

Language, Media, and Identity Politics in Northeast India: Government Communication and Digital Visibility

^{1*}Bristi Gogoi, ²Dr. Florence Handique Rabha

^{1*}Research Scholar, Royal School of Communications and Media, The Assam Royal Global University, Guwahati, Assam India . Email ID : bristu143@gmail.com , Orcid Id : 191-200-191-200.

²Asst. Professor, Royal School of Communications and Media, The Assam Royal Global University, Guwahati, Assam India . Email ID : florence.handique@gmail.com , Orcid Id : 191-200-191-200

HOW TO CITE:

Bristi Gogoi, Florence Handique Rabha (2026) Language, Media, and Identity Politics in Northeast India: Government Communication and Digital Visibility International Journal of Special Education, 41(22s), 191-200

ABSTRACT:

This paper is about media and technology, language sustainability and identity politics in the margins of the digital and linguistic landscape of Northeast India. It is home to over 200 languages and dialects, and is under-represented in dominant digital infrastructures. The study, which considers the Critical Digital Studies, Media Ecology, Postcolonial Theory, Sociolinguistics and public relations approach, examines the impact of digital platforms, state intervention and institutional communication on the visibility of language and cultural recognition. It explores how these factors, such as algorithmic reach, monetization, English subtitles, script support and platform design, affect the visibility of indigenous language(s) through comparative analysis of digital content, using anonymized cases of content creators, and evidence from regional digital practices. Special focus is paid to the way language functions as an identifier of identity and the ways in which the language of government communication can reinforce, negotiate or marginalise linguistic identities in policy, digital projects, and official representations. Additionally, the analysis brings the limitations of the Unicode standard to light, as well as the unequal support of translation and the differences in technological access. The paper does not see digital presence as being synonymous with linguistic sustainability, but rather considers it to be about participation, cultural legitimacy, accessibility and the ability of communities to speak for themselves in digital and institutional communication spaces, in unequal media and governance arrangements in practice.

COPYRIGHT STATEMENT:

Copyright: © 2026 Authors.
Open access publication under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

Keywords: Identity politics; government communication; digital media; language sustainability; linguistic representation; Northeast India

1. Introduction

The states of Northeast India are very linguistically diverse, with more than 200 indigenous languages and dialects being spoken (Eberhard et al., 2015). Languages don't only provide means of communication, they also provide a reservoir of collective memory, belonging and culture. Language was enveloped in wider social contexts, and Haugen (1972)

believed that the vitality of language depends on the context(s) in which it is used and transmitted. Language decay is the deterioration of the language itself, not only in terms of vocabulary or colloquialism, but also in terms of cultural transmission or community continuity. Fishman (1991) also emphasized the intergenerational transmission and ongoing use of languages as the

key to maintaining threatened ones. In the digital era, where new media technologies are providing new possibilities for rejuvenation, and new forms of exclusion, these issues have become even more urgent.

Digital platforms have opened up new avenues for indigenous communities to record, share, and enact linguistic identities. Oral traditions, songs, folktales and culturally-specific stories can be transmitted across geographic boundaries through podcasts, YouTube channels, Instagram posts, and language learning apps. Digital initiatives can offer new spaces for documentation, participation, and cultural expression to indigenous-language communities, as shown by Llanes-Ortiz (2023). However, this visibility is not uniform as technology platforms are embedded in larger power and economic landscapes. According to Couldry and Mejias (2019), unequal relations around data, participation and technological control have impacted contemporary digital infrastructures. Fuchs (2017) also shows how commercial social media systems prioritise scale, engagement and market-oriented aspects of visibility. As a result, smaller regional languages may face increased challenges in circulation than globally or nationally dominant languages. Cunningham and Craig (2019) present a discussion of how the discovery, audience measurement and commercial visibility of platform-based cultural production is now becoming increasingly tightly linked.

This inequitable digital landscape has on-the-ground implications for identity politics. Language is not just a tool for communication but also a means to make cultural identity visible, intelligible, and legitimate within public and institutional spaces. Bhabha (1994) understands identity as an ongoing process of negotiation rather than as a stable category as it is negotiated in the spaces of cultural interaction. Digital platforms can thus be a site for indigenous communities to negotiate their linguistic identity and representation. Concurrently, the unequal visibility makes it an issue to consider whether the linguistic minority groups could be represented on their own terms. Spivak (1988) makes visible the structural constraints that shape the ability of marginalized voices to be heard in the dominant structures of representation. Technological inequality, in turn, can thus become representational marginalization due to limited platform support, translation facilities, script compatibility, or institutional recognition.

