

# RETENTION AND SWITCHOVER IN LANGUAGE USE: THE ADIS OF ARUNACHAL PRADESH

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## ABSTRACT

*The Adis are an indigenous group living in the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh. This article explores the complex dynamics of language maintenance and linguistic transition among the Adis. The study examines the elements influencing the retention and loss of Adi language in the face of modernity and outside influences, with a focus on the Indian context. This study examines linguistic diversity and the effects of sociocultural changes on linguistic practices. The study examines how intergenerational language transmission, urbanisation, globalisation, and education have shaped Adis language practises. The results highlight the difficulties and opportunities the Adi group faces in preserving their own linguistic legacy and highlight the importance of language as a conduit for intergenerational knowledge and cultural identity. This study offers insights into language revitalisation initiatives and policies that can protect linguistic diversity and cultural legacy among the Adis of Arunachal Pradesh*

**Keywords:** *Language maintenance, Language shift, Adis, Arunachal Pradesh, Indian context, Linguistic diversity, Sociocultural changes, Education, Media, Cultural heritage.*

## INTRODUCTION

Language plays a crucial role in a community's identity and cultural history in addition to serving as a means of communication. The Adis of Arunachal Pradesh is an excellent example of the depth of language variation among India's many indigenous communities. The Adi community demonstrates the complexities of language maintenance and language change in the face of shifting socio-cultural dynamics thanks to its distinctive linguistic repertoire, which includes multiple tribal languages and dialects.

With an emphasis on the interaction between language retention and language shift within the Indian context, this study attempts to analyse the intricacies of language dynamics within the Adi group. This study aims to shed light on the factors influencing the maintenance of Adi languages

and the potential for revitalization initiatives by examining the socio-cultural changes, and present issues. In order to preserve languages in Arunachal Pradesh's multiethnic environment while embracing linguistic variety and preserving cultural heritage, it is important to understand the linguistic experiences of the Adis.

This study is about the processes of language maintenance and language change in the multilingual community of East Siang district, the home of the Adi community in Arunachal Pradesh, using a sociolinguistic framework.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The use of two or more languages within one community is dependent on each language serving a function which the other does not. If two languages

could be used interchangeably on all occasions by all speakers one would be unnecessary and finally lose its usage in the community. It is because of the separate functions of different languages which lead to bilingualism in the community. In Fishman 's (1966) terms, for bilinguals, each language has its own domain, such as family, education, employment, religion etc. Language choice results in both language maintenance and language shift. I quote Pandit (1977) "... in Europe or America language shift is the norm and language maintenance an exception. In India language maintenance is the norm and shift an exception". His study was based on Marathi speakers who have settled in Gujarat, maintain Marathi at home and speak Gujarati in the workplace. Bengali speakers living in Delhi experience a similar situation. Numerous ethnic groups in India have historically abandoned their native tongues entirely or are in the process of doing so. Many tribes, including the Bhil, Lodha, God, and Kurux, have given up their native tongues. Srivastava (1988) points out that "It is common experience that the migrant speech communities of India continue to speak their own language in the home domain of language use. Through their mother tongues, they try to maintain their ethnic boundaries." He further adds that "language maintenance is not a problem in the agrarian society of India. However, as a result of industrialization and urbanisation, various speech communities come into touch with one another and frequently undergo modifications to their linguistic repertoire."

Gumpurz, 1968 says that "speakers may choose different varieties to accommodate changes in person, place and topic. In monolingual societies, these objectives are achieved by a choice of different styles, in multilingual societies different languages are used for these purposes". Language choice results in both language maintenance and language shift. In general, it has been observed that migrants frequently abandon the usage of their native tongue in favour of the host language, which is a typical speech practice in India. When two societies interact, it is possible that the minority

group will either switch to the host society's language or keep its own language. It has been observed that a community may continue to speak its native language in the contexts of the home and neighbourhood while using the other language exclusively in the contexts of education and employment. Whereas a mixed variety of languages may be used with friends, etc., the native language may still be utilised in extremely formal settings, such as family gatherings.

