

The Indigenous Languages of Nepal (ILN)

Situation, Policy Planning and Coordination

Edited by
Yogendra P. Yadava,
&
Pradeep L. Bajracharya



NATIONAL FOUNDATION FOR DEVELOPMENT OF INDIGENOUS NATIONALITIES (NFDIN)

Sanchal, Sanepa, Lalitpur

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October 28th, 2005

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(NFDIN)**

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FORWARD

Nepal is a multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, multi-religious and multi-cultural country. The national census of 2001 has revealed that there are more than one hundred different caste/ethnic groups of people in Nepal who speak more than ninety-two different languages. However, there is no single caste/ethnic group, which exceeds twenty percent of the country's total population of twenty-five million. Therefore, none of the caste/ethnic group commands numeric majority in Nepal.

Historically, janajatis (indigenous nationalities), dalits and madhesi have suffered discrimination and oppression from the State's discriminatory policies and practices. Imposition of Hindu nationalism based on a mono-cultural and mono-lingual ideology pushed indigenous nationalities, dalits and madhesi communities to the state of deprivation and marginalization. In the aftermath of Jana Andolon II, the Interim Constitution of Nepal 2007 has declared Nepal as an independent, federal, secular, inclusive and democratic state. Furthermore, the Interim Constitution, for the first time, has recognized all languages of Nepal as national languages which can be used in government offices at the local level. Therefore, the Interim Constitution provides policy a framework for the protection and development of all languages spoken as mother tongue by different caste and ethnic groups in Nepal.

With a view to promoting the indigenous languages of Nepal, National Foundation for Development of Indigenous Nationalities (NFDIN) organized a one-day seminar on Indigenous Languages of Nepal: Situation, Policy Planning and Coordination, on 28 October 2005 in Kathmandu at which three research papers were presented by eminent scholars in their respective fields. The main objective of publishing the proceedings of the seminar is to disseminate the findings of the researchers among stakeholders and the general public who are interested in the development of indigenous peoples of Nepal. Finally, I would like to thank the researchers, commentators, seminar participants and my colleagues at NFDIN who have worked hard to make this work successful.


Jitpal Kirant
Vice Chairman
NFDIN

FOREWARD

Despite being small in size, Nepal is a land of linguistically diverse people. However, no initiatives have been taken by the government to carry out a comprehensive linguistic survey of the country. Even the census report 2001 could not cover prevailing languages of the indigenous languages of Nepal, due to the lack of a timely and proper comprehensive linguistic survey of Nepal.

This book comprises the proceedings of the seminar papers presented by linguists and the comments raised by various participants on the papers. It can benefit anyone interested in understanding the state policy regarding the language situation and issues of the indigenous people of the country. I hope this volume will serve as a basis for formulating immediate language policy and planning, research activities and coordination of languages at various levels.

June 19, 2007



(Lok Bahadur Thapa Magar)

Member Secretary

NFDIN

Preface

Language is the most unique gift that sets humans apart from the rest of living beings. It is the greatest accomplishment of human civilization and perhaps the most significant asset of human life. We cannot think of any social, academic and artistic activities going on without language. But it is sad to see that almost half of world's 7,000 languages are likely to be lost by the end of this century. Languages of Nepal including indigenous languages are not immune from this prediction. However, there lurk some rays of hope in this regard. Recently, there has been growing awareness about this issue at both national and international levels. We can visualize some attempts at national as well as global levels to adopt policies and a plan of action to preserve and promote minor languages so as to avert this crisis.

There exist varying estimates about the enumeration of languages spoken as mother tongues in Nepal. The census report (2001) has identified 92 (plus a few more) languages spoken in Nepal while *Ethnologue* (2005) presents a list of 126 languages of Nepal. Most of these languages are languages used by indigenous nationalities of the country. Several of them are dying out for a number of reasons such as the marginal number of speakers, migration to urban areas, the use of Nepali alone in education, administration and mass media and so on.

There certainly exist constitutional provisions to promote, preserve and use these languages but these provisions remained mostly ignored for some time. These issues have now gained momentum with the establishment of the National Foundation of Development of Indigenous Nationalities (NFDIN) for addressing the upliftment of indigenous nationalities in Nepal including their languages. Such awareness has also percolated down to various language communities and their members.

With this perspective the NFDIN made a resolution to organize a seminar on understanding the situation of indigenous languages, formulating policies and planning for their preservation and promotion, and establishing coordination among various language-related national and international agencies to achieve the goals in this field. Accordingly, a seminar was held on October 28, 2005 and participated in by representatives of diverse indigenous organizations, policy makers, social scientists and linguists.

Indigenous languages of Nepal: situation, planning and coordination is the proceedings of this seminar. This volume consists of three papers. The first paper, entitled "Indigenous languages of Nepal (ILN): a critical analysis of the linguistic situation and contemporary issues", by Yadava and Turin, sets the scene for the seminar on indigenous languages of Nepal. It is an attempt to examine mainly two aspects of these languages: situation and contemporary issues. The language situation addresses the topics such as identification, distribution, genetic affiliation, writing systems, ethnicity and language endangerment.

The second major aspect of indigenous languages covers contemporary issues related to the preservation and promotion of linguistic diversity in the Nepalese context. These issues include ecology, state, law, census, media, education and gender. Besides, the paper also briefly deals with language policies adopted in neighboring states. As an epilogue, the paper concludes with a note of optimism signaling better prospect for indigenous languages of Nepal in the future on the basis of the analysis of the issues discussed above.

In their paper, entitled "Indigenous languages of Nepal (ILN): policy, planning and recommendation", D. Watters and Rai look into the nature and scope of language and suggest appropriate planning and policy for the indigenous languages of Nepal and make concrete recommendations to implement them. They focus on the use of these languages in education including literacy since they argue that mother tongue education is not just a right but also a "bridge" to participation in the wider world.

Finally, S. Watters and Tuladhar, in their paper entitled "Indigenous languages of Nepal (ILN): capacity building, institutional support, and coordination", provide a framework for establishing coordination among diverse existing national and international agencies in order to carry out the works related to the preservation and promotion of indigenous languages and their use in education and other fields. This paper consists of three sections. In the first section, the authors present a list of agencies and individuals involved in language work in Nepal. It is not a complete list but it does give a fairly broad picture of those involved in the field.

The second section of the paper suggests a model of cooperation known as Community of Practice (CoP), which refers to a loosely affiliated group of people that share and collaborate in getting over problems.

The third section of the paper makes some specific suggestions about the form of the collaboration which may be said to comprise three groups of people: academics, practitioners and policy makers. Finally, the paper writers suggest that support and coordination can become possible as organizations and individuals see the need for such.

The presentation of each of these papers was followed by evaluation and comments from specialists and participants from indigenous organizations. An attempt has also been made to incorporate them in this volume. We hope this work can be of value in guiding NFDIN and other concerned organizations in comprehending the state-of-the-art situation of indigenous nationalities, planning appropriate activities for them and carrying them out in coordination with academics, practitioners and policy makers.

After the completion of the seminar, the NFDIN decided to publish it in a book form; however, it was delayed because there were no authority to expedite this publication.

With the nomination of the new authorities the decision has been taken to publish it with the minimum necessary revision along with the change of time, context and situation. Any comments, suggestions and improvements for this volume will be highly appreciated.

July 1st, 2007

The Editors

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Objectives of the Seminar

The seminar was organized with the following objectives:

1. To aid in the preservation and promotion of the indigenous languages of Nepal.
2. To analyse the past and the present situations of the existing indigenous languages.
3. To aid in the development of effective policies and plans for the future actions regarding indigenous languages of Nepal.
4. To derive suggestions and recommendations as an input for policy planners.
5. To formulate the coordination mechanism among national and international linguistic institutions.

Intended Outcomes

The intended outcomes of this seminar will help the Foundation to move into action. We hope to achieve the following outcomes:

- ◆ To analyze the present situation of the existing and endangered indigenous languages.
- ◆ To get appropriate feedback for the development of policies regarding preservation and promotion of endangered indigenous languages.
- ◆ To develop an action plan for the future implementation of policies at every level of society.
- ◆ To build a strong coordination between concerned national and international agencies to get support for the upliftment of indigenous languages.
- ◆ To publish and distribute the final report of this seminar.
- ◆ To ensure social inclusion and recognition of the indigenous languages in national policies.

