

The Necessity and Process of Preservation and Standardization of Tripura and Other Indigenous Ethnic Minority Languages in Bangladesh and the Tripura State of India: A Comparative Analysis of the Two Cases

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ABSTRACT

The preservation and standardization of Tripura Kok and other Indigenous ethnic minority languages are critical for maintaining cultural identity and linguistic diversity in Bangladesh and the Tripura State of India. Despite constitutional and policy-level commitments in both regions, challenges such as the dominance of Bengali, lack of resources, and inconsistent implementation hinder progress. This study is guided by two central research questions: (1) What is the current status of government initiatives, educational integration, and community efforts pertaining to Tripura Kok in Bangladesh and the Tripura State of India? and (2) How do the policy frameworks and implementation outcomes of the two regions compare, and what lessons can inform a comprehensive language standardization and revitalization strategy? Employing a comparative policy analysis framework—drawing on Cooper’s (1989) language planning model and Hornberger’s (1994) tripartite framework of status, corpus, and acquisition planning—this study systematically examines and compares the two regions. While India’s Tripura State has made significant strides by granting official language status and integrating Tripurakok into formal education across all levels, Bangladesh’s efforts remain nascent, limited primarily to primary-level textbooks. The study advocates a *pandialectal approach* to standardization methodologically grounded strategy for harmonizing dialectal variations into a unified standard form without privileging any single dialect. This approach draws on the theoretical work of Wolff (2000) and Mismang (2001) and is illustrated with reference to successful cases such as Quechua standardization in Peru and Standard Bengali. Additionally, the study highlights the potential of digital platforms in language revitalization. Recommendations include institutional support, teacher training, and community engagement to ensure the sustainable development of Tripurakok and other Indigenous languages.

Keywords: Tripurakok, indigenous languages, linguistic diversity, language preservation, language standardization, comparative policy analysis, pandialectal approach, harmonization of dialects, language planning framework.

INTRODUCTION

The preservation and standardization of the Tripura and other Indigenous ethnic minority languages are crucial in the context of Bangladesh and Tripura State of India due to the ongoing decline of indigenous languages including this language and the cultural identity they represent. Tripura language is currently rated as a vulnerable language in Bangladesh by the International Mother Language Institute. However, BL Tripura (2025) argued that “the status of Tripurakok or Kokborok in Bangladesh may be defined as both vulnerable and partially shifted” (p. 2). The government of Bangladesh introduced a subject of some Indigenous languages including the language of the Tripura community in local primary schools for pre-primary class in 2017. The development of textbooks for the upper classes is ongoing.

On the other hand, Tripura Kok or Kokborok has been recognized as an official language of Tripura of India since 1979 by the State Government through the Tripura Official Language (Amendment) Act, 1979. Consequently, this language has been implemented in the formal education system. Debbarma (2025) reported

that the government of India has made efforts to incorporate Kokborok or Tripura Kok into the curriculum in over 1,100 schools across different educational levels, with thousands of students currently learning the language. Additionally, specific posts for Kokborok or Tripura Kok faculty have been created to enhance teaching quality. In this regard, DD Tripura (2025) presented an elaborate account of the courses of Tripura Kok or Kokborok introduced in Tripura Central University:

- Certificate course in Kokborok (Tipra/Tripura language)
- Diploma in Kokborok (Tipra/Tripura language)
- MA in Kokborok (Tipra/Tripura language) since 2015
- PhD programme in Kokborok (Tipra/Tripura language) since 2018
- A language subject in Kokborok or Tripura Kok in all the Tripura Government Degree Colleges
- A certificate course in NIT Agartala since 2017

BL Tripura (2025) noted that an ongoing controversy is alive in the Tripura State of India pertaining to the adoption of script and standardization. This phenomenon has created a historical momentum to standardize this language which is said to be divided among five major clans (Tripura, Reang, Jamatia, Halam and Debbarma) and thirty-six sub-clans. Among the thirty-six sub-clans, nineteen sub-clans write their surname as 'Tripura'. Though all five major clans and thirty-six sub-clans' dialectal varieties are mutually intelligible, they have some differences in lexicons and tones. Consequently, the various clans tend to refer to their dialects as Tripurakok, Reangkok, Kaubru, Kaubrung and Kokborok respectively. These visual differences in referring to their language are giving rise to an identity crisis and debate among the speakers.

