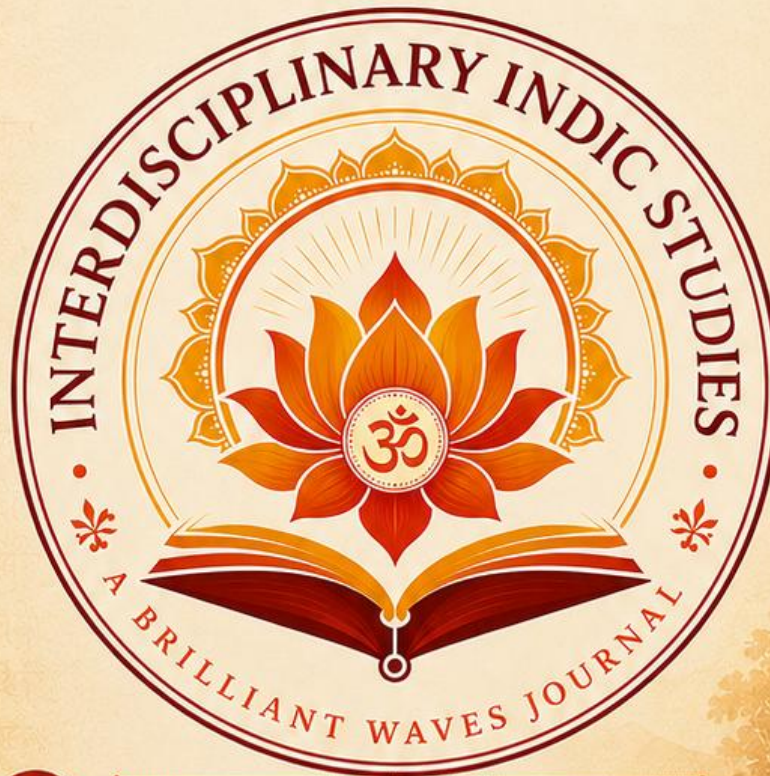


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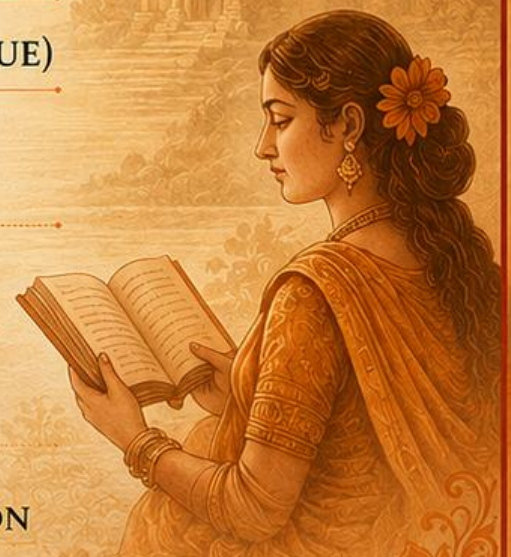
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Linguicide and Loss: Unseen War on Linguistic Identity – A Literature Analysis**Anushree Saha¹, Department of Psychology, Adamas University, Barasat, West Bengal, Email:****anush23.work@gmail.com****Sayantana Dey², Department of Smart Agriculture, Adamas University, Barasat, West Bengal Email:****deysayantana463@gmail.com****Abstract**

Language is more than just a composition of absurd signs and scribbles but rather a terrain of culture, tradition and knowledge. In the context of Dooars – a region rich in tribal diversity, nestled at the foothills of the Eastern Himalayas – they are not just a communication system; they are cultural blueprints and tools of resistance. They serve as a crucial signifier of identity and belonging. This paper examines the fragile relationship between language and resilience in the tribal communities of Dooars. Putting light on tribal communities – such as Oraon, Santhal, Rabha, Sadri, and Totos – this study focuses on how language shapes a community's worldview, especially in relation to nature and culture. Their parlance holds social values and liturgy that are hard to express in prevailing language models. However rapid development and rising urban migration have led to linguicide. This erosion not only indicates a decline in vocabulary but also the disintegration of cultural frameworks. With the help of examples and theoretical analysis, this paper argues that safeguarding these languages is crucial for sustaining cultural identity and preserving the diverse knowledge of these tribes.

Key Words – *Language, Linguicide, Dooars, Indigenous identities, tribal communities, tribal languages, Linguistic identities, Language shift, Ecological knowledge, Oral knowledge systems, Cultural marginalisations, Review analysis*

Introduction

“Language is the road map of a culture. It tells you where its people come from and where they are going.” (Rita Mae Brown, 2018).