In Assam, language has been so tightly linked to

political identity that questions of language have consistently been intertwined with questions of cultural recognition and institutional representation. Basid (2016) provides a glimpse into the evolution of Assamese language policy debates that emerged during the colonial and postcolonial struggle over language and official and education language. This historical context serves as a reminder, then, of the importance of language decisions in governmental and digital communication today.

In the context of language and identity, the importance of government communication is important. Public institutions have a role in shaping linguistic visibility in their decisions on official languages, digital-literacy programmes, public-information portals, digitization programmes, and regional communication programmes. Grunig and Hunt (1984), however, have identified two types of public information: information that is disseminated as a one-way message and information that is more participatory in nature. They offer a helpful basis for making the distinction between publics that are addressed and publics that are engaged. Government communication can, in a multilingual context in the Northeast Indian region, then act as a space for the recognition, prioritization, standardisation or marginalisation of linguistic identities.

The State-led digital programmes have significantly increased linguistic inclusiveness of technology participation. Digital India (2022) highlights digital access and services through digital means, and the linguistic diversity in the Northeastern region imposes new demands on communicating in local languages. Linguistic accessibility is also crucial for meaningful participation in a context that aims to promote digital literacy amongst the rural population, such as is the case with PMGDISHA (2023). These efforts are complicated by the fact that digital inequality exists in social and geographical settings, which further hinders access to technological infrastructure. A recent survey (Oxfam India, 2022) found a huge digital divide between rural and urban areas. The Digital Empowerment Foundation (2022) also recognizes that, without a response to the language and cultural characteristics of communities, connectivity is no guarantee of meaningful inclusion when digital resources are not provided.

These conditions question the technological determination, especially the idea that technical tools, mobile applications, connectivity, or

digitization will automatically help to ensure the survival of language. Philip (2020) suggests that with the growth of digital environments, minoritised languages can still be structurally invisible. Linguistic sustainability, therefore, is not solely created through the presence of a website, but rather through the accessibility of technological infrastructures, discoverability, community involvement and opportunities for self-representation.

In this backdrop the intersections between digital media, linguistic sustainability, identity politics and government communication in Northeast India are discussed in the paper. It includes a qualitative and interpretive method that uses digital ethnography, semi-structured telephonic interviews with eight anonymous content creators, media-textual analysis of selected digital outputs, and policy and institutional documents. The research found a link between platform visibility and linguistic recognition, and government communication, that place language sustainability within broader issues of identity, representation, participation and institutional inclusion.

2. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

2.1 Language, Identity, and Linguistic Sustainability

Language serves as a vehicle for both communication and for carrying the collective memory, values and sense of social identity. Linguistic continuity relies upon the ability of communities to continue to use their languages in a context of change in social and technological settings in multilingual societies. The environments in which communication takes place are also changed by the media technologies, as highlighted by McLuhan (1964), that media systems can have an impact on language transmission and use in Northeast India.

Williams (2003) suggested that media technologies are embedded in social and cultural contexts, suggesting that they have an impact that is shaped by institutions and practices in which they are embedded. The digital presence is not, therefore, a prerequisite for sustainability in the case of indigenous languages. A language can exist in the online environment but not be well represented in everyday communication and public institutions.

The vitality of a language is their involvement of the community. UNESCO (2022) emphasizes that involvement with documentation, content development and representation of communities

in the development of digital initiatives for indigenous languages will be more effective. For instance, the Travelling Archive (2022) records Khasi oral traditions, connecting language, storytelling and place, is recorded. NEZINE (2021) also illustrates the power of digitally circulated oral narratives in both reaching beyond the local community and expanding their potential stories. The examples demonstrate that there is more to language sustainability than preservation.