Inaugural Session

After the usual proceedings of the inauguration linguists and participants expressed their views thus:

Prof. Dr. Yogendra Prasad Yadava stressed that the major thrust of the programme was to uplift the social and cultural livelihood of the indigenous people of Nepal. Prof. Yadava highlighted the works done by CDL in the sector of languages, which are supported by NFDIN. CDL is working on the development of dictionaries, grammar, documentation of indigenous languages and have published some of them so far. It has also been working on the revival of dying languages, such as "Kusunda" by collecting facts from infor-

nants, to prepare and publish its grammar. He acknowledged the contributions by Dr. David Watters for the same and said that dictionaries of Baramo and Mewahang have already been published. He further said that he appreciated the concern taken by NFDIN for the preservation and promotion of sensitive aspects like languages.

Finally, Prof. Yadava said that the seminar was very contextual as it dealt with the situational analysis, planning and final implementation and concluded his speech by wishing the NFDIN to be able to draw some concrete results from the programme, which may be able to help in the preservation and promotion of the indigenous languages of Nepal.

The Vice chancellor, Royal Nepal Academy, Prof. Dr. Basudev Tripathi said that it is the pride of Nepal to have four language families, more than hundred languages and more than seventy active languages in existence. Though Nepal is considered to be a heaven for linguists, there still exist challenges for the development of the languages. For the preservation and promotion of different indigenous languages, Dr. Tripathi stressed that the importance of every indigenous language should be taken into account while mainstreaming them into the national language, develop policies, implement and promote to move forward in development. It is the nation's pride that NFDIN has started its work in the sector of preservation and promotion of ILN and we hope that it will strive forward and strengthen the organization.

In B.S. 2063 Ashad 9, RNA is entering its 50th year and the golden jubilee will end on 9th Ashad 2064. RNA is preparing for its celebration where RNA will look back at the 50 years of existence, obstacles and challenges faced and will prepare for the next 50 years with a scheduled framework to overcome the obstacles. To address the need to develop an effective action plan, RNA will organize a workshop and will collaborate with NFDIN, T.U., national and international organizations, linguists, etc. It has now become necessary to establish an autonomous linguistic division within RNA.

The Honourable Member of National Planning Commission, Prof. Dr. Ram Prasad Chaudhary referred to the definition of indigenous peoples given by the 'World Council of Indigenous Peoples'. Among 6,000 cultures, 4,000 belong to indigenous peoples worldwide. He cited the fact that in Papua New Guinea there are 870 languages out of which 66 percent belong to the indigenous groups. Similarly Indonesia has 670, Nigeria has 610, India has 380 indigenous languages. In Nepal, among 92 languages more than 3/4 belong to the indigenous groups. He also stressed that the 10th National Plan, which has declared that for poverty reduction, policies have been developed about social inclusion of the indigenous peoples into the mainstream and said that it is a great challenge to protect those languages which are on the verge of extinction. The challenge for the government is to develop programs for the social, educational, economical and cultural

development of the indigenous groups. He emphasized that by the end of the 10th Plan, the government has to protect and promote at least 10 languages, conduct mother-language literacy programs in 15 mother languages and publish at least 10 dictionaries and grammars. He said that it is necessary to protect languages because languages help preserve traditional knowledge.

Prof. Chaudhary explained how we can use language in the international arena by citing the example of Kinabalu National Park in Sabha island of Malaysia where they promote the use of local language in the tourism sector by hiring local people as interpreters, which finally helped protect the language. He spoke of an important aspect of The Conference on 'World Sustainable Development', 2002 in Johannesburg where the protection of language was put forth as an indicator for the conservation of the indigenous societies if language is dead, then the indigenous society will also become extinct. So it is important for the preservation programs to reach the local community. He pointed out that there is a need for a strong collaboration between intellectuals, T.U., RNA, NFDIN and other related organizations to protect and promote indigenous languages.

Prof. Chaudhary ended his speech by saying that the conclusion drawn from the seminar papers will help the National Planning Commission to formulate policies and programs in future national plans.

The special guest, Assistant Minister, Ministry of Local Development, Mr. Chhakka Bahadur Lama stressed the fact that knowledge transfer through language takes place in two ways, oral and textual transmission. All the rules, regulations and policies of the state are issued in written text but most of the indigenous people depend upon oral transmission for information. Though the country has moved forward through imported advanced technologies, we are still in the state of oral transmission. As we are not able to express ourselves in the textual form, how can we land the projects? Only elite society depends upon texts for information, which is why textual transmission was not able to reach the actually deprived public. He exemplified 'Deuda', which is a song in the means of oral transmission and said that compilation of the song for the conversion into textual transmission should be done. He said that the government recognizes only the textual transmission; that is why we need to write everything down in simple understandable language.

Minister Lama showed his concern for the non-formal economy system (Caravan economy) being replaced nowadays as backward communities that have no upper hand in society, and emphasized that this is the age of social inclusion and with the change in economy due to different reasons, most of the indigenous knowledge being based upon non-formal system is being overshadowed at present. Tibetan script is in use throughout Nepal from east to west yet as it is regarded as non-formal, it is nowadays in the shade.

Indigenous groups who do not have their own scripts do not mean that they are un-knowledgeable. He said that it is sad to know the 'survival economy' where everybody had to participate in the process of development is being replaced by the 'imported economy' where people mostly become dependent on imports. With that he parted by saying that there is a need to recognize the oral transmission system if we are to care for the development of the backward societies.

The Chief Guest Honourable Minister, Ministry of Local Development, Mr. Khadga Bahadur G.C. suggested that in the context of Nepal, NFDIN has toiled hard and has moved forward with its countless efforts for preserving the nationality and identity of freedom, which is truly praiseworthy. He further said that this seminar had an important meaning as it provided a forum for active participation between national and international intellectuals and linguists. The nation could become strong only if it could protect and promote its mother languages, as these are the cultural heritage of every society. So concrete steps should be taken for their protection.

Finally, Sant Bahadur Gurung, chairperson of the inaugural session, said that *The Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal 2047* has stated the positive aspects in Article 4 and 6(2) where it defines: Nepal is a multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, democratic, independent Kingdom, and all the languages spoken as the mother tongue in the various parts of Nepal are the national languages of Nepal. It shows the existence of the indigenous peoples, as most of the national languages are mother tongues spoken by indigenous peoples. He informed that it is the duty of NFDIN to preserve and promote the national languages in order to create an identity of the state. He put forth the fact that till date, there is no actual data about the number of indigenous languages spoken in Nepal. The National Census, 2001 had identified a total of 92 languages among which more than 70 belong to indigenous people. Referring to the data provided by the National Census, 1991 and 2001, he pointed out the notable growth in the number of native speakers and also highlighted the fact that in some ethnic societies, like Thakali, the number of speakers is declining such as, from 51.8% in 1991 to 49.6% in 2001. Also, in the Newar community, the increment in the number of speakers is negligible, from 66.2% in 1991 to 66.3% in 2001. He said as the output of last year's seminar, NFDIN was able to prepare dictionaries of 10 indigenous languages and grammars of Bhujel, Chantyal and Hayu languages with the help of Dr. Novel Kishore Rai. He also clarified that NFDIN has been working in collaboration with the CDL, T.U. to achieve better results. He assured that the main reason for conducting this seminar is to preserve and promote languages and to develop action plans for the future and said that the outputs of this discussion would be published and distributed.

Prof. Gurung expected help from all for the success of the programme and concluded the inaugural session.