According to a study by Mukherjee (1980), the members of the Bengali speech community in Delhi show a minimal degree of mother tongue displacement whereas Punjabi Hindus in Delhi completely assimilate into the host society. The younger generation shows a 100 per cent shift from Punjabi to Hindi. Satyanath's (1982) study of Kannadigas shows a greater degree of tenacity for mother tongue retention than Punjabis but less than Bengalis and a greater degree of displacement of the mother tongue in an outside domain.

Roy V., Binu PM, and Karthikeyan J. 2020 found that family domain, social gatherings, events, and the role of traditional media are particularly important for language maintenance in their study of Keralites in Oman. The majority of Keralites in Oman are multilingual or use code-mixing.

One of the largest indigenous tribes of Arunachal Pradesh, India, is the Adi, who live in an area renowned for its language diversity and rich cultural past. Early studies on the Adis by linguists and anthropologists show how closely their linguistic system and cultural practices are related. The Adi community is home to a number of Adi languages, including Minyong, Padam, Gallong, and Pangi, as well as a large number of dialects. These languages distinguish different Adi clans and reflect their distinctive social structures, serving as crucial markers of ethnic identity.

Adi languages and culture have historically been transmitted orally down the generations and are entwined with folklore, rituals, and traditional practices. However, a number of outside factors have had a considerable impact on the socio-cultural

landscape of the Adis in recent decades. The dynamics of language among the Adis have changed as a result of rapid industrialization, more significant interactions with surrounding communities and the outside world, the emergence of mass/ social media, and formal education.

The research demonstrates that both internal and external forces have affected Adis' linguistic change. Younger generations are becoming more and more involved in society outside of their native communities, which has increased their interest in dominant tongues like English and Hindi. The usage of Adi languages gradually declined over time, especially among young people, as these languages are frequently linked to improved chances for jobs, education, and social mobility.

It is impossible to ignore how formal schooling affects linguistic dynamics within the Adi community. A change in language preferences among the younger generation has been attributed to the establishment of formal schooling in the area, which is frequently delivered in national or regional languages. Adi languages are used less frequently as a form of instruction and communication as a result of children being exposed to non-Adi languages in educational settings.

Additionally, the younger generation has been exposed to languages of greater communication thanks to the development of mainstream media, and social media, including television, radio, and internet platforms. Language preferences and choices have been further influenced by the extensive accessibility of entertainment and information in the major languages. This has led to a partial shift in the use of language.

The literature also demonstrates the Adi community's tenacity in preserving and revitalising their languages despite the difficulties of language shift. Adi languages have been actively documented and promoted by community-based organisations, academics, and activists through language documentation projects, workshops, and cultural festivals. These programmes aim to increase public

awareness of the Adi language its variety and its cultural legacy.

In addition, the importance of mother tongue-based education as a strategy for protecting and revitalising indigenous languages is becoming more widely acknowledged as mentioned in NEP2020. The movement to incorporate Adi languages into the curriculum and support their usage as a teaching tool has gained traction. An important technique for promoting intergenerational language transmission and building a sense of pride and identity in the next generation is mother tongue-based schooling.

The literature study highlights the intricate relationships between language shift and language maintenance among the Adis of Arunachal Pradesh. The interaction of historical elements, socio-cultural shifts, educational programmes, and outside influences has a substantial impact on local language usage. Even though there are obstacles, the Adi community's attempts to celebrate linguistic diversity and protect their cultural legacy are evidence of their dedication. To create contextually relevant language preservation strategies that ensure the continued vitality and relevance of Adi languages in the ever-changing landscape of Arunachal Pradesh, collaborative efforts including the Adi community, policymakers, linguists, and educators are required.

## METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to examine language shift and maintenance among the Adis of Arunachal Pradesh using a mixed-method research methodology. To better understand language usage, practises, and attitudes, qualitative data was gathered through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with members of the Adi community. Questionnaires were used to collect information about language usage and proficiency. This was based on information from 80 informants, who represented diverse age groups, geographic regions, and genders (male vs. female). The questionnaire asked about language use patterns

with various interlocutors, as well as their socioeconomic status, educational background, mobility, and reactions to cinema, among other things. The study method was conducted with ethical considerations in mind.

## DISCUSSION

This case can be taken as “assimilation with maintenance “. Other studies done in this area show that the languages of the host society are making serious inroads into even the domain of the home, which can be called the case of “assimilation with shift”.