2.2 Digital Media, Script Support, and Linguistic Marginalization

One factor in the digital visibility of a language is the effectiveness of the language's script in today's technological systems. The inclusion of Unicode gives the basis to represent the digital standard of the language. The Unicode Consortium (2019) had formally added the Wancho script to the Unicode Standard which allows for the standardized digital use of the script, but this would not necessarily make it practical in daily use.

Everson (2019) explains the technical effort that went into writing the proposal for the encoding of the minority scripts, and that, in order to include a minority script, much documentation and standardisation are required. The same issues seem to come up when using Meitei Mayek. In the view of Malli (2023), typographic development, font design and digital compatibility play an important role in the visibility of indigenous scripts in practice. The Unicode Consortium (2021) also notes that representation of minority scripts is still ongoing with irregular support of input methods and fonts by operating systems.

The inequalities of technology entail a juxtaposition of historical language hierarchies. Pennycook (2002) shows how English's global status is related to colonialism and culture. English can thus serve as a portal to greater visibility and discoverability in digital environments. This puts pressure on creators of indigenous languages who are using English subtitles or metadata to help reach a wider audience, but keeping their content as authentic as possible.

From a decolonial angle, such activities are viewed as struggles over representation. Mignolo (2009) highlights the importance of questioning the dominant system of knowledge and establishing other epistemologies. Indigenous digital production can then be used to assert the linguistic identity. It is also argued that the

community should have control in the representation of indigenous knowledge, as digital preservation should be "merely a means of preserving the meaning of cultural materials for the people and contexts that made them significant" (Smith, 1999).

2.3 Government Communication and Linguistic Recognition

Another domain where languages become visible in the government is in the language of communication. Lasswell (1948) created a model of communication that incorporates the communicators, messages, mediums, and audiences. In a multilingual space, language choice is an aspect of this relationship: public information might be formally present but is not accessible to communities that are not sufficiently catered for in their own languages.

Examples of multilingual institutional initiatives highlight potential and constraints of multilingual communication. In an effort to promote multilingual exposure with digital learning, Ministry of Education (2021) launched Bhasha Sangam Application. NCERT-CIET (2022) set the application in a pedagogy designed to facilitate multilingual engagement via technology. These recognise linguistic diversity but many smaller languages of the Northeast region are not included in the larger institutional arenas.

2.4 Theoretical Framework

The study is an intersection of the views of Media Ecology, Critical Digital Studies, Postcolonial/Decolonial Theory, and Public Relations. These methods can be combined to discuss digital linguistic visibility as a technological, cultural and political process. They allow for the analysis of the relationship between the media environment, language use, the distribution of visibility through digital infrastructure, and the recognition of indigenous communities in relation to their representation, and the role of the government communication in recognizing language. In this sense, language is defined as a medium of communication, as a symbol of belonging and as an indicator of institutional inclusion. While the Northeast Indian context is always the larger picture, Assam is a key area for the study of media, linguistic identity, and government communication.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study used a qualitative research and interpretive research design to explore the

relationship between language, digital media, identity and institutional communication in the Northeast India. Such an approach was suitable as the research included not only measures of patterns of digital visibility, but also the ways in which the choices of language, platform use, and government or institutional actions take on cultural and identity meanings. The majority of the data for this study was gathered by using digital ethnographic observation, interviews, media-textual analysis and documentary materials to get an overall picture of both community practices and the wider structures of digital communication.

3.2 Data Sources and Participants

Primary qualitative data was gathered from eight anonymous digital content creators from different part of Northeast India through semi-structured telephonic interviews. The participants were active in various online platforms like YouTube, Instagram and community podcasting platforms and belonged to different linguistic groups like Khasi, Mizo, Ao, Karbi, Bodo and Assamese. The interviews took place in April 2025 and examined various aspects of the language choice, cultural authenticity, digital visibility, subtitling, platform constraints, algorithmic pressures, institutional support, and perceptions of language sustainability. An interview framework comprised 15 questions that covered the following areas: Content and Language Use, Visibility Challenges, Accessibility, Platform Dynamics, Institutional Support and Digital Futures. The complete semi-structured interview framework and interview questions are provided in Appendix A for methodological transparency.

A number of digital content created in the region was also studied. Special emphasis was laid on the language of the video, subtitles, captions, audiences coverage, engagement dynamics and visibility of regional-language video. Around fifteen YouTube channels were comparatively analysed to check the differences in content with English subtitles/English presented in the content and content presented mainly in local languages.