1. Dr. Mark Turin (Left)
2. Dr. Yogendra P. Yadav (Middle)
3. Mr. Bairagi Kainla, Chair Person (Middle)
4. Dr. Chudamani Bandhu, Commentator (Right)



Hon. Mr. Malla K. Sundar Commenting on the paper



Mr. Mahesh Kormocha, Ex-chairman of NJDC, Commenting on the paper



Dr. Chudamani Bandhu commenting on the paper



Dr. Mark Turin replying to the commentator



Dr. Yogendra Yadav replying to the commentator

I Session

Commencement of the session

Session I was chaired by Mr. Bairagi Kainla, the eminent litterateur and Life Member of Royal Nepal Academy. The paper, entitled "Indigenous languages of Nepal (ILN): a critical analysis of the linguistic situation and contemporary issues", was jointly presented by Prof. Dr. Yogendra Prasad Yadava, Central Department of Linguistics, T.U, and Dr. Mark Turin, University of Cambridge. This sets the scene for the seminar on indigenous languages of Nepal. It is an attempt to examine mainly two aspects of these languages: situation and contemporary issues. The language situation addresses the topics such as identification, distribution, genetic affiliation, writing systems, ethnicity, and language endangerment.

The second major aspect of indigenous languages covers contemporary issues related to the preservation and promotion of linguistic diversity in Nepalese context. These issues include ecology, state, law, census, media, education, gender, and. Besides, the paper also briefly deals with language policies adopted in neighboring states. As epilogue, the paper concludes with a note of optimism signaling better prospect for indigenous languages of Nepal in future on the basis of the analysis of the issues discussed above.

Dr. Chudanami Bandhu and Mr. Malla K. Sundar were the invited commentators on this paper. It was followed by questions from the floor and replies from the paper presenters.

Indigenous Languages of Nepal: A Critical Analysis of the Linguistic Situation and Contemporary Issues

*Prof. Dr. Yogendra Prasad Yadava
and
Dr. Mark Turin*

Abstract

According to even the most conservative estimates, at least half of the world's 6,500 languages are expected to become extinct in the next century. While the documentation of endangered languages has traditionally been the domain of academic linguists and anthropologists, international awareness about this impending linguistic catastrophe is growing, and development organisations are becoming involved in the struggle to preserve spoken forms. The death of a language marks the loss of yet another piece of cultural uniqueness from the mosaic of our diverse planet, and is therefore a tragedy for the heritage of all humanity. Language death is often compared to species extinction, and the same metaphors of preservation and diversity can be invoked to canvas support for biodiversity as well as language preservation programmes. This document addresses language endangerment in the Himalayas, with a particular focus on Nepal, and presents the options and challenges for the development of endangered languages in this mountainous region.

In the present report, we assess the linguistic diversity of Nepal in the frame of wider debates about diversity of all forms, and move on to situate language in the context of ecology, the state, the legal system, the national census, the media, the education sector, gender, the Maoist insurgency and finally culture. One section is devoted to comparative examples from other nations in the greater Himalayan region.

Finally, the paper concludes with a discussion of the future prospects for promoting the indigenous languages of Nepal. As such, this section of the report offers a situational analysis which we hope will help frame current debates about language policy and the

linguistic diversity of Nepal. We are confident that the other two sections of this report, which focus on policy, planning, recommendations and capacity building, institutional support and coordination, will draw on the background analysis and data provided here.

Introduction

The greater Himalayan region, which extends for 3,500 km from Afghanistan in the west to Myanmar in the east, sustains over 150 million people and is home to great linguistic diversity and many of Asia's most endangered languages. Moving across the region, Afghanistan boasts 47 living languages, Bangladesh 39, Bhutan 24, China 235, India 415, Myanmar 108, Nepal 123 and Pakistan 72 (Ethnologue 2005). The entire Himalayan region is often described as one of the ten biodiversity 'mega centres' of the world. But this stretch of mountainous Asia is also home to one sixth of all human languages, so the area may be thought of as a linguistic 'mega centre' as well.

The great biological diversity of present-day Nepal is matched by its cultural and linguistic diversity. Comprising an area of 147,181 square kilometres with a length of 885 kilometres from east to west and a mean breadth of 193 kilometres from north to south, the topography of Nepal is rich and varied. Inhabiting these different climatic and ecological zones are 59 officially-recognised caste and ethnic groups who speak around 92 languages recognised by state officials. The disparity between the language totals forwarded by the *Ethnologue* (126) and His Majesty's Government of Nepal (92), and the difference between the number of ethnicities and mother tongues is interesting and important. Counting and classifying discrete languages or ethnicities is a complicated and political task.

According to recent census data collected in 2001, Nepal's 92 officially-recognised languages belong to four language families, an impressively large number for a country with a small land mass like Nepal. The Indo-Aryan group of the Indo-European language family forms the largest group in terms of speaker numbers, around 80% (Yadava 2003: 141). The Tibeto-Burman branch within the Sino-Tibetan family of languages is represented by 57 languages in Nepal, the largest number of distinct mother tongues of any linguistic grouping represented in the country, but with noticeably less speakers than the Indo-Aryan group. Two other language families are also found in Nepal: the Austric branch of the Austro-Asiatic family and the Dravidian family, each represented by a couple of languages along the southern belt of the country. Moreover, Kusunda, previously thought to be extinct, is a linguistic isolate spoken in Nepal. While the Census conducted by the Central Bureau of Statistics in 2001 established fairly credible numbers of speakers for each of Nepal's languages, more precise and accurate figures still need to be ascertained through further careful investigation.

As is clear from the facts outlined above, Nepal is not only home to more language families than in all of Europe combined, but also has a greater distinctness and diversity of individual languages in one country than in the whole of the European community.

The National Foundation for the Development of Indigenous Nationalities (NFDIN) was established under an act of parliament relating to "the development of indigenous nationalities in Nepal". One of the principal objectives of the Foundation is to preserve and promote the languages of indigenous nationalities. In line with this objective, it is imperative to investigate and analyse the situation of these languages in order to formulate and implement an action plan for their preservation and promotion. It is with this perspective that the present study was undertaken.

To accomplish this task, the authors have identified the languages used as mother tongues by the indigenous nationalities of Nepal, outlined their genetic affiliation, described their distribution, discussed their literate traditions, reflected on the relationship between language and ethnicity, and finally identified Nepal's most endangered languages.

As sources, both published and unpublished works prepared by national and international scholars were used, as well as raw census data provided by the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) of the Government of Nepal.

Identification

Fifty-nine indigenous nationalities have been officially identified in Nepal. The list is as follows:

A. Mountain		Population	
1. Bahragaunle	—	7. Lhomi	—
2. Bhote	19,261	8. Lhopa	—
3. Byansi	2,103	9. Marphali	—
4. Chairotan	—	10. Mugali	—
5. Dolpa	—	11. Sherpa	110,358
6. Larke (Nupriwa)	—	12. Syar (Chumba)	—
		13. Tangbe	—
		14. Thakali	13,731
		15. Thudam	—
		16. Tingaunle	—
		17. Topkegola	—
		18. Walung	1,148
B. Hill		Population	
19. Bankariya	—	26. Hayu	1,821
20. Bhujel/ Gharti	117,644	27. Yholmo	579
21. Baramu	73,83	28. Jirel	5,319
22. Chepang	52,237	29. Kusunda	164
23. Chantel	9,814	30. Lepcha	3,660
		34. Pahari	11,505
		35. Fri	—
		36. Rai	635,151
		37. Sunuwar	95,254
		38. Sural	—

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24. Dura	5,169	31. Limbu	359,255	39. Tamang	1,282,304
25. Gurung	543,571	32. Magar	1,622,339	40. Thangmi	22,999
		33. Newar	1,245,232	41. Yakkha	17,003
C. Inner Terai					
	Population				
42. Bote	7,969	44. Darai	14,859	46. Majhi	72,614
43. Danuwar	53,229	45. Kumal	99,389	47. Raji	2,399
				48. Raute	658
D. Terai					
49. Dhanuk (Rajbansi)	188,150	53. Kisan	2,876	57. Satar (Santhal)	42,698
50. Dhimal	19,537	54. Kushwadiya		58. Tajpuriya	13,250
51. Ganagai	31,318	55. Meche (Bodo)	3,763	59. Tharu	1,533,879
52. Jhangar	41,764	56. Rajbanshi (Koch)	95,812		

Table 1: Population of Nepal's indigenous nationalities

Source: *Nepal Rajpatra* (25 Magh, 2058 Bikram Samvat) (*Nepal Gazette*, February, 2001)

The indigenous nationalities listed above speak a number of distinct languages. It is still, however, not possible to enumerate the precise number of languages spoken in Nepal and their distribution on account of the lack of an authentic and comprehensive linguistic survey of Nepal. Nonetheless, several studies are available which address linguistic diversity within Nepal, each of which includes an estimate as to the number of speakers of each enumerated language studied. The present section examines these estimates and concludes with an impartial assessment of a likely and more accurate figure.