However, greater uniformity is an issue for speakers both in India and Bangladesh. In the Bangladesh context, it is suitable and manageable to standardize the dialects of nineteen sub-clans of the Tripura clan, as these nineteen sub-clans belonging to the Tripura clan have variations in tones and lexicons which may interfere in spelling and pronunciation. Standardization of this language will make textbook development easier. It will also support the preservation and development of this language. Thus, in a broader sense, the preservation and development of the Tripura language and other Indigenous languages will foster and scaffold the cultural heritage, linguistic diversity, education and empowerment of the Indigenous ethnic minority communities of the two countries.

Current Status of Tripura Kok and Other Indigenous Ethnic Minority Languages in Bangladesh and Tripura State of India

Bangladesh does not have any clear language policy to address the linguistic diversity of the country. Article 9 of the Constitution of Bangladesh 1972 overtly emphasized Bengali language and Bangalee nationalism as a core principle of the country, asserting that the unity and solidarity of the Bangalee nation is derived from its language and culture. This article articulates a vision for a sovereign state where Bengali is recognized as the state language, reinforcing its significance in fostering national identity (Constitution of Bangladesh, 2022). This ideological position of the constitution of Bangladesh has created a challenging situation for the languages of the indigenous ethnic minorities of the nation.

In this regard, Ahsan and Chakma (1989) argued that the Bengali-only language policy gravely affected the Indigenous ethnic communities of Bangladesh. Sultana (2023) opined that "the indigenous communities have become invisible and non-existent in the social landscape of Bangladeshi" (p. 683). In the same vein, Hamid (2011), Mohaiemen (2012), Mohsin (2023) and Sultana et al. (2021) believed that indigenous ethnic minority communities and other non-Bengali, non-Muslim communities have become invisible in government discourses due to this 'deeply ingrained, essentialized and deterministic assumption' (Sultana, 2023) of Bangladesh being a monolingual and homogeneous country. Baldauf et al. (2010) contended it was empirically proven that Indigenous ethnic languages are made invisible in Bangladesh by policy.

However, in Bangladesh approximately 1.7 million ethnic minorities live (Population Census, 2022) belonging to 50 distinct ethnolinguistic communities, although Indigenous leaders have questioned the accuracy of this census data (The Daily Star, 2022; IWGIA, 2024). Many members of these communities speak languages that are not widely recognized or supported within the national education system (The Daily Star, 2025). As a result, the linguistic diversity of ethnic minority communities faces significant challenges in accessing quality education.

A paradigm shift has taken place in Bangladesh through the adoption of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2010, which emphasizes the importance of mother tongue-based education to promote linguistic diversity and cultural preservation, opting for mother tongue-based multilingual education (MTB-MLE) to provide instruction in students' native languages. Tripura (2025) stated that the government of Bangladesh has since published textbooks under the PEDP-4 project, marking a significant step toward formalizing minority language education within the national curriculum. Thus, currently, a pilot project is being implemented in five languages. Due to policy-level commitments, there are possibilities for all 50 Indigenous ethnic languages to be introduced in the education system in local primary schools, thereby creating the necessity for standardization of these languages.

In contrast to the situation of Bangladesh, India adopted an overt language policy favorable to the linguistic diversity of the country. Annamalai (2001) delineates from the Indian Constitution: "Article 29(a) provides the right for any section of the citizens to conserve its language, script or culture" (p. 127). "Article 30 provides the rights for the linguistic minorities... to establish and administer educational institutions" (p. 127), which is further strengthened through the 8th amendment as Article 350A says, "provide adequate facilities for instruction in the mother tongue at the primary stage of education to children belonging to linguistic minority groups" (p. 128).