3.3 Media and Documentary Analysis

Media-textual analysis was employed to explore the portrayal of indigenous languages in digital media and the impact of the technologies on its visibility. The analysis focused on the subtitles, multilingual subtitles, presentation of the content, platform discoverability, script compatibility, and

linguistic self-representation. Also analyzed were differences between channels featuring English captions and those that do not, in terms of reach, audience diversity, engagement, watch time, algorithmic visibility, commercial viability and cultural perception.

To give context to the findings on the platforms, documents from public policies, institutional documents, digital archives and government communication on the subject of digital inclusion and regional language accessibility were used. The involvement of government and institutional programs was examined in terms of how they allowed for linguistic participation, recognition and access. This dimension was especially significant in helping to understand the dynamics and nature of the use of language as a tool not just for transmitting information, but as a sign of identity in public communication.

3.4 Analytical Procedure

The qualitative data was analysed thematically in relation to the issues of linguistic visibility, representation of identity, accessibility of platforms, algorithmic pressure, language choice, institutional recognition and digital sustainability which surfaced repeatedly. Interpretation of the interview responses was done in conjunction with the observed digital-media practices to find convergence and variance between the experience of the creators and the conditions of the platform. Comparative observations on subtitling were also conducted on an evaluative 5-point scale for the reach, diversity of audience, algorithmic visibility, engagement, watch time, commercial viability, and cultural perception. These comparisons, however, were not generally considered as inferential statistical indicators; they were merely descriptive to help interpret the qualitative data.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

All participants were anonymised during the

study. All eight interviewees asked to keep their names anonymous due to digital visibility-related concerns, platform backlash, and content monetisation precarity. Pre-interviews verbal informed consent was obtained and no personal identifiers were recorded.

4. Results and Findings

4.1 Language Choice, Subtitling, and Digital Visibility

The analysis revealed that language was a factor that affected the visibility and circulation of digital content from the Northeast India. The content creators preferred to use indigenous or regional languages because of cultural authenticity. Some creators added English or Hindi subtitles and captions as well as hashtags and metadata to make their videos easier to find. The messages from the interviews suggested that creators balanced linguistic fidelity and platform visibilities.

Fifteen channel owners were evaluated and they had an evident pattern. Generally, channels that used English subtitles or multilingual captions were able to achieve wider reach than channels that had only regional-language presentation. In a number of instances, subtitled content garnered 191-200 times more viewership. The comparison indicated that all the scores were better for the subtitled content when it came to reach, audience diversity, engagement, watch time, algorithmic visibility, commercial viability, and cultural perception. Reach was given a score of 5 for subtitled and 2 for non-subtitled content while audience diversity was given a score of 5 and 1 respectively. The results suggest that multilingual presentation had a positive impact on circulation, but had a negative effect on discoverability in terms of reliance on dominant languages. The comparative assessment of subtitled and non-subtitled regional digital content is summarized in Figure 1 on the three main dimensions of visibility, engagement and accessibility.

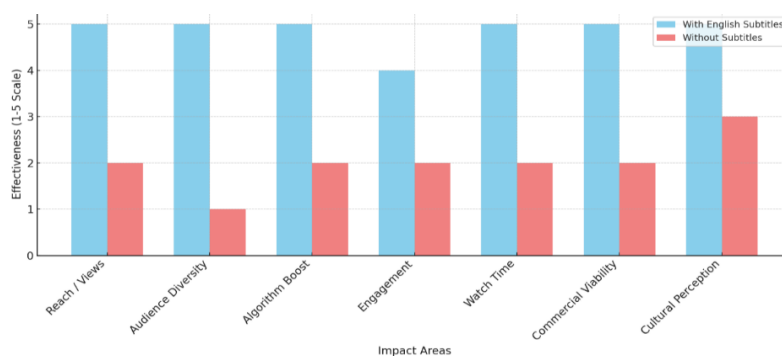


Figure 1. Comparative Impact of English Subtitling on Regional Digital Content

4.2 Script Support and Digital Accessibility

The results indicated differences in technological support of the languages of the Northeast India. Scripts that were not as integrated and were used more often tended to have fewer issues with typing, rendering and platform compatibility, and less-integrated scripts tended to have more issues. The Devanagari script (Bodo) had high support and Roman script languages like Mizo and Khasi had high compatibility. With some of the characters, as with Wancho and Meitei Mayek, it was not possible to use the entire repertoire of

encodings (Unicode).