Brian Houghton Hodgson

Hodgson is credited as the first observer to recognize the affinity between Nepal's Tibeto-Burman languages. In 1828 he published a series of papers dealing with these languages (see Hale 1982: 1), and later published a comparative vocabulary of 28 Tibeto-Burman languages of Nepal including sketches of the grammar of a few of these tongues (Hodgson 1857). Hodgson's studies do not, however, include all the indigenous languages spoken in Nepal.

In addition, in a 1828 publication Hodgson made two important observations about Tibeto-Burman languages. First, he noted that Tibeto-Burman languages fall into two categories: (i) pronominalizing (i.e. verbs inflecting for pronominal subject and object) and (ii) non-pronominalizing (i.e. verbs not inflecting for pronominals). Second, he observed that these languages are similar to Austro-Asiatic languages in terms of verb agreement.

GRIERSON AND KONOW

In pursuance of the resolution of the Oriental Congress held in Vienna in 1866, the Government of India launched a systematic survey of Indian languages. Sir George Abraham Grierson, an Indian Civil Servant, was asked to assume the office of superintendent of this project in 1898. In the monumental *Linguistic Survey of India* (1898-1927) he and Sten Konow recorded not only Indian but also Nepalese languages. This survey was the first attempt to enumerate the languages of all families spoken in Nepal and India. The Grierson-Konow survey accepted Hodgson's classification of Himalayan languages into two typological groups: pronominalizing and non-pronominalizing.

Grierson-Konow's work did not, however, cover all the languages spoken by the indigenous nationalities as they are presently construed. In part this may be due to the fact that their study was not entirely based on direct fieldwork but relied heavily on secondary sources such as Hodgson's studies and consultations with informants in Darjeeling. Despite these limitations, their survey continues to be one of the most important source of data for linguists working on South Asian languages.

BENEDICT AND SHAFER

Both Benedict (1972) and Shafer (1974) provide information about Sino-Tibetan languages. Some years later Benedict and Bauman pointed out that pronominalization was not borrowed into Sino-Tibetan languages from Austro-Asiatic languages but rather a characteristic of Sino-Tibetan languages themselves.

HALE

Hale compiled a 'a brief survey of the literature on Tibeto-Burman languages' in 1982. In this, he presents a comparison of Tibeto-Burman languages and their major classifications as provided by Grierson-Konow (1903-1928), Shafer (1955, 1966 and 1974), Miller (1969), Benedict (1972), Voegelin-Voegelin (1977), Rierich (1931, Uray (1955) and Nishida (1970).

MALLA

Malla (1989) lists 45 main indigenous languages out of a total of 70 languages spoken in Nepal.

HANSSON

The *Linguistic Survey of Nepal*, funded by the German Research Council (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft) and supported by the Centre for Nepal and Asian Studies at Tribhuvan University, was the first systematic attempt to enumerate and document Nepal's

languages. This project, undertaken in 1981-1984, aimed to carry out 'extensive field-work covering the four easternmost zones of the Kingdom' (Winter 1991:ii). The collected data, especially that pertaining to Tibeto-Burman languages, were analyzed in detail. The findings and conclusions of this analysis were presented by Gerard Hansson in his 1991 book. Another major contribution of this project was the linguistic atlas of the Kiranti languages (to appear in Pacific Linguistics).

Hansson recorded the following 34 Kiranti languages:

- | | |
|----------------|------------------|
| 1. Athpahariya | 2. Bahing |
| 3. Bantawa | 4. Belhariya |
| 5. Chamling | 6. Chhintang |
| 7. Chhulung | 8. Chukwa |
| 9. Dumi | 10. Dungmali |
| 11. Jerung | 12. Khaling |
| 13. Koi | 14. Kulung |
| 15. Limbu | 16. Lingkhim |
| 17. Lorung | 18. Lumba-Yakkha |
| 19. Mewahang | 20. Mugali |
| 21. Nachering | 22. Phangduwali |
| 23. Puma | 24. Saam |
| 25. Sanpang | 26. Sunwar |
| 27. Thulung | 28. Tilung |
| 29. Umbule | 30. Waling |
| 31. Wayu | 32. Yakkha |
| 33. Yamphre | 34. Yamphu |

Table 2: Kiranti Languages (Hansson 1991)

According to Hansson's report, Choksule and Dorungkecha were the two speech forms for which no data were collected. Besides, Polmachha remained unclassified on account of insufficient data. There were also 46 language names listed in the report which could not be identified since no data were collected for them (Hansson 1991: 112-3).

Finally, Hansson listed the following languages/dialects as nearly extinct:

1. Bungla
2. Chukwa
3. Hedangpa
4. Khandung
5. Lingkhim
6. Mugali (=Lambichhong)
7. Pongyong
8. Sambya
9. Eastern Kulung

Hansson's enumeration of Kiranti languages remains, however, tentative and inconclusive due to inadequate documentation (Ebert 1994: 8). According to van Driem (2001: 623), Hansson's report suffers from a number of limitations. First, it mentions a number of languages which in fact do not exist. Second, the data are collected from general questionnaires and are thus inadequate for more detailed analysis.

MATISOFF

In *Languages and dialects of Tibeto-Burman*, Matisoff et al. (1996) offer data on a range of Tibeto-Burman languages. The main entries provide information about variant names of languages, related languages, dialects, bibliographical citations and genetic affiliation in accordance with Shafer (1966-67 and 1974) and Benedict (1972).

From the entries given in Matisoff et al. (1996) the following can be identified as Tibeto-Burman languages spoken in Nepal:

- | | | |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. Athpariya | 2. Bahing | 3. Bantawa |
| 4. Baragaunle | 5. Belhariya | 6. Bhotia |
| 7. Bhramu | 8. Bhuje | 19. Byangsi |
| 10. Chamling | 11. Chantyal | 12. Chaudangsi
(Tsaudangsi) |
| 13. Chaurasya/Chaurasia | 14. Chepang | 15. Chhintang |
| 16. Chulung | 17. Darai | 18. Danuwar |
| 19. Dhangar/Jhangar | 20. Dhimal | 21. Dolpo |
| 22. Dumi | 23. Dungmali | 24. Ghale |
| 25. Gurung | 26. Hayu/Vayu | 27. Jirel |
| 28. Kagate Tibetan | 29. Kaike | 30. Khaling |
| 31. Kham | 32. Koi | 33. Kulung |
| 34. Kumhali | 35. Kusunda | 36. Kyerung |
| 37. Lepcha | 38. Lhomi | 39. Limbu |
| 40. Lohorung | 41. Magar | 42. Manangba |
| 43. Meche | 44. Mewahang | 45. Mugali |
| 46. Nachereng | 47. Nepali Sign Language | 48. Newar |
| 49. Pahari | 50. Panchgaunle | 51. Puma |
| 52. Rajbanshi | 53. Raji | 54. Rangkas |
| 55. Raute | 56. Rodong | 57. Saam |
| 58. Sampang | 59. Santhali | 60. Sherpa |
| 61. Sotang | 62. Sunwar | 63. Surel |
| 64. Takale | 65. Tamachhang | 66. Tamang |
| 67. Thakali | 68. Thami | 69. Tharu |
| 70. Thulung | 71. Tibetan | 72. Tilung |
| 73. Toto | 74. Tseku | 75. Umbule |
| 76. Wali | 77. Waling | 78. Yakkha |
| 79. Yamphe/Yamphu | | |

Table 3: Tibeto-Burman languages and dialects spoken in Nepal (Matisoff et al. 1996)