Tripura Kok (Kokborok) was recognized as an official language of Tripura by the State Government through the Tripura Official Language (Amendment) Act, 1979. This Act amended the earlier Tripura Official Language Act, 1964, to include Tripura Kok/Kokborok alongside Bengali as an official language of the state. Tripura (2025) stated that the speakers of Tripura Kok are demanding the inclusion of their language in the 8th Schedule of the Indian Constitution. The Indian Express (2025) reported that Tripura Parliamentary Affairs Minister Ratan Lal Nath said that the state government was trying to get the Kokborok language included in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution.

Objectives and Scope of This Research

This study is guided by the following research questions and objectives:

- Research Question 1: What is the status of government initiatives, educational integration, and community efforts for the preservation and standardization of Tripura Kok in Bangladesh and the Tripura State of India?
- Research Question 2: How do the policy frameworks and implementation outcomes of the two regions compare, and what strategic recommendations can be drawn to guide a comprehensive standardization and revitalization plan?

The objectives of this research are to understand the status of Tripura Kok and other Indigenous languages in Bangladesh and the Tripura State of India. This research also aims to compare the initiatives and processes undertaken in the two countries with a view to offering a policy framework for preserving, developing and standardizing Tripura Kok and other ethnic languages. Accordingly, we aim to facilitate effective communication, support national development, simplify educational instruction, and serve various political functions in line with the general objectives of language standardization.

METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

This research adopts a Comparative Policy Analysis methodology grounded in the theoretical frameworks of Cooper (1989) and Hornberger (1994). The analytical framework integrates three lines of language planning action:

- (1) status planning (political recognition and official status),
- (2) corpus planning (standardization, codification, and vocabulary development), and
- (3) acquisition planning (educational integration and community use).

These dimensions provide a structured lens through which the policy landscapes of Bangladesh and the Tripura State of India are systematically examined and compared.

Data Sources and Selection Criteria:

The study draws on multiple categories of primary and secondary sources, selected according to the following criteria:

- i. Government policy documents: Official legislative texts, educational policies, and government reports from both Bangladesh and the Tripura State of India were included if they directly address language policy, minority language education, or the recognition of Tripura Kok/Kokborok. These include the Chittagong Hill Tracts Accord (1997), the National Education Policy (2010), the Small Ethnic Groups Cultural Institute Act (2011), and the Tripura Official Language (Amendment) Act (1979).
- ii. Academic and peer-reviewed literature: Scholarly articles, books, and conference papers were selected based on their direct relevance to language standardization, minority language preservation, and language policy in South Asia. Sources were identified through academic databases and targeted bibliographic searches.
- iii. Institutional and community reports: Reports from organizations such as UNDP, UNICEF, SIL Bangladesh, and the TTAADC were included where they provided evidence of educational integration, teacher training, or cultural promotion activities.
- iv. Digital and media sources: Social media platforms (YouTube, Facebook) and reputable news outlets (The Daily Star, The Indian Express, The Business Standard) were consulted to document community-level initiatives and the presence of Tripura Kok in digital spaces.

The comparative analysis proceeds by mapping each country's status, corpus, and acquisition planning efforts against the evidence base described above. Policy documents and educational initiatives were analyzed for their scope, implementation fidelity, and measurable outcomes. The analysis is qualitative and interpretive, identifying patterns, gaps, and best practices across the two cases.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Understanding of the Necessity of Preservation and Standardization

Language is an integral part of identity, and an internal system for the collection, preservation and transfer of knowledge. Thus, language becomes a tool of education and empowerment, a cultural treasure, and an embodiment of cultural heritage. Izsak (2013) argued that "language is particularly important to linguistic minority communities seeking to maintain their distinct group and cultural identity, sometimes under conditions of marginalization, exclusion and discrimination" (p. 6). The United Nations (2007) stated that "languages, with their complex implications for identity, communication, social integration, education and development, are of strategic importance for people and planet."