These disparities influenced users' access to creating, accessing, editing and sharing content in their languages. This was indeed both an issue of script encoding, but also the need to be able to use keyboard, applications, operating systems and platforms together. Table 1 indicates that though there is a certain level of compatibility of digital script platforms for Northeast Indian languages, some are more successful than others as regards rendering and integration.

Table 1. Digital Script Support for Selected Northeast Indian Languages

Language	Script	Digital Support	Major Issue
Meitei	Meitei Mayek	Moderate	Uneven rendering
Ahom	Ahom	Limited	Weak mobile support
Wancho	Wancho	Very limited	Low platform integration
Bodo	Devanagari	Strong	Minor variant issues
Karbi	Latin/Devanagari	Variable	Inconsistent digital use
Dimasa	Latin/Devanagari	Variable	Limited standardization
Mizo	Roman	Strong	Generally well supported
Khasi	Roman	Strong	Generally well supported
Assamese	Eastern Nagari	Strong	Some rendering variation
Garo	Roman	Strong	Broad platform support

4.3 Community Media and Indigenous Representation

Digital media as a space of linguistic and cultural representation was an important one that was developed by the community. Podcasts, oral history projects, storytelling venues, and social media allowed communities to capture and share traditions to audiences throughout the community. The use of bilingual presentation in examples from Khasi and Karbi oral traditions showed how this might enhance accessibility and maintain oral language expression in indigenous languages.

Interviews revealed that creators saw linguistic and cultural authenticity as being important to their work. Language was used not only to communicate but to communicate about community identity: it was a way of storytelling, oral tradition, visual, and reference to culture. Despite this there were challenges to creators with regards to subtitling, platform usage and platform discovery.

4.4 Government Communication and Institutional Recognition

The documentary analysis showed that

government and institutional support remained uneven across linguistic communities. Languages with stronger official recognition, larger user bases, or established scripts generally received greater visibility in digital initiatives, while smaller indigenous languages received less consistent support. In Assam, official communication provisions allowing Karbi alongside English in Karbi Anglong and West Karbi Anglong illustrate how language choice can function as institutional recognition.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that digital language sustainability depends on platform visibility, script accessibility, community participation, and institutional support. Linguistic visibility therefore represents not only a technological outcome but also a matter of identity, recognition, participation, and cultural representation and belonging within digital and public communication environments. As shown in Table 2, government and institutional communication practices differ considerably in their accommodation of linguistic diversity, with corresponding implications for accessibility, participation, and identity recognition.

Table 2. Government Communication and Linguistic Inclusion in Northeast India

Initiative/Context	Language Practice	Communication/Identity Implication
PMGDISHA	Predominantly Hindi and English	Limited accessibility for smaller indigenous-language communities
Digital inclusion initiatives	Limited localization in some tribal areas	Uneven linguistic participation
MyGov Assam	Limited Bodo and Mishing content	Reduced multilingual engagement
Radio Brahmaputra	Assamese, Mishing and Deori	Community-oriented linguistic inclusion
Assam official communication	Karbi permitted alongside English in Karbi Anglong districts	Institutional recognition of linguistic identity

5. Discussion

The results are reaffirming the difference between the digital presence and the linguistic visibility of the people in the Northeast region of India. Indigenous-language information is now being provided via social-media outlets, but its reach is limited by the architecture of the platforms, the difficulty of its discoverability, its monetization, and language conventions. Gillespie (2018) shows how digital platforms are more than neutral spaces – they are spaces of organisation and classification, of moderation, of governance. This goes some way to understanding why regional-language creators might want to adjust their subtitles, metadata and/or presentation to achieve greater circulation, despite their primary cultural and linguistic concerns.