VAN DRIEM

The two volume *Languages of the Himalayas* is a recent study by George van Driem (2001). Based on the earlier studies as well as his own investigations corroborated by his colleagues and students, this treatise “tells a tale of the languages spoken in the Himalayas and of the people who speak them” (van Driem 2001: ix). In this study, van Driem further develops the idea of the Mahakiranti hypothesis, according to which there exists a subgroup of Tibeto-Burman languages, referred to as *Mahakiranti*, comprising Kiranti languages as well as the three Newaric languages Baram, Newar and Thangmi.¹ This hypothesis is still controversial among Tibeto-Burman linguists.

van Driem proposes the following genetic subgroupings of Kiranti languages, from east to west:

- Limbu
 - Eastern Limbu: Panthare, Tamarkhole
 - Western Limbu: Phedappe, Chathare
- Eastern Kiranti
 - Greater Yakka: Yakka, Chiling, Athpariya
 - Upper Arun: Lohorung, Yamphu, Mewahang
- Central Kiranti
 - Khambu: Kulung, Nachiring, Sampang, Saam
 - Southern: Chamling, Puma, Bantawa, Dungmali
- Western Kiranti
 - Midwestern: Thulung
 - Chaurasiya: Ombule, Jero
 - Northwestern: Bahing, Sunwar, Hayu

Table 4: Kiranti subgroups from east to west (van Driem 2001: 615)

In addition to the Mahakiranti hypothesis, van Driem’s study differs from others in the following ways:

- (i) He identifies 21 Kiranti languages instead of 23 enumerated in the 2001 Census and 34 in Hanßon (1991).
- (ii) He corrects Shafer’s (1974) assignment of Hayu as belonging to West Central Himalayish group along with Magar and Chepang. In fact, Hayu belongs in the East Himalayish group along with other Kiranti languages.
- (iii) Thulung is treated as a distinct subgroup within Kiranti.
- (iv) He treats Belhare as a dialect of Athpariya.

¹At present, van Driem no longer subscribes to the Mahakiranti hypothesis as it was originally formulated, although he argues that the case for Newaric has grown.

CENTRAL BUREAU OF STATISTICS (CBS)

Another significant contribution towards the enumeration of Nepal's languages has been the censuses compiled every ten years by the CBS. Since the 1952/54 census, languages spoken by the indigenous nationalities, as well as Nepal's other languages, have consistently been reported.

The 1952/54 census recorded 44 languages out of which 29 were languages spoken by indigenous nationalities. In the 1961 census, the number of indigenous languages fell down to 26 (of a total of 33). The number of indigenous languages was, however, drastically reduced to 12 (out of a total of 17) and 13 (out of total of 17) in the 1971 and 1981 censuses respectively. These varying figures concerning Nepal's indigenous languages are presented in the following table:

	1952-54	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001
Total number of languages	44	33	17	17	20	92
Number of indigenous languages	29	26	12	13	15	70

Table 5: Number of Nepal's languages recorded in various censuses (1952/54 – 2001)

Source: Censuses (1952/54-2001)

The uncertainty about the number of Nepal's indigenous languages and their reduced enumeration in the last five censuses may be attributed to a lack of awareness of Nepal's indigenous mother tongues and also to the "one nation – one language" policy adopted during the Panchayat regime (Yadava 2003).

In the 2001 census, however, the number of languages spoken by indigenous nationalities shot up to nearly 70 (CBS 2002; Yadava 2003). These languages include Bram/Bramu, Bhujel, Chhantyal, Dura, Ghale, Kaike, Kisan, Kusunda, Munda, Raute, Yholmo, Khariya, Lhomi, Dungmali and Sadhani. Moreover, while earlier censuses recorded the Rai languages under the single category of 'Rai group of languages', in the 2001 census 23 separate 'Rai' languages were enumerated. The names of the various 'Rai' languages enumerated in the most recent census are presented in the table below.

Languages	Speakers	Languages	Speakers
1. Bantawa	371056	2. Chamling	44093
3. Kulung	18686	4. Yakkha	14648
5. Thulung	14034	6. Sanpang	10810
7. Khaling	9288	8. Dumi	5271
9. Umbule	4471	10. Puma	4310
11. Nachhering	3553	12. Bahing	2765
13. Koul	2641	14. Yamphule	1722
15. Chhiling	1314	16. Lohurung	1207
17. Mewahang	904	18. Tilung	310
19. Jerung	271	20. Dungmali	221

21. Lingkhim	97	22. Sam	23
23. Chhintang	8		

Table.6: Rai languages (CBS 2001)

Source: Population Census 2001 and Yadava (2003)

All the languages of indigenous nationalities recorded in the various censuses from 1952/54 to the present are given with their speaker numbers in Appendix 1.

There are a number of reasons for the significant rise in the number of languages recognised as being spoken in Nepal. One important factor instrumental in the change is that a large number of languages used as mother tongues were returned for the first time in 2001 because of the growing awareness by indigenous nationalities of their distinct cultural and linguistic identity, and the willingness of the state to acknowledge this linguistic and cultural diversity. Since the restoration of democracy in 1990 there has been a genuine increase in awareness among linguistic minorities and indigenous peoples about their mother tongues and the status that these might be accorded in the nation. The ethnic organisations which represent the languages and their speakers have taken an active role preserving and promoting diverse cultural identities and languages. Taking note of this changed reality, the CBS sought the cooperation and support of these organizations during the 2001 census enumeration. Following the enumeration, some linguists were also consulted to aid in the precise identification of Nepal's languages.

TOBA ET AL.

In a recent language survey report prepared by Toba et al. (2002), sociolinguistic information on a total of 56 indigenous languages spoken in Nepal (plus four other major languages, namely Nepali, Maithili, Awadhi and Bhojpuri) are presented. In this report, 39 different information sets were collected for each language on the basis of a UNESCO questionnaire. The details mainly include language family, dialect, presence or absence of a literate tradition, distribution of language and speakers, contact languages, population of speakers, multilingualism, attitude towards the language, domains of use and language loss. An attempt was made to elicit information from native speakers, though in some cases, such as for Bhojpuri and Bote, the researchers were unable to do so. Furthermore, this report excludes a number of indigenous languages enumerated in the population census, such as Kharia, Tibetan, Churauti and Bhujel. As the writers themselves confess, "it would have been desirable to visit the areas of each language listed in this report, but neither the time frame nor the present situation in Nepal allowed for this" (Toba et al. 2002: iii). Despite its shortcomings, then, this report is of help in understanding certain issues relating to Nepal's languages, and particularly the indigenous tongues.

GURUNG

In his 2002 report, Gurung mentions 39 indigenous languages of which 22 are Kiranti languages. According to his findings, 71.3% of the indigenous population in Nepal have their own mother tongue. The *Ethnologue* (Gordon, ed. 2005), however, suggests that 75 of the 126 languages spoken in Nepal are indigenous.

As an approximation based on details published in existing studies and census reports, we may estimate the following list of languages spoken by indigenous nationalities of Nepal as mother tongues:

S.No.	Language Names	Census Status	S.No.	Language Names	Census Status
1.	Athapaharia	Ne	2.	Bahing	E
3.	Bantawa	E	4.	Baragaunle	Ne
5.	Baram/Baraamu/ Bhramu	E	6.	Belhare	Ne
7.	Bhujel	E	8.	Bote	E
9.	Byansi	E	10.	Chamling	E
11.	Chhantyal	E	12.	Chepeng	E
13.	Chhiling	E	14.	Chhintang	E
15.	Churauti	E	16.	Danuwar	E
17.	Darai	E	18.	Dhangar/Jhangar	E
19.	Dhimai	E	20.	Dolpo	Ne
21.	Dumi	E	22.	Dungmali	E
23.	Dura	E	24.	Ghale	E
25.	Gurung	E	26.	Hayu/Vayu/Wayu	E
27.	Jerung/Jero	E	28.	Jirel	E
29.	Kagate	E	30.	Kaika	E
31.	Khaling	E	32.	Kham	Ne
33.	Khariya	E	34.	Kisan	E
35.	Koche	E	36.	Kou/Koi/Kohi	E
37.	Kulung	E	38.	Kumal	E
39.	Kusunda	E	40.	Lepcha	E
41.	Lhomi	E	42.	Limbu	E
43.	Lingkhim	E	44.	Lohorung	E
45.	Magar	E	46.	Majhi	E
47.	Managba	Ne	48.	Meche	E
49.	Mewahang	E	50.	Mugali	Ne
51.	Nachiring	E	52.	Nar-Phu	Ne
53.	Nepalese Sign Language	E	54.	Newar	E
55.	Pahari	E	56.	Puma	E
57.	Rajbansi	E	58.	Raji	E
59.	Raute	E	60.	Saam	E
61.	Sampang	E	62.	Santhali (Including Mundaa)	E

63.	Sherpa	E	64.	Sunwar	E
65.	Tamang	E	66.	Thakaali	E
67.	Thami/Thangmi	E	68.	Tharu(Dagaura/Rana)	E
69.	Thulung	E	70.	Tibetan	E
71.	Tilung	E	72.	Umbule/Wambule/ Ombule	E
73.	Yakkha	E	74.	Yamphe/Yamphu	E
75.	Yholmo (Helambu Sherpa)	E			

Table 7: Languages of the indigenous nationalities in Nepal.