The necessity of preservation of Tripura Kok is elaborated below across three key dimensions:

Cultural Heritage: Tripura Kok is not just a means of communication; it embodies the cultural identity and heritage of the Tripura people. Rahman (2023) argued that the loss of this language would mean a significant loss of traditional knowledge, customs, and practices unique to this community.

Linguistic Diversity: Bangladesh is home to over 54 indigenous groups, each with distinct languages. Abdullah (2022) believed that preservation of linguistic diversity is essential for fostering social justice and equality among different ethnic communities.

Education and Empowerment: Integrating Indigenous ethnic minority languages into the educational system is vital for their survival and development. Tripura (2025) has explained the Vygotskian perspective on the necessity of mother tongue in education and cognitive development: Vygotsky (1962) posited that language is the primary psychological tool that mediates thought processes and enables self-awareness. The mother tongue facilitates deeper understanding, faster learning, and emotional development (Noormohamadi, 2008; Koda, 2005). Cummins (2000) further argued that a strong foundation in the mother tongue aids in acquiring a second language.

Standardization of the language is also necessary on account of Tripura language's many dialectal varieties. Linguists and researchers believe that standardization is necessary for clarity and consistency in communication, facilitating education and learning, promoting inclusivity and equal opportunity, providing a reference for correctness and prestige, and supporting the preservation and development of language (Ramlan, 2018; Siregar, Rakasiwi & Hutasuht, 2024).

Table 2 Benefits of Standardization of a Language

Benefit	Description
Clarity and Consistency	Reduces variation, ensuring clear and uniform communication.
Educational Utility	Simplifies teaching and learning for all students.
Inclusivity	Promotes equal access and breaks down social barriers.
Reference for Correctness	Provides a standard for correctness and prestige.
Preservation and Development	Supports the creation of language resources and ongoing development.

Theoretical Understanding of the Process of Preservation and Standardization

The process of preservation and standardization of a language is a functional part of language policy. Spolsky (2004), in his framework for language policy, specified three essential components as follows,

- ideology (language belief),
- ecology (language practice), and
- planning (language management) (cited in Tripura, 2024).

Cooper (1989) defined language planning as “deliberate effort to influence the behavior of others with respect to acquisition, structure, or functional allocation of their language codes” (p. 45). Hornberger (1994) and Kaplan and Baldauf (1997) stated that language planning traditionally involves three integrated lines of action:

- status planning (political issue),
- corpus planning (linguistic issue), and
- acquisition planning (educational issue).

This tripartite framework serves as the primary analytical lens for the comparative analysis in this study.

Language standardization involves both deliberate academic efforts and organic natural processes to elevate a dialect to a standardized form. There are two primary approaches: **the discriminatory approach, and the pandialectal approach.**

Discriminatory Approach:

This approach chooses a prestigious dialect based on socio-political, demographic, or cultural factors—for example, the Kokrajhar dialect for Bodo (Narzary & Baro, 2022). Straaijer (2024) emphasized that selection prioritizes dialects with widespread use, literary traditions, or institutional backing.

Pandialectal Approach: Definition, Theoretical Justification, and Practical Application

In contrast to the discriminatory approach, the *pandialectal approach* is a methodologically distinct strategy for language standardization that seeks to unify multiple dialects within a single standardized form rather than elevating just one prestige variety. As a theoretical concept, it operationalizes the principle of linguistic democracy: no single dialect is privileged over others; instead, an idealized norm is constructed through systematic harmonization of common features across dialects.

This approach is grounded in the work of Mismang (2001, as cited in Elizabeth, Chimdi & Beniyam, 2009), who described it as a process of “dialect democracy,” and Wolff (2000), who characterizes it as harmonization—forms common to all dialects are employed wherever possible, with forms from the predominant majority or established literary traditions used where necessary. The pandialectal approach thus rests on three core operational principles:

- v. Neutralization: Dialectal variants are analyzed comparatively, and the most widely shared or phonologically neutral forms are selected for the standard.
- vi. Harmonization: Lexical and grammatical forms are aligned across dialects to reduce divergence while maintaining mutual intelligibility among all speaker communities.
- vii. Inclusivity: No speaker group is linguistically marginalized; the standardized form is collectively owned by all dialectal communities.