The results on the subject of the technology inclusion also confirm that technological inclusion is still uneven. The Unicode recognition is just one of the steps towards functional digital accessibility. Scripts that are less integrated pose the same issues with devices, searchability, font, and keyboard for languages. In describing the writing system of the Wancho language, Omniglot (2023) shows how different they are from the orthography used in print-based systems, and how this difference must be met with the new digital environment if the community is to be able to use it effectively. These technical barriers not only affect the capacity to use a language as a means of communication but also to produce written texts and to transmit culture.

Community controlled digital spaces can be an alternative to entrusting to the mainstream platform structures. Pad.ma (n.d.) is an example of a pioneering open digital archive that can be used to preserve and share audio-visual works, with their contextual information. These can be especially pertinent for Northeast India because the ability to convey the oral narrative, performance, storytelling and community memory is not always easily conveyed through the

standardised textual interface. The results therefore indicated that linguistic sustainability needs a language environment where communities have control over production of cultural materials, their contextization and circulation.

Representation-audience relations are also significant. The role of the media forms in positioning audiences in relation to the representations was illustrated by Mulvey (1989). Her work was born out of film theory but the question, "how is representation mediated," is helpful in the digital realm. While indigenous creators now have more opportunities to be engaged directly in their creation of public image, practices on the platforms still shape how that image is received. For example, the use of English subtitles is an example of the duality at work: on the one hand, making culturally specific content accessible to wider audiences; and on the other hand, the mediation in the dominant language a prerequisite for wider recognition.

These processes are influenced by infrastructure and digital literacy. While digital access is important, Zohmingliani (2016) has highlighted that significant challenges with technologically mediated learning lay in Mizoram as access and usage of devices and internet was not the only constraint. The current results also suggest that participant usability of the script, language-appropriate program interfaces, digital literacy and presence of local resources have an impact on this level of engagement. Technological growth without the care of linguistic conditions, may then lead to a higher level of connectivity without the same degree of communicative participation.

Government communication takes on particular importance in this inequity-laden context. The Government of India has been working towards creating digital initiatives to increase access, infrastructure and digitised public services throughout the country. The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (2022) identifies digital expansion as a crucial part of

more extensive frameworks of public services and participation. The results of the present study however show that to enable diverse communities to be equally engaged in institutional communication, technological expansion needs to be accompanied by linguistic localization. However, with the multiple languages coexisting within a relatively small geographical area in Northeast India, using a single language automatically gives a preference to already dominant linguistic publics.

This has implications for identity politics which are direct. Language by public institutions does not just shape the understandability of information; it also affects the sense of being institutionally recognized of certain communities. The results on the Assamese, Karbi, Bodo, Mishing and other regional languages indicate that language could be symbolically included in the process of official and digital communication as a recognition of the presence of the community. On the other hand, if smaller languages are not well represented, this can help contribute to the inequalities in the public visibility of the languages.

So the results put government communication at the nexus of both access to information and representation of identity. The translation requirement is not the only way to address multilingualism in digital policy but part of participatory communication. Enabling more localization, community consultation, easy-to-use interfaces and the ability to support content in indigenous languages would have the potential to enhance communication effectiveness and cultural recognition. But if government communication can be used to empower linguistic communities to engage with it, rather than simply take it in, it will be more in tune with the much bigger principles of inclusive public relations.

Overall, the study reveals that the sustainability of the language in the Northeast region is dependent on the interaction of community agency, technological infrastructure, visibility of the platform and institution recognition. Digital technologies have the potential to propagate the visibility of indigenous languages, but can also replicate the dominance of a particular language in the mediation of the visibility of another language, or a lack of access to a technical system. Thus, linguistic sustainability should be seen as the ability of communities to exist online, but also to communicate, to be represented, to be involved in public life and to be recognised meaningfully through their languages by

institutions.