The Adi languages are intricately entwined with customs, ceremonies, and oral traditions, aiding in the preservation of their distinctive cultural heritage. However, it is clear how socio-cultural changes, modernization, urbanisation, and outside influences have affected society because language shift is now a major source of worry for the younger generation. The allure of dominant languages like English and Hindi, seen as doors to economic and educational, career prospects has caused the use of Adi languages to gradually wane (in some domains), especially among the young. This generation still identifies with mainstream India while clinging to their identity as "Arunachalees." The formal education system, which teaches primarily in non-Adi languages, is seen as having a significant impact on young people's language preferences and choices. Additionally, the use of non-Adi languages in different parts of everyday life has been influenced by exposure to popular culture and technology. The formal education system, which teaches primarily in non-Adi languages, is seen as having a significant impact on young people's language preferences and choices.

The social and cultural landscape has altered. Modern clothes are preferred by the younger generation, who only wear traditional costumes on rare/special occasions. Basically, oral literary transmission from generation to generation is becoming extinct. It is urgently necessary to write them down and keep them. The younger generation

prefers Hindi and English when speaking and enjoys reading and writing in English. The community's exclusive usage of their mother tongue in the domestic and neighbourhood spheres is another indication of how proud they are of their language. The locals are aware that Hindi and English are the two vital languages at the national level since they are both regarded as powerful, prominent, and literary. Adi and its dialects are most favoured in the family and neighbourhood, although English is preferred in institutional settings.

Despite these difficulties, the data also demonstrates the Adi community's tenacity in defending its linguistic heritage. The qualitative research results show that community-based organisations, academics, and activists actively support language maintenance and revitalization initiatives. Recent years have seen a surge in the documentation and preservation of Adi languages as well as the acceptance of mother tongue-based education. These initiatives demonstrate the community's dedication to preserving its linguistic variety and cultural uniqueness.

The talk emphasises the value of language transmission across generations within the Adi community. During religious rituals, social contacts with senior family members, and cultural events, participants reported hearing more Adi languages. This emphasises the critical part that elders play in preserving cultural traditions and transferring language expertise. The desire to hold on to the roots while at the same time catching up with what is most modern is clearly demonstrated by the younger generation.

Overall, the study's findings shed important light on the difficulties associated with language transition and maintenance among the Adis of Arunachal Pradesh. Language usage in the community is powerfully shaped by sociocultural developments and educational policy. Collaborative efforts between the Adi community, policymakers, linguists, and educators are crucial to addressing the difficulties caused by language transition. It is necessary to protect language diversity. Context-specific language preservation measures must be

created. This study supports broader initiatives for language revival and preservation among indigenous groups across the nation by promoting a greater understanding of language dynamics in the Indian setting.

## CONCLUSION

This study's findings demonstrate the complex interactions between language change and maintenance among the Adis of Arunachal Pradesh. The research shows how important Adi languages are as keepers of cultural identity and heritage that are intimately integrated into oral traditions and traditional practises. However, the younger generation has changed, favouring dominant languages like English and Hindi as a result of sociocultural changes, industrialization, formal education, a bright future, etc. The results highlight the value of intergenerational language transmission and the critical part that elders play in maintaining linguistic expertise and cultural traditions.

Despite the difficulties caused by the language shift, the Adi community's tenacity may be seen in their initiatives to support language preservation and revitalization. There is a dedication to maintaining their language's uniqueness and cultural history as seen by the initiatives taken by community-based organisations, academics, and activists. It's a big step in the right direction when mother tongue-based education is acknowledged as a way to foster language retention. The continued vitality and significance of the Adi languages within the ever-evolving terrain of Arunachal Pradesh should be ensured by these measures, which should celebrate linguistic diversity and cherish cultural legacy.

It is clear that tribes like the Adi are not going to entirely merge into the mainstream national melting point by losing their native language and culture. It is obvious that people want to maintain their roots while keeping up with modern technology.

In the end, language is not just a tool for communication but also a significant component of cultural heritage. It is important to invest in the richness of India's cultural fabric, intercultural understanding, and the advancement of a more inclusive and diverse society by preserving the languages of indigenous communities like the Adis. It might contribute to a time when language diversity is valued and protected, enhancing the fabric of cultural identity in India, a multiethnic country.

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