The theoretical justification for adopting this approach for Tripurakok is strong. Tripurakok is spoken by speakers of five major clan-based dialects (Tripura, Reang, Jamatia, Halam and Debbarma), which are mutually intelligible yet vary in lexicons and tones. A discriminatory approach would risk privileging one clan’s dialect and generating social and political tensions—an outcome widely documented in comparable contexts (Elizabeth, Chimdi & Beniyam, 2009). The pandialectal approach avoids this by constructing a supradialectal norm.

The most illustrative practical example is the standardization of Quechua in Peru (Hornberger, 1998; Coronel-Molina, 1996; Wölck, 2011). Quechua is spoken across multiple regional varieties with significant lexical and phonological differences. The standardization initiative aimed to create a supradialectal norm that neutralizes regional differences while preserving mutual intelligibility—a direct parallel to the Tripurakok situation. Standard Bengali and Standard English are further examples of outcomes achieved through pandialectal harmonization, where multiple regional varieties contributed to a synthetic standard rather than one variety being simply imposed.

The pandialectal approach is implemented through the following operational stages, which are elaborated in the contextualization section below: (1) Selection/Determination of a neutral norm; (2) Codification into grammar, dictionary, and orthography; (3) Elaboration and harmonization across domains; and (4) Acceptance through institutional promotion and community adoption (Wolff, 2000; Straaijer, 2024).

Challenges and Critiques of Pandialectal Standardization

It is acknowledged by scholars that the pandialectal approach can be complex and may face practical challenges. Harmonizing multiple dialects requires careful balancing of linguistic features and may encounter resistance

from speakers who feel their dialect is underrepresented or altered. Nonetheless, many linguists agree that this approach can help avoid social and political unrest often associated with the elevation of a single dialect (Elizabeth, Chimdi & Beniyam, 2009). Community consultation, transparent decision-making processes, and inclusive technical committees are therefore essential safeguards in its implementation.

Process of Implementing Pandialectal Standardization

Language standardization happens through two processes: academic (deliberate and institution-driven) and natural (organic evolution).

A. Academic Processes:

- i. Selection or Determination: Wolff (2000) suggests selecting an idealized norm that is not the dialect of any one group but a neutral, harmonized variant.
- ii. Codification: Involves developing grammar, dictionaries, and orthographies that reflect the unified standard. Modern Standard Arabic codified Classical Arabic's structure to unify communication across dialects (Straaijer, 2024).
- iii. Elaboration and Harmonization: Expanding the standard for use in various domains and ensuring terminology and forms are consistent across dialects, including lexical enrichment (Elizabeth, Chimdi & Beniyam, 2009).
- iv. Acceptance: The standardized form gains legitimacy through institutional promotion (e.g., schooling, legal frameworks) and public adoption (Straaijer, 2024).

B. Natural Processes:

Natural standardization occurs through unplanned linguistic evolution including the following:

- i. Koineization (contact between dialects leading to mixing and leveling, as in immigrant communities or trade hubs),
- ii. Dialect leveling (regional variants homogenizing as speakers avoid marked forms), and
- iii. Reallocation (surviving variants acquiring new social roles) (Kerswill, 2004; Elizabeth, Chimdi & Beniyam, 2009).

Table 3 Key Differences between Academic and Natural Standardizations

Aspect	Academic Standardization	Natural Standardization
Driver	Institutional planning	Organic language contact
Speed	Rapid (decades)	Gradual (centuries)
Outcome	Codified, prescriptive norms	Descriptive, fluid norms

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Comparative Policy Analysis of Findings

The necessity for the preservation and standardization of Tripurakok and other indigenous languages in Bangladesh is underscored by its role in maintaining cultural identity, promoting linguistic diversity, and empowering indigenous communities through education. Addressing the challenges posed by dominant

languages and resource limitations is essential for ensuring that Tripurakok and other Indigenous ethnic minority languages thrive for future generations.