6. Conclusion

The findings show that while digital visibility does not necessarily translate into linguistic vitality, digital media has opened up opportunities for indigenous languages in Northeast India, too. What language(s) can be viewed and supported online is still determined by platform algorithms, script compatibility, subtitling practices, infrastructure and monetization. This strong status of the English and Hindi languages also reflects the general historical developments that placed some languages in more culturally and institutionally worthy positions (Pennycook, 2002). The community-led projects like regional podcasts, storytelling channels, practices of subtitling and script digitisation highlight the capacity of indigenous communities to use digital media in relation to cultural continuity and self-representation. The study also shows that between language sustainability and identity politics, and government communication, there is a strong connection. Issues of official languages, digital platforms and public information and language supports can affect the recognition, inclusion or marginalisation of linguistic communities in the policies of institutions. Communication in multilingual areas is thus more than just about disseminating information, it is about being accessible in language, having local participation and considering identities. Technological support and community agency and inclusive institutional practices should go hand-in-hand to create a sustainable digital future for the languages of the Northeast. Future studies should examine the communication strategies and policies of the government on platform based communication to understand the impacts on the linguistic identity, participation and digital visibility of the communities in the region.

Appendix A

The following appendix provides an overview of the interview methodology adopted for carrying out semi-structured telephonic interviews with eight indigenous digital content creators across various regions in Northeast India. The participants are makers of community podcasts, YouTube videos and profiles on Instagram, with different linguistic backgrounds such as Khasi, Mizo, Ao, Karbi, Bodo, and Assamese. All the interviewees wanted to maintain their anonymity for confidentiality regarding digital visibility, platform backlash and content monetization precarity issues. Their names have been redacted

as such and no personal identifiers have been noted. Conversations were held in the month of April, 2025 with verbal informed consent. These interviews aimed to examine some of the issues that arise around the representation of indigenous language online, such as those relating to linguistic choice, digital accessibility, the behaviour of algorithms and the sustainability of platforms. Thematic incorporation of insights are included in Section III and IV of this paper.

Interview Schedule: Semi-Structured Telephonic Interview Questions:

A. Content and Language Use

1. What kind of content do you create and on which platform(s)?
2. What language(s) do you typically use in your content, and why?
3. How important is cultural and linguistic authenticity in your creative process?

B. Language Visibility and Challenges

4. Have you noticed differences in content reach or visibility based on the language used?
5. Have you ever switched languages (e.g., from a local language to English or Hindi) for better engagement or reach?
6. What platform-related or technical limitations have you faced in using your native language?

C. Subtitling and Accessibility

7. Do you use subtitles? If yes, which languages do you choose and why?
8. Have subtitles improved the accessibility or reception of your content?

References

- Basid, H. F. (2016). The Assamese language issue: An analysis from historical perspective. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 6(2), 125–133. http://www.ripublication.com/ijhss16/ijhssv6n2_13.htm
- Bhabha, H. K., & Bhadha, H. K. (1994). *The location of culture* (Vol. 199). London: routledge.
- Couldry, N., & Mejias, U. A. (2019). *The costs of connection: How data is colonizing human life and appropriating it for capitalism*. Stanford University Press.
- Cunningham, S., & Craig, D. (2019). *Social media entertainment: The new intersection of Hollywood and Silicon Valley* (Vol. 7). Nyu Press.
- Digital Empowerment Foundation. (2022). *Digital Inclusion in Tribal Northeast: Connectivity is Not Enough*. Retrieved from <https://defindia.org>
- Digital India. (2022). *Annual report 2021–22*. Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, Government of India. Retrieved from <https://www.meity.gov.in/writereaddata/files/Digital%20India%20Annual%20Report%20191-200.pdf>
- Eberhard, D. M., Simons, G. F., & Fenning, C. D. (Eds.). (2015). *Ethnologue: Languages of the world*.
- Everson, M. (2019). *Proposal to encode Wancho in Unicode*. Unicode Consortium.
- Fishman, J. A. (1991). *Reversing language shift: Theoretical and empirical foundations of assistance to threatened languages* (Vol. 76). Multilingual matters.
- Fuchs, C. (2017). *Social media: A critical introduction* (2nd ed.). Sage Publications.

D. Platform Dynamics and Algorithmic Pressures

9. Do you think platform algorithms favour certain languages or styles of content?
10. Have you made any deliberate changes to match algorithm trends (e.g., switching thumbnails, using hashtags, code-switching)?

E. Institutional and Community Support

11. Are you aware of any government or institutional support for content in indigenous languages?
12. Have you participated in any regional or state-run digital or cultural initiatives?

F. Digital Futures and Language Sustainability

13. What does language sustainability mean to you as a creator in the digital age?
14. What kind of support - technical, financial, or community – based would help you continue creating in your native language?
15. What role do you think creators like yourself can play in sustaining indigenous languages digitally?

