Resistance to dominance of colonizing languages	Impact of language policies on dominance
Human Right	Asserted as a human right for indigenous communities	May face political decisions impacting language dominance
Cultural Resilience	Vital for cultural resilience and preservation	Influence on language shift and social factors
Expertise	Indigenous linguists play a key role in preservation efforts	Role of linguists in documenting and preserving languages
Global Diversity	Contribute to global linguistic diversity and cultural exchange	Contribute to linguistic diversity and globalization

5. Case Studies in Native Language Revival in India

India, with its rich linguistic diversity, is a melting pot of languages and cultures. Within this diverse landscape, there are numerous indigenous languages, some of which Henne-Ochoa, R. (2018) face the threat of extinction due to various historical and contemporary challenges. However, there are also inspiring case studies of native language revival efforts taking place in different parts of the country. Here, we explore a few such cases of language revival in India Iseke-Barnes, J.M. (2004)

5.1 The Revival of Sanskrit

Sanskrit, one of the oldest languages in the world, Henne-Ochoa, R. (2018) has experienced a revival in recent years. While Sanskrit has always held a significant place in India's religious and philosophical traditions, it faced a decline in everyday usage. However, several educational institutions and initiatives have been working diligently to reintroduce Sanskrit as a spoken language. Specialized schools, known as "Sanskrita Pathashalas," focus on teaching Sanskrit conversationally and comprehensively. These efforts have led to increased interest in Sanskrit and a revival of its everyday usage, not just for religious texts but also for daily communication.

5.2 The Bodo Language Revival

The Bodo people, Iseke-Barnes, J.M. (2004) an indigenous community in the northeastern state of Assam, have been actively involved in the revival of their native language, Bodo. Historically, the Bodo language faced marginalization due to the dominance of other languages. However, sustained efforts by Bodo cultural organizations, educational institutions, and community leaders have led to a resurgence of the language. Bodo-medium schools, literature, and cultural events have played a vital role in promoting and preserving the Bodo language.

5.3. The Revival of Tribal Languages

India is home to a vast number of tribal communities, Iseke-Barnes, J.M. (2004) each with its own distinct language and culture. Many of these tribal languages faced the risk of extinction due to limited documentation and government neglect. However, in recent years, Henne-Ochoa, R. (2018) there has been a growing recognition of the

importance of preserving these languages. Organizations, researchers, and tribal communities themselves have undertaken efforts to document, teach, and promote these languages. For example, the Warli tribe in Maharashtra has taken significant steps to preserve their language and art through community-led initiatives and workshops Daveluy, M. (2005), Feliciano-Santos, S. (2021), Ferguson, J. (2022)

Digital technology has played a crucial role in language revival efforts across India. Mobile apps, websites, and online resources have made it easier for people to access and learn native languages. Initiatives like the "People's Linguistic Survey of India" (PLSI) have used digital platforms to document and disseminate information about lesser-known languages. Moreover, social media and YouTube have provided platforms for native language enthusiasts to share lessons, stories, and cultural content, further fueling language revival Henne-Ochoa, R. (2018). In recent years, the Indian government has also recognized the importance of preserving indigenous languages. The "Ek Bharat Shrestha Bharat" initiative aims to promote linguistic and cultural exchanges between states. Additionally, the National Education Policy 2020 emphasizes the use of mother tongue or regional languages as the medium of instruction in early education. Carpenter, K., & Tsykarev, A. (2020) These policy changes have provided a significant boost to native language revival efforts.

In conclusion, while the challenges to native language revival in India are significant, there are promising case studies of languages making a comeback. Henne-Ochoa, R. (2018). These efforts are driven by the recognition of the intrinsic value of linguistic diversity and the understanding that language is not just a means of communication but also a repository of culture and identity. Carpenter, K., & Tsykarev, A. (2020) The revival of indigenous languages is a testament to the resilience and determination of communities to preserve their heritage and pass it on to future generations.

Table 1.2: Literature Survey

Author	Year	Methods	Findings	Conclusion
Henne-Ochoa, R.	2018	Ethnography-of-Speaking Approach	Emphasizes the importance of indigenous languages in preserving traditional knowledge and culture.	Promotes the continued use and revitalization of indigenous languages.
Hinton, L.	2011	Not specified	Discusses innovative teaching and learning strategies for indigenous language revitalization.	Advocates for the adoption of effective language pedagogies to support language revitalization.
Iseke-Barnes, J.M.	2004	Not specified	Explores indigenous resistance to the dominance of colonizing languages and its impact on communities.	Highlights the need to recognize and address language dominance as a challenge to indigenous language preservation.
Jacob, W.J.	2015	Not specified	Addresses macroaggressions and microaggressions contributing to indigenous language annihilation.	Stresses the importance of creating inclusive and supportive language environments to counter language loss.
Jacob, W.J., Liu, J., & Lee, C.W.	2015	Not specified	Examines policy debates surrounding indigenous education and the interplay of language, culture, and identity.	Advocates for policies that integrate language, culture, and identity in education to support indigenous language revitalization.
Carpenter, K., & Tsykarev, A.	2020	Not specified	Discusses indigenous language as a human right and the implications for linguistic and cultural preservation.	Calls for the recognition and protection of indigenous languages as a fundamental human right.
Daveluy, M.	2005	Not specified	Explores resilience and language in Arctic societies, emphasizing the significance of language in culture.	Highlights the role of language in resilience and the need to support indigenous languages for cultural preservation.
Feliciano-Santos, S.	2021	Not specified	Examines contested Caribbean indigeneity and the role of language, social practice, and	Highlights the complexities of indigeneity and the importance of language in shaping identity within

			identity.	Puerto-Rican Taíno activism.
Ferguson, J.	2022	Not specified	Explores language ideologies and perceptions of language vitality among Sakha speakers.	Emphasizes the persistence of antiquity in language and the importance of understanding language ideologies for revitalization efforts.
Giles, J.	2022	Not specified	Investigates language socialization, family lineage, and language choice at Irish immersion events.	Highlights the role of immersion events in language revitalization and their impact on ancestral connections.

6. Conclusion:

The case studies of language revival in India offer profound insights into the resilience of communities and the intrinsic value of linguistic diversity. In a nation where languages are not just a means of communication but also repositories of culture and identity, these revival efforts are monumental. The revival of Sanskrit demonstrates how ancient languages can regain relevance through specialized education. It reaffirms the notion that languages are living entities capable of evolving and adapting to contemporary contexts. The Bodo language revival exemplifies how a marginalized language can make a comeback through concerted community efforts. It underscores the role of education, cultural events, and pride in one's linguistic heritage in preserving indigenous languages. The revival of tribal languages is a testament to the recognition of their significance. As marginalized languages gain recognition and support, they thrive and enrich the cultural tapestry of India. Digital technology has democratized language learning and documentation, making it accessible to a wider audience. It has accelerated language revival efforts, connecting enthusiasts and learners across geographical boundaries. Government support through policy changes and initiatives like "Ek Bharat Shrestha Bharat" and the National Education Policy 2020 reflects a changing paradigm. It acknowledges that native languages are essential for preserving cultural diversity. In conclusion, the revival of indigenous languages in India signifies a deep-seated commitment to heritage preservation. These languages are not fading away; they are thriving, shaping India's cultural identity, and ensuring that linguistic diversity remains a source of strength and pride for generations to come.

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