Current government policies in the Tripura State of India aimed at promoting Tripurakok/Kokborok are multifaceted and evolving yet face several challenges that impact their effectiveness. Similarly, government policies of Bangladesh envisage fostering education of Indigenous children and preserving, developing, and promoting the unique cultural heritage of Bangladesh's small ethnic groups.

The comparative spectrum of Bangladesh and India's key aspects of these policies and their effectiveness is explored below across government initiatives, educational integration, cultural promotion, and community endeavors.

Government Initiatives of Bangladesh and Tripura State of India

i. Recognition of the Ethnic Minority Languages

The Bangladeshi government has recognized the importance of preserving indigenous languages through the following policy documents:

The Chittagong Hill Tracts Accords 1997:

In Clause 33(a) of the accord, it was stated that the hill district council will run vocational training, primary education in mother tongue, and secondary education.

Primary Education Development Programme (PEDP)-II (2002):

PEDP-II emphasized inclusive education and formulated an action plan for mainstreaming tribal children in primary education.

The National Education Policy 2010:

This policy aims to facilitate learning in the mother languages of the Indigenous peoples and small ethnic groups at the primary level of education (p. 5).

The Small Ethnic Groups Cultural Institute Act 2011:

This act was adopted to establish and regulate cultural institutions for the preservation, development, and promotion of the unique cultural heritage of Bangladesh's small ethnic groups. The amendment of the act recognizes Tripura language and 49 other ethnic minority languages.

In contrast, the scenario of the Tripura State of India is far more comprehensive and legally grounded. Tripurakok/Kokborok was recognized as an official language of Tripura by the State Government through the Tripura Official Language (Amendment) Act, 1979. The amendment received the Governor's assent on April 23, 1979, and was published in the Tripura Gazette on May 30, 1979. Debbarma (2024) and Deb Dulal Tripura opined that this recognition allowed its inclusion in various levels of education, from primary to higher education, with courses offered at institutions like Tripura University. Deb (2025) reported that the Tripura Government is setting a priority agenda to get Kokborok included in the 8th Schedule of the Constitution.

ii. Educational Integration

Curriculum and Textbook Development:

Tripura (2025) stated that the Government of Bangladesh integrated five Indigenous languages in its educational system in 2012. Textbooks of the pertinent languages—Chakma, Marma, Tripura, Gago and Santal—were developed under the PEDP-4 and distributed among indigenous students at local primary schools since 2017.

However, Abdullah (2022) opined that these efforts have met with mixed results due to inconsistent implementation and limited resources.

The comparative scenario in the Tripura State of India is richer and more comprehensive. Debbarma (2025) reported that Kokborok is taught in over 1,100 schools across different educational levels. Additionally, specific posts for Kokborok or Tripurakok faculty have been created to enhance teaching quality.

Teacher Training:

Teacher training is a critical component for any educational programme. Despite some efforts, the implementation of teacher training in Bangladesh remains inconsistent due to challenges such as resource allocation, curriculum development, and sustaining trained teachers in remote areas. The involvement of international agencies such as UNDP, UNICEF, and Save the Children has supported initial training and material development, but scaling up remains a concern (Tripura, 2025; The Daily Star, 2025).

Cultural Events and Workshops:

Debbarma and Debbarma (2024) reported that in India, the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAADC) plays a crucial role in promoting Tripurakok or Kokborok through cultural festivals, language workshops, and community events aimed at revitalizing the language. In contrast, in Bangladesh, neither the Hill District Councils (HDCs) nor the District Education Offices (DEOs) have been found to organize such events systematically. Only Small Ethnic Cultural Institutes and some community organizations occasionally arrange such events.