(Note: Most of these languages have already been enumerated (E) while a few have not yet been enumerated (Ne) in the 2001 Census).

Distribution

The languages of Nepal's indigenous nationalities vary greatly in their distribution. Some are widely spoken across all the three regions (mountain, hill and Terai) while others are mainly confined to specific regions. The main distribution of indigenous languages along with their speaker number are presented in Table 8 below

A. Mountain		Population			
1. Bahragaunle	-	4. Lhomi	4	7. Nar-Phu	-
2. Byansi	1,734	5. Manangwaa	-	8. Sherpa	110,358
3. Dolpo	-	6. Mugali	-	9. Thakali	13,731
				10. Tibetan (Bhote)	19,261
B. Hill		Population			
11. Athparia		30. Kagate	10	49. Sunuwar	26611
12. Bahing	635,151	31. Kaike	794	50. Tamang	1,282,304
13. Bantawa	95,254	32. Khaling	9288	51. Thangmi	22,999
14. Baram	73,83	33. Kham	-	52. Thulung	14034
15. Bhujel	117,644	34. Kou	2641	53. Tilung	310
16. Belhare		35. Kulung	18686	54. Umbule	4471
17. Chamling	44,093	36. Kusunda	164	55. Yakkha	17,003
18. Chantyal	9,814	37. Lepcha	3,660	56. Yamphu	1722
19. Chepang	52,237	38. Limbu	359,255	57. Yholmo	579
20. Chhiling	1314	39. Linkhim	97		
21. Chhintang	8	40. Lohorung	1207		
22. Dumi	5271	41. Magar	1,622,339		
23. Dungmali	221	42. Mewahang	904		
24. Dura	5,169	43. Newar	1,245,232		
25. Ghale	1649	44. Nachhiring	3553		
26. Gurung	543,571	45. Pahari	11,505		
27. Hayu	1,821	46. Puma	4310		
28. Jerung	271	47. Saam	23		
29. Jirel	5,319	48. Sampang	10810		

C. Inner Terai		Population			
58. Bote	7,969	60. Darai	14,859	62. Majhi	72,614
59. Danuwar	53,229	61. Kumal	99,389	63. Raji	2,399
				64. Raute	658
D. Terai					
65. Dhimal	19,537	68. Kisan	2,876	71. Rajbanshi	188,150
66. Jhangar	41,764	69. Koche	95,812	72. Santhal	42,698
67. Khariya	1575	70. Meche	3,763	73. Tharu	1,533,879

Table 8: Distribution of Nepal's indigenous languages by topographic region.

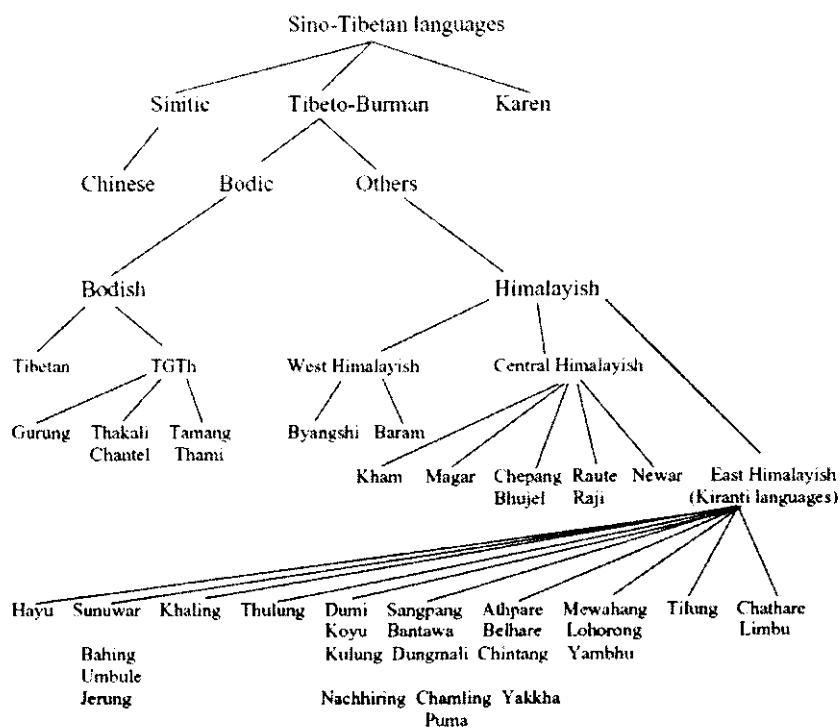
Genetic affiliation

Excepting Kusunda, the languages spoken by the indigenous nationalities of Nepal as mother tongues belong to four language families: Sino-Tibetan, Indo-European, Austro-Asiatic and Dravidian.

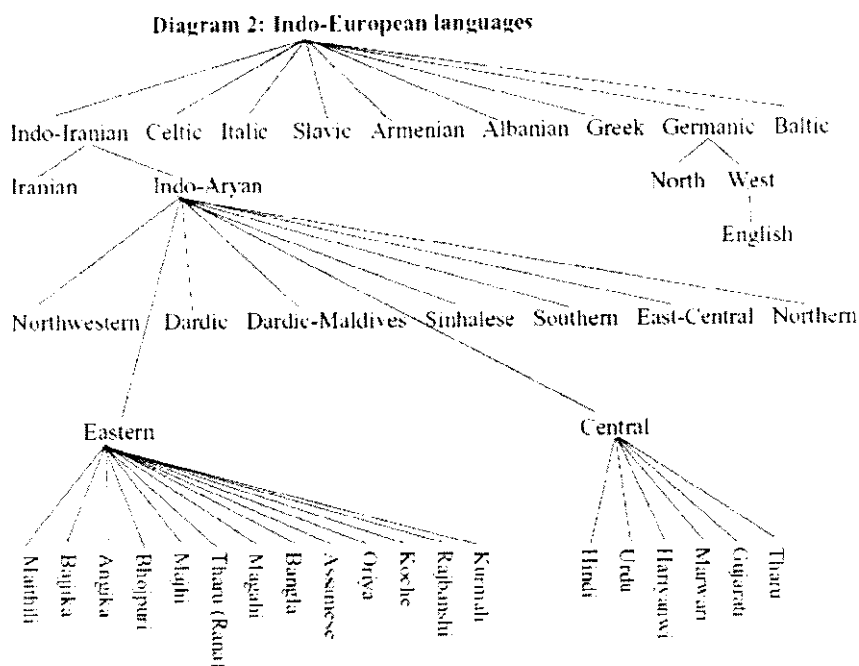
Most of Nepal's indigenous languages are members of the Tibeto-Burman group of the Sino-Tibetan family. Hodgson is considered to be the first to identify the unity among the Tibeto-Burman languages (Grierson 1909:12). According to Grierson, Max Muller (1854) made the first classification of Tibeto-Burman languages.