Language is a prime marker of a person's linguistic and cultural identity. It not only defines the culture within a community but

also transmits it throughout generations. The interrelation of language and culture is what keeps the culture alive (Mazari & Derraz, 2015). However, for many indigenous and tribal communities, this roadmap has been redrawn. With urbanization and modernisation, the linguistic focus in both terms of market and education has shifted from native languages to the so-called civilised languages (Neo Abell P. Obligar, 2024).

A language dies when the masses refuse to let it thrive, but when an agent, be active or passive, is involved with a motive of killing the language, its called Linguicide (**Skutnabb-Kangas, 1996**). Several arguments have put forward that passive agents like Mass Language Shifts lead to language death overtime which generally contradicts with the basic idea of Linguicide. Linguicide can have a structural overview where the language is primarily affected by the structural infrastructure of power and material resources, autonomy of respect and legitimation and marginalization among the social groups. The

ideological overview can have the autonomy and legitimation of a certain group, internalized superiority of language, and monopoly of language (**Skutnabb-Kangas,1996**).

The process in not a natural linguistic shift but rather a well-planned culture rupture. And among all this, the ecological knowledge is lost and generations lose connection within themselves. A comparable pattern was found in the Dooars region of India. A region rich in tribal diversity experienced a gradual linguistic displacement as dominant languages captured their tongues (Sarkar, 2018). The rise in dominance of Bengali was often taken as a sign of civilization and development. These dominant, mass speaking languages have displaced the native tongue along with the cultural identity framed by it have created fractures in the psychological and cultural walls of these tribal communities (Sruthi & Anburaj, 2024)

Rationale of the Study

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Language is a living archive of a community's identity and worldview. Among the indigenous tribes of Dooars, language holds age old oral traditions and ecological knowledge. But decades of colonial linguistic imposition have led to the erosion of tribal languages. The rise in dominance of Bengali was often taken as a sign of civilization and development. These dominant, mass speaking languages have displaced the native tongue and (along with the cultural identity framed by it) have created fractures in the psychological and cultural walls of these tribal communities.

This research focuses on explaining how linguicide has played its role in bringing control and marginalisation in Dooars. This

study examines the crossover of language, identity and power to learn about the underlying capitalist and imperialist aspects of post-colonial situation of indigenous society in Dooars region. It also investigates the psychological impact of this process- identity dislocation, intergenerational alienation and cultural fractures in communities.

Understanding these dynamics and its acknowledgement is the first step into promoting linguistic diversity. In addition to restoration of the linguistic knowledge, it also restores cultural justice to indigenous communities who have been exploited under the guise of development and urbanization.

Methodology

Between 12th – 31st October 2025, searches were conducted across multiple databases such as google scholar, Sodh ganga, academia and research gate. Papers were researched with keywords like Language, Linguicide, Dooars, tribal communities, Language shift, Cultural marginalisations. The papers that were included in this study were published with

journals or publishers indexed with International Journal of Interdisciplinary and Multidisciplinary Studies (IJIMS), Routeledge, Springer gate and Current Journal of Applied Science and Technology. Then thematic analysis was done. In total, a pool of 7 papers were included for the review synthesis.



1. **Sarkar, B. C.** in his paper explored the Santal migration to Dooars and losing their native or indigenous culture, custom and tradition to adapt into the modernisation and mainstream society. The paper mentioned how the Santals took up the occupation of Agricultural labours and were forced to be a part of Mainstream Monopoly. It mentions how the community, which once thrived with indigenous customs, rituals, festivals and music, has now turned them down to fit into mainstream social culture. The indigenous festivals turned to Durga Puja, Kali puja, and Holi whereas the ancient bamboo flutes changed to modern Violin. The paper extensively deals with the Santal tribes in Mal Region of Jalpaiguri District and cannot be used to refer the entire diverse tribal population of Dooars.

Also, it does not mention the language disruption in details, that was a result of migration and modernisation.

2. **Sutradhar,** in his paper discussed the different cultures over the geographic location of Dooars. The paper went over the various cultural aspects and vividly segregated them on the basis of their livelihood and dwelling habit. The paper further explains the cultural overlapping in the region and slow wiping out and deterioration of culture aspects. One key term the paper mentioned is “Linguistic Imperialism”, happened due to overlapping of various tribes. Many languages wiped out, solely due to ignorance and the tribe’s indifferent attitude towards the slow extinction of language, and with the language,



the cultural practices and identity dispersed. Though the paper mentioned the key terms like 'Linguistic Imperialism' and talked about language deterioration, but it fails to convey the whole pathway in which cultural overlapping, instead of making the heritage rich, is actually leading to slow death of language and culture.