Table 1 Comparison of Key Points on the Progress of Preservation and Promotion of Tripurakok in Bangladesh and Tripura State (India)

Aspect	Bangladesh	Tripura State (India)
Legal Recognition	Recognized through policy documents (CHT Accord 1997, NEP 2010, Small Ethnic Groups Cultural Institute Act 2011). No official language status for Tripurakok.	Official status granted via Tripura Official Language (Amendment) Act, 1979. Strong legislative backing for Kokborok.
Educational Integration	Primary level only: Textbooks developed for 5 indigenous languages under PEDP-4 (2017). Challenges: inconsistent implementation, lack of trained teachers, limited resources.	Comprehensive integration: Kokborok taught in 1,100+ schools across all levels. Dedicated faculty posts created.
Curriculum Development	Limited to basic primary-level materials.	Advanced curriculum at multiple educational levels. Focus on modernizing vocabulary while preserving tradition.
Teacher Training	Inconsistent: few structured programs, reliance on NGOs/international agencies. Lack of sustained training in remote areas.	Structured programs: workshops and training for educators on modern teaching methods.
Cultural Promotion	Minimal government efforts: Small Ethnic Cultural Institutes and NGOs occasionally organize events.	Active promotion: TTAADC organizes cultural festivals, language workshops, and community events.
Challenges	Dominance of Bengali, resource constraints, weak implementation, lack of political will to scale up.	Dialectal variations limited modern vocabulary. Need for broader societal adoption.

Community Initiatives and Individual Efforts

The Daily Star (2025) emphasized increased awareness and involvement from community leaders regarding the importance of preserving indigenous languages and cultures. However, remarkable differences exist between the two countries in community initiative and individual effort in the realm of preservation and standardization of Tripurakok or Kokborok. Through a review of social media platforms such as YouTube and Facebook, many more active and functional social organizations, online TV channels, and language, literacy and literature-based online platforms were found in the Tripura State of India than in Bangladesh. Movies, music videos, and news broadcasting in Kokborok are notably active in the Tripura State of India. A sharp contrast is also visible in the realm of publication of books, magazines, and animations, though some efforts are alive in Bangladesh as well.

Contextualization and Adoption of Academic Processes of Language Standardization for Triura kok

In the case of Tripurakok or Kokborok, we firmly recommend adopting an academic process of language standardization in line with the pandialectal approach. The process of Quechua language standardization in Peru may be closely observed as a model.

Selection of Dialect and Script:

In the realm of social media, particularly Facebook, there are ongoing debates surrounding the selection of a suitable dialect from Debbarma, Jamatiya, Reang and Tripura ones. Controversy also surrounds the choice of script from Roman, Bengali and Devanagari. Each has its proponents and critics. The Roman script is viewed as more accessible and neutral, while the Bengali script is historically significant but may reinforce cultural dominance of Bengali speakers. The Devanagari script is less familiar to most speakers. Deb Dulal Tripura noted that two commissions were formed in Tripura State of India in 1994 and 2005 which recommended adopting Roman script, yet currently a powerful movement has emerged for Bengali script, and no ruling government has laid down clear guidelines on which script to officially use.

Therefore, it is essential to resolve this controversy. We recommend adopting an idealized norm in favor of a neutral, harmonized variant of dialect under an academic process in line with the pandialectal approach. Regarding script, we recommend that both scripts may be used as a choice by institutions and individuals until a consensus is formed. To end the controversy of the script issue, we propose the improvisation of a new script that may be called Tripura/Tipra Koloma.

Codification:

We advocate forming a technical committee comprising language experts from all dialectal groups to develop common grammar, an inclusive dictionary, and a harmonized orthography or spelling system. Adoption and integration of modern vocabulary into the Tripurakok lexicon is essential for its relevance and survival. Debbarma (2024) opined that words should be culturally appropriate and linguistically sound, and collaboration with linguists can help in creating original Tripurakok/Kokborok terms rather than relying solely on loanwords from Bengali or English (Debbarma & Debbarma, 2025).