The Sino-Tibetan languages spoken in Nepal can be classified as follows:

Diagram 1: Sino-Tibetan languages



The Indo-Aryan languages spoken by the indigenous peoples of Nepal are genetically subcategorised in the following diagram:

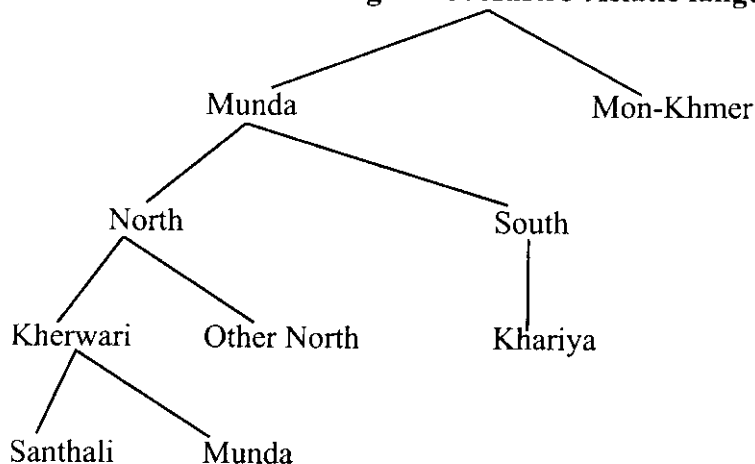


Some of the Indo-Aryan indigenous languages spoken in Nepal have yet to be genetically classified due to a lack of available data about them. These languages include Tharu, Bote, Darai, Kumal, Churaoti and Danuwar.

Besides the two major language families of Sino-Tibetan and Indo-European, languages of the indigenous nationalities of Nepal also belong to two minor language families: the Austric branch of the Austro-Asiatic family and the Dravidian family of languages. The Austric languages comprise Santhali of the northern Munda group and Khariya of the southern Munda group. It is important to note that while Satar was reported in all of the censuses, Santhal was incorrectly reported as a separate language except in the 1952/54 census. The 2001 census lumps Satar and Santhal together as a single language name called Santhali. It is suggested that Munda (with 67 speakers) should also be included within Santhali, since it is thought to be just a variant name of the same language. According to the 2001 census, Santhali speakers number only 40,193, i.e. 0.18% of Nepal's total population, as compared to 0.20% (1952/54), 0.31% (1961), 0.21% (1971), 0.19 (1981) and 0.18% (1991). Another Austric language of the Munda branch is Khariya,

which was recognised by the census for the first time in 2001. This language is spoken by 1,575, i.e. 0.01% of Nepal's population. All the Austric languages are spoken by groups of tribal peoples from the eastern Terai and make up approximately 0.19% of the total population. The genetic affiliation of the Austric languages spoken in Nepal is shown in the following diagram:

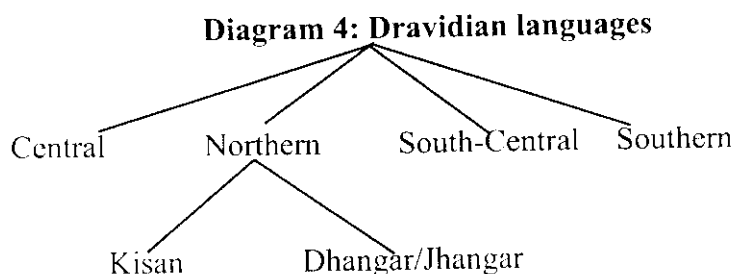
Diagram 3: Austro-Asiatic languages



One of the Dravidian languages spoken in Nepal is Jhangar and is located in the region east of the Kosi river, while Dhargar is spoken in the region west of the Kosi river. This language grouping constitutes the northernmost part of the Dravidian family of languages and is said to be a regional variant of Kurux spoken in Jharkhand State of India, even though it shows divergence in its vocabulary and grammar (Gordon 1976; Yadava 2002). According to the 2001 census, Dhargar/Jhangar is spoken by 28,615 people, i.e. 0.13% of the total population of the country. Speaker numbers were reported to be 4,832 (1952/54), 9,140 (1961), and 15,175 (1991) and the language was not listed in the 1971 and 1981 censuses.

Another Dravidian language spoken in Nepal is Kisan. Like Dhargar/Jhangar, this language also belongs to the northernmost part of Dravidian family of languages. The 2001 census suggests that there are 2,876 speakers. This language was enumerated for the first time in the 2001 census.

The genetic affiliation of the two Dravidian languages (namely Dhangar/Jhangar and Kisan) is shown in the following diagram:



Kusunda, also known as *Begai* by non-Kusunda speakers, is a language isolate, without any genetic relation to the other languages spoken in Nepal. A number of speculations exist about its genetic affiliation. Forbes (1877, 1881) suggests a relation between Kusunda and Chepang and other Tibeto-Burman languages. *Ethnologue* (2005) still considers Kusunda to be a Tibeto-Burman language. In the most recent and comprehensive study so far made, Watters et al. (2005: 3) write “A few speculative proposals continue to make the rounds on the possible relationship of Kusunda to Munda or even to languages further afield, like Nihali, a language isolate of west-central India (Whitehouse 1997); “possibly” Burushaski and languages of the Caucasus (Reinhard and Toba 1970); or the Yenisseian languages of Siberia (Gurov 1989, reported in van Driem 2001). The latest proposal (Whitehouse et al. 2004) advances the premise that Kusunda is an ‘Indo-Pacific’ language, with “the possibility that Kusunda is a remnant of the migration that led to the initial peopling of New Guinea and Australia.”

Recently, Whitehouse (personal communication) speaks of the need to undertake a DNA test of the Kusunda people to ascertain their precise genetic affiliation. The language family of Kusunda is thus yet to be confirmed. Reported earlier to be extinct, Kusunda has been recently discovered to have a marginal number of speakers. Of the total 164 Kusundas, 86 are reported to speak their mother tongue Kusunda (CBS 2001). Left with a handful of fluent but elderly speakers, this language will almost certainly die.

Writing systems

Most of the indigenous languages spoken in Nepal are oral traditions. Each of them has a rich oral heritage of traditional folk stories and songs handed down from parent to child over a long period of time, such as the *Mundhun* in Kiranti languages. However, these oral tales are disappearing with the growth of literacy in Nepali and with increased language shift towards the national language. It is therefore imperative to document these spoken forms before they are lost.

Only a few of Nepal's indigenous languages have literate traditions. These include Tibetan, Newar, Limbu and Lepcha. These languages have long traditions of written literature and have employed various writing systems or scripts. Tibetan and Sherpa are two of the Tibeto-Burman languages with the earliest written records (van Driem, 2001: 428). The Tibetan script, called Sambota, was developed from the Gupta or Brahmi script, which was employed for writing Sanskrit in the mid-seventh century. Tamang speakers have also shown preference for this script when writing their language.

Newar (or *Nepal Bhasha*) is another Tibeto-Burman language with an ancient written literary tradition. Introduced in the 9th century, the Newar script is still in use even though with the passage of time the script has undergone changes. This script was used in most of the earlier documents written in the Kathmandu Valley. Over time, there emerged variants of the Newar script in the forms of Ranjana and Bhujimol. Ranjana was in vogue from the 11th to 18th centuries while Bhujimol remained in use from the 11th till 17th centuries. From the Bhujimol script, it appears that a number of other scripts used for writing the Newar language emerged. These scripts, referred to as Golmol, Litumol, Kwemol, Kunmol, Hinmol and Pachumol are supposed to have been introduced by Newar scholars for writing ornamental texts on special festivals and ritual occasions. These embellished scripts were introduced in the 13th century and continued to be used until 17th century (Shakya, 2030 VS: 5-10). Now the Newar language is also written in the Devanagari script for the sake of convenience.

Limbu, another Tibeto-Burman language, uses its own Kiranti Srijanga script. Lepcha is written in Rong script. Both of these scripts were developed to propagate Buddhism during the regime of the third Chögyal or 'Maharaja' of Sikkim.