3. **Pawan Toppo** conducted an exclusive study on the Oraon community of the Dooars. He studied their festivals, cultural events and communal unity. He mentioned how festivals were a system of cultural integrity and communal unity and how, with time, the communal separation and changing working environment led to extinction of the culture. The Oraons working in the tea garden were indifferent to the festival;

and traditions as they were considered primarily agricultural, but festivals belong to a community and not an occupation and with time, these cultural markers of identity would extinct. The paper discussed the Oraon community and its festivals and loss of culture, but the linguistic drive and reason for culture loss are not defined within the literature.

4. **Virginus Xaxa** in her paper, thoroughly investigated the reasons for linguistic and language loss among the tribes from a political point of view. The paper mentioned that in spite of having constitutional rights for safeguarding the tribal languages, no visible efforts are made to give them the rights that they deserve. In spite of linguistic rights, they do not receive the status that the dominant language of majority enjoys. It mentions

government's favour for the dominant language and marginalising the tribal languages. It mentions the marginalisation of the tribals on the basis of their language and ethnicity. Though the paper articulated the various facts about failure of constitutional rights in safeguarding the indigeneity, but it does not mention any possible solutions to overcome the secluded marginalisation and save their ethnicity as well.

5. **Christine P. Sims** mentioned about the Revitalization of native languages among the American-Indian tribes at university level. It narrates the autonomy of English language and the sheer deficiency of learners under the program. It further mentions about the struggle the tribes are facing to adopt their native tongue as their Spoken Language. The language

immersion program started with the thought of owning the language that once belonged to them. The paper mentions about the American-Indian tribes, who could afford the education but does not cater with the tribes who faced the sheer marginalisations, not only lingual but also economical and occupational.

6. **Suman Kalyan Samanta** carried out his study on the migrant Garo community in the Dooars region of Jalpaiguri. In terms of linguistics, he mentioned how, in order to adapt to the locality, they started conversing in a mixture of Bengali, Hindi and Nepali. Whenever they tried to converse in their ethnic language, it had words from the vernaculars spoken by the market majority. The paper expressed how the tribe lost the purity of the

language in order to survive the mass.

7. Saheli Saha and Debasri

Banerjee explored the Mech community of West Bengal to check the impact of modernisation on them. It mentioned the loss of indigenous knowledge in the tribe of West Bengal. It mentions how the parents of the Mech tribe don't feel it important to pass down the

indigenous knowledge and ethnic ideologies to their children as they believe that they have to adapt to the mainstream society's knowledge and ideologies and do not have the privilege to preserve theirs. The paper however does not concern the other primary tribes and does not provide any revitalization methods.

Discussion

Linguicide and Its Reason -

Linguicide, or language suicide, is a well-structured erosion of linguistic identity further resulting in loss of one's culture. The reasons vary from colonization and political domination to linguistic imperialism. Naturally, with development and urbanization, one loses its culture and along with that, their vocabulary and language specific practices. While in some

cases, the dominant languages displace minority languages over time, resulting in language monopoly; other places face linguistic imperialism with the same practice done institutionally. This is done under the facade of educational policies and modernization. In rare cases, we also notice forced cultural assimilation where the minorities are compelled to abandon their

language and adapt to the dominant tongue

How Identity Fractures?-

Language is not only a medium of collection but also a carrier of memory and collective belonging. When a language disappears the community loses its symbolic framework through which the people connect with each other. The most significant fracture would be the cultural identity. Erasure of a language makes one lose the related ecological wisdom, indigenous knowledge and kinship terms. When the linguistic system collapses, these cultural ideologies loses its meaning. The community starts to feel incomplete and loses its emotional depth. The other major factor for this would be the intergenerational disconnect due to language barriers. Elders speak a language that the youth no longer

understands creating a gap and resulting in the younger ones developing a fragmented or shallow cultural identity.

Cultural Disintegration – The loss of language was not just a blow to the lingual identity, but was a termite to the pillars of ethnic iconography. ‘Culture’ came from the Latin word COLERE which means tends to earth, to grow or nurture (Samar Sutradhar,2019). Culture is not just an ingredient of ethnic variability, but the result of an aged preservation of one’s very own idea of communal integrity. Culture does not develop overnight but the detrimental condition of indigeneity can lead to its disintegration within a decade. For the tribes of dooars, the reasons vary from culture overlapping to Linguistic Imperialism (Samar

Sutradhar,2019). Over the time, the tribes have struggled to thrive in society where language is monopolized and capitalized in disguise of modernity. The loss of the language was not solely due to their urge to survive in the mainstream community, but the negligence of the youth to their own paternal lineage. With language, what they lost was their festivals, traditions and unique identity, and what remained were just mere means of shouting their ethnicity with broken voices.