Elaboration and Harmonization:

Attention should be given to enriching lexical resources, with special focus on creating technical terms to ensure that the language meets modern needs. Debbarma (2024) recommended selective borrowing—selectively incorporating loanwords from Bengali and English while adapting them phonetically and morphologically to fit Tripurakok's linguistic structure.

Acceptance:

For greater acceptance and legitimacy of the standardized form, institutional promotion and public adoption are necessary. Standardized words must be used in teaching and learning materials, legal frameworks, publications, and community events. Debbarma and Debbarma (2025) believe that this can be achieved through community programmes, workshops, and media campaigns.

Addressing the Challenges and Adopting the New Opportunities

Addressing the Challenges

Dominance of Bengali:

The increasing preference for Bengali has marginalized indigenous languages such as Tripurakok. Abdullah (2022) argued that many indigenous children face pressure to adopt Bengali in educational settings, leading to a decline in native language usage. Rahman (2023) contended that employment opportunities in Bangladesh are primarily restricted to Bengali and English, constituting another factor in ethnic language decline. Bangladeshi Tripurakok speakers may address these challenges by forming more active groups and clubs for language, literature and publication.

Lack of Resources:

Despite government initiatives, there is a shortage of qualified teachers and standardized teaching materials. Abdullah (2022) reported that this gap hinders effective language instruction and limits the practical use of Tripurakok in formal education. More advocacy and lobbying must be done for budget allocation, especially during budget seasons of the pertinent governments.

Implementation Gaps:

Despite supportive policies, significant gaps in implementation persist. Schools continue to prioritize Bengali and English over Tripurakok, limiting its practical use in education and administration. The pertinent linguistic groups should continue research, publication, seminars, lobbying and advocacy to address this issue.

Digital Competition:

While digital tools can enhance engagement with younger generations, they also expose the language to competition from dominant languages on social media. Community members, clubs, and organizations should create more digital content in their ethnic language and post it on digital platforms.

Limited Administrative Use:

In Bangladesh, Tripurakok is not used or allowed in administration. In the Tripura State, its presence remains limited compared to Bengali despite TTAADC efforts. Community members may take the initiative to orally utilize their ethnic languages in local offices.

Utilizing the Emerging Opportunities

Online Resources:

Developing digital platforms such as mobile apps, e-learning modules, and online dictionaries can enhance accessibility to modern vocabulary and make the learning process more engaging for younger audiences.

Social Media and Digital Platforms:

Leveraging social media platforms to promote the usage of Tripurakok among younger generations can help integrate modern vocabulary organically, encouraging active participation and usage among speakers.

CONCLUSION

The preservation and standardization of Tripurakok (Kokborok) and other Indigenous languages in Bangladesh and Tripura State, India, are essential for safeguarding cultural heritage and ensuring linguistic diversity. This comparative analysis, guided by the Cooper (1989) and Hornberger (1994) language planning framework, reveals a clear disparity: while Tripura State has demonstrated a more structured approach—granting official

language status, integrating Kokborok into all educational levels, and promoting cultural events through the TTAADC—Bangladesh's efforts remain fragmented, focusing mainly on primary education with limited implementation. Both regions face challenges, including dialectal variations, script controversies, and the dominance of majority languages.

To address these challenges, a pandialectal approach to standardization is recommended, operationalized through a four-stage process of selection, codification, elaboration/harmonization, and acceptance. This approach—grounded in the theoretical work of Wolff (2000) and illustrated by successful cases such as Quechua standardization in Peru—harmonizes linguistic variations while maintaining mutual intelligibility, ensuring no dialectal community is marginalized. The adoption of digital tools, enhanced teacher training, and stronger policy enforcement are crucial for revitalizing these languages.

Community engagement and cross-border collaboration between Bangladesh and India can further strengthen preservation efforts. Ultimately, the survival of Tripurakok and other Indigenous languages depends on sustained political will, institutional support, and active participation from speakers. By fostering multilingual education and leveraging modern technology, both nations can ensure that these languages thrive, empowering Indigenous communities and enriching global linguistic diversity.

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