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author wishes to thank Prof. (Dr.) Bibhash Choudhury of Gauhati University for his insightful perspectives, which were particularly enlightening and played a critical role in refining the approach to this study. The author is deeply appreciative for the esteemed mentor for his time, wisdom, and dedication.

- Gillespie, T. (2018). *Custodians of the Internet: Platforms, content moderation, and the hidden decisions that shape social media*. Yale University Press.
- Grunig, James & Hunt, Todd. (1984). *Managing Public Relations*.
- Haugen, E. (1972). *The Ecology of Language*. Stanford University Press. Redwood City, CA.
- Lasswell, H. D. (1948). The structure and function of communication in society. *The communication of ideas*, 37(1), 191-200.
- Llanes-Ortiz, G. (2023). *Digital initiatives for indigenous languages*. UNESCO Publishing.
- Malli, K. (2023, June 24). Tracing Meitei Mayek & Ol Chiki letters: A comparative study. Typotheque. <https://www.typotheque.com/research/tracing-meitei-mayek-and-ol-chiki>
- McLuhan, M. (1964). *Understanding Media: the Extensions of Man* (NY, McGraw Hill).
- Mignolo, W. D. (2009). Epistemic disobedience, independent thought and decolonial freedom. *Theory, culture & society*, 26(191-200), 191-200.
- Ministry of Education. (2021). Launch of Bhasha Sangam app under Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat. Press Information Bureau.
- Ministry of Electronics & IT. (2022). *Digital India: Journey & Way Forward*. Retrieved from <https://www.digitalindia.gov.in>
- Ministry of Electronics & IT. (2023). Pradhan Mantri Gramin Digital Saksharta Abhiyan (PMGDISHA): Annual Report. Retrieved from <https://pmgdisha.in>
- Mulvey, L. (1989). Visual pleasure and narrative cinema. In *Visual and other pleasures* (pp. 191-200). London: Palgrave Macmillan UK.
- NCERT-CIET. (2022). Bhasha Sangam app overview and pedagogical framework. <https://ciet.nic.in>
- NEZINE. (2021). *Voices of Northeast India: Folk tales series*. <https://nezine.com>
- Omniglot. (2023). Wancho script. Omniglot: Writing systems and languages of the world. Retrieved April 18, 2025, from <https://www.omniglot.com/writing/wanchoscript.htm>
- Oxfam India. (2022). *India Inequality Report 2022: Digital Divide*. Retrieved from <https://www.oxfamindia.org/knowledgehub/workingpaper/india-inequality-report-2022-digital-divide>
- Pad.ma. (n.d.). Public access digital media archive. <https://pad.ma>
- Pennycook, A. (2002). *English and the discourses of colonialism*. Routledge.
- Philip, A. (2020). The Invisibility of Minoritized Languages in Digital India. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 55(30), 42–47.
- PMGDISHA. (2023). Annual report 2022–23: Pradhan Mantri Gramin Digital Saksharta Abhiyan. Retrieved from <https://www.pmgdisha.in>
- Smith, L. T. (1999). *Decolonizing methodologies: Research and indigenous peoples*.
- Chakravorty Spivak, G. (1988). Can the subaltern speak?. *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, 191-200.
- The Travelling Archive. (2022). *Stories as songs: Oral traditions in the Khasi Hills*. <https://thetravellingarchive.org>
- UNESCO. (2022). *Empowering indigenous languages in the digital age: Toolkit for action*. <https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/empowering-indigenous-languages-digital-age-toolkit-action>
- Unicode Consortium. (2019). *The Unicode Standard, Version 12.0 – Wancho*. <https://www.unicode.org/charts/PDF/U1E2C0.pdf>
- Unicode Consortium. (2021). *Roadmap to Unicode inclusion: Minority scripts of India*. <https://unicode.org/roadmaps/>
- Williams, R. (2003). *Television: Technology and cultural form*. Psychology Press.
- Zohmingliani, L. (2016). Open learning in Mizoram: Challenges and prospects in a digital world. *International Journal of Peace, Education and Development*, 4(2), 44–48. <https://www.renupublishers.com/images/article/15152418116.pdf>