A Language Homicide - The overall language loss that we witnessed overtime in Dooars was not just a theoretical example of language depreciation or linguicide, but rather a well planned and calculated murder, the story of which started with the advent of colonial government and

imperializing of the tea gardens. Labor migrations led to massive culture and lingual overlap throughout the dooars terrain, that made dooars, a center of lingual cluster. Inspite of such lingual diversity, considering English and Bengali as the autonomous language of power and authority, made the tribes realise that only by adapting to these languages [Bengali being prominent], they can share a part of the mainstream social ideology. This, coinciding with Lingual marginalization, where the tribal languages were considered the language of the labors, forced the tribes to substantially give-up their indigenous tongue and adopt to the so-called developed tongue. This conceptualized how modernization stepped up on the grave of indigeneity.

Conclusion

While examining the deep interconnection between language and culture, we get to know its not just a linguistic failure but rather a multidimensional erosion of ones identity and connection with community. This paper demonstrated how the structural genocide of language took -place in the dooars resulting in cultural erasure and inters generational alienization. Along with this, they also

suffered a deep fracture in their identity, homogenization of the market and internalized inferiority. The consequences extend far beyond communication seeping its way through destroying ecological knowledge and disrupting collective identity. Language forms the basis of a person's individual identity, but its death results in the erosion of cultural visibility.

Limitations

1. The paper focuses on the geographic location of Dooars and includes the tribal population found primarily in the Dooars region. It does not concern areas outside the Dooars terrain.
2. The paper has a limited study on Dooars due to lack of resources and limited research papers present on the topic of linguicide and language erosion in Dooars.
3. This is a review paper, so the data was pre-recorded. There are no new surveys or datas encoded in the paper and hence the paper cannot be used to conclude a statement or problem analysis.

Implications

The paper can be implied in the academic sphere to enunciate the degrading condition of indigenous languages and the slowly erasing

tribal culture and traditions. It would create a sense of urgency among the readers to understand the importance of lingual



rejuvenation of endangered cultures alongside their traditional knowledge. This paper can be evaluated as a study material to derive the urgency of language revitalization of tribal communities in order to protect their culture, ethnicity and preserve their identity. The paper can be a resource to conclude the loss of indigenous knowledge and traditions among the tribal population of Dooars, based on the literatures reviewed and discussed analysis.

This paper puts emphasis on how language loss affects self-concept, emotional expression and community belonging. It contributes to the cultural and social aspect of linguicide, implying that it should be studied as a form of institutional structural violence with long term consequences such as inferiority regarding identity, shame and disconnect in regards to community and alienation in society. Such problems can affect a person's mental health largely, creating a foundation for further issues such as depression and anxiety. Acknowledging this aspect would not only help in preventing such misfortunes but also in building a proper framework for treating those who are already suffering.





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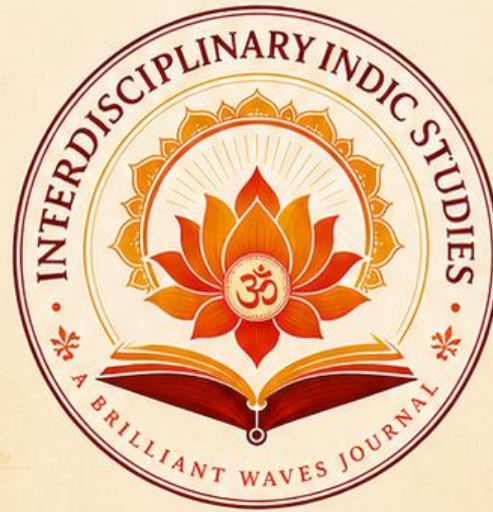




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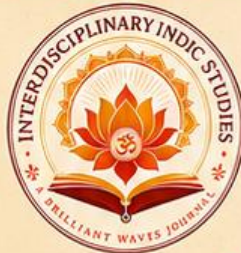
सा विद्या या विमुक्तये।
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सत्यं वद। धर्मं चर।
आ नो भद्राः क्रतवो यन्तु विश्वतः।
तमसो मा ज्योतिर्गमय।
ॐ सर्वे भवन्तु सुखिनः।

— ABOUT THE JOURNAL —

Interdisciplinary Indic Studies is a peer-reviewed, refereed journal dedicated to fostering scholarly dialogue at the intersection of traditional wisdom and contemporary inquiry. The journal welcomes interdisciplinary research that engages with Indic knowledge systems, thought traditions, and their relevance to modern society.

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To serve as a global platform for critical, creative and constructive exploration of Indic perspectives across disciplines, inspiring a deeper understanding of self, society and the universe.



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