More recently, some of Nepal's other indigenous languages have taken to developing literate traditions. Initiatives have been taken by various language communities to develop writing systems appropriate to the sound system of their languages and which are practical and acceptable to them. These speech communities include Tharu, Tamang, Magar, Gurung, Rajbanshi and a subset of the Rai group of languages such as Bantawa, Thulung, Chamling, Khaling, Kulung and others. Tharu, Tamang and Gurung use the Devanagari script but some Gurung speakers advocate the use of the Roman script for their language. Magar has developed its own script, called Akkha. Recently, these languages have begun to develop written literature in the form of newspapers, magazines, textbooks for adult literacy and primary education, as well as folk literature.

As in India, Santhali as spoken in Nepal is written in the Roman script.

Language and ethnicity

According to *Nepal Gazette* (2002), 59 indigenous nationalities have been identified in Nepal. While specific ethnicities are often found to identify as speakers of particular languages as their mother tongue, for many languages there is no absolute one-to-one parity between an ethnic community and a speech community. The mother tongues associated with the indigenous nationalities are provided in the following table.

Mountain			Inner Terai		
<i>S.No.</i>	<i>Indigenous nationalities</i>	<i>Mother tongues</i>	<i>S.No.</i>	<i>Indigenous nationalities</i>	<i>Languages</i>
1.	Barahgaule	Barahgaule	31.	Danuwar	Danuwar
2.	Bhote	Bhote/Tibetan	32.	Darai	Darai
3.	Byansi	Byansi	33.	Kumal	Kumal
4.	Dolpa	Dolpa	34.	Majhi	Majhi
5.	Lhomi	Lhomi	35.	Raji	Raji
6.	Marphali	Thakali	36.	Raute	Raute
7.	Mugali	Mugali			
8.	Sherpa	Sherpa			
9.	Thakali	Thakali			
10.	Tokpegola	Tokpegola			
11.	Walung	Walung			
Hill			Terai		
12.	Bhujel	Bhujel	37.	Dhimal	Dhimal
13.	Baram	Baram	38.	Dhangar/Jhangar	Dhangar/Jhangar
14.	Chepeng	Chepeng	39.	Kisan	Kisan
15.	Chantyal	Chantyal	40.	Meche	Meche
16.	Dura	Dura	41.	Rajbanshi	Rajbanshi
17.	Gurung	Gurung	42.	Satar	Santhali
18.	Vayu/Hayu	Vayu/Hayu	43.	Tharu	Tharu
19.	Yholmo	Yholmo			
20.	Jirel	Jirel			
21.	Kusunda	Kusunda			
22.	Lepcha	Lepcha			
23.	Limbu	Limbu			
24.	Magar	Magar			
25.	Newar	Newar			
26.	Pahari	Pahari			
27.	Sunuwar	Sunuwar			
28.	Tamang	Tamang			
29.	Thami	Thami			
30.	Yakkha	Yakkha			

Table 9: Mother tongues associated with Nepal's indigenous nationalities.

There are 43 ethno-linguistic communities in Nepal which identify themselves as speakers of particular mother tongues. These communities are listed in the table above. For these

groups there is a one-to-one relation between the language spoken and the ethnic group, reflecting a 'one tribe, one language' formula. On the other hand, there are several ethnic communities who speak several mother tongues. In Nepal, the 'one tribe with several languages' model is aptly represented by the Rai (Kiranti) ethnolinguistic grouping in the eastern hills and mountain areas. In this case a 'single' ethnic group speak around 34 Kiranti language including Bantawa, Chamling, Kulung, Yakkha, Thulung, Sangpang, Khaling, Dumi, Jirel, Puma, Umbule, Bahing, Yholmo, Nachiring, Dura, Koi, Hayu, Yamphu, Chhiling, Lohorung, Mewahang, Kaika, Tilung, Jerung, Lingkhim, Sam, Kagate, Chhingtang and Lhomi, among others. In all then, in the Kiranti group there exists no one-to-one correspondence between a recognised ethnic community and their spoken mother tongue(s).

Finally, we find a number of ethnic groups who do not equate themselves with a specific mother tongue or whose ethnic mother tongues have not yet been identified or recognised.

In the case of a one-to-one relation between an ethnic community and their spoken language, a comparison of the populations illustrates the extent of language retention in each community. According to Gurung (2002: 7-8), there has been considerable increase in the speaker numbers of languages spoken by various ethnic groups except for Dhimal, Bhote-Sherpa and the Thakali languages. Rajbanshi and Raji are the two languages whose speakers' population exceeds the population of their ethnic community. Limbu, Jirel, Thami and Magar also show a significant increase in speaker numbers. This is evident from the table below.

Ethnic Group	1991	2001	Ethnic Group	1991	2001
1. Rajbanshi	104.1	135.2	18. Chepang	68.5	70.5
2. Raji	90.4	100.6	19. Darai	60.0	68.7
3. Hayu	-	95.7	20. Newar	66.2	66.3
4. Satar	-	94.1	21. Dura	-	65.7
5. Limbu	64.0	92.9	22. Gurung	50.7	62.4
6. Jirel	86.5	92.5	23. Chhantel	-	60.2
7. Tamang	88.8	92.0	24. Danuwar	46.7	59.8
8. Dhital	89.5	88.6	25. Kusunda	-	53.0
9. Meche	-	87.7	26. Thakali	51.8	49.6
10. Tharu	83.2	86.8	27. Magar	32.1	47.5
11. Yatha	-	86.1	28. Jhangad	-	36.3
12. Thami	75.4	82.6	29. Bote	-	35.4
13. Byansi	-	82.4	30. Sunuwar	-	27.9
14. Raute	-	78.7	31. Pahari	-	26.0
15. Rai-Kirant	83.6	78.3	32. Majhi	20.6	23.6
16. Bhote-Sherpa	99.1	77.6	33. Bhujel	-	9.1
17. Lepcha	-	77.2	34. Kumal	1.8	6.6
			35. Baramu	-	4.5

Table 10: The population of ethnic groups and their languages.

Source: Population Censuses (1952/54-2001) and Gurung (2002)

Aspects of the interplay between language and ethnicity outlined above reflect the dynamism of language shift in the Nepalese context. The findings suggest a common tendency to shift toward regional and ethnic languages. As a result, there has been continuous decline in the official numerical strength of mother tongue Nepali speakers.

Patterns of language endangerment

In linguistically diverse countries, minority languages continue to be endangered and lost. According to an estimate (Krauss 1992: 7), 90% of human languages will face extinction by the end of the 21st century. In other words, only 600 of the 6,000 or so languages presently spoken will be safe (Crystal 2000: 18). As a multilingual state, Nepal is susceptible to this global trend of language endangerment.

Some of Nepal's languages are thriving, most notably Nepali, which is the national language, while many of Nepal's minority languages lie at various stages on the continuum to eventual extinction. The key measure of a language's viability is not the number of people who speak it, but the extent to which children are still learning the language as their native tongue. The reasons for the endangered status of these mother tongues are varied, but include declining speaker numbers (an example of which is Kusunda), the destruction of the traditional habitat of a linguistic community through deforestation (as in the case of the Raute), or even natural disasters such as the landslides which swept away two villages thus almost entirely devastating the Koi speaking community (UNESCO 2002: 260). More prosaic if far more compelling reasons for the decline in usage of Nepal's indigenous mother tongues include many decades of neglect by the state of poor and rural ethno-linguistic communities compounded with the effectiveness of Nepali language and media in inculcating a sense of national Nepali identity, at linguistic, religious and cultural levels.

Language endangerment specialists have borrowed their conceptual framework, and its associated terminology, from the fields of botany and zoology, and portray languages as lying on a continuum from stable to moribund. In Nepal, a worryingly large number of the country's ethnic mother tongues are severely endangered, and will likely be reduced from communicative vernaculars to symbolic identity markers within a generation. At the same time, and perhaps even because of the threat, ethnic and linguistic activists within these communities have embarked on the process of documenting and promoting their mother tongues through cultural awareness campaigns and literacy programmes.

Why should development scholars and ethnic activists be concerned with the extinction of endangered languages? After all, 96% of the world's population speak 4% of the world's languages, and over 1,500 languages have fewer than 1,000 speakers (Crystal 2000). Some monolingual English speakers would have us believe that linguistic diver-

sity is incompatible with the juggernaut of inevitable progress which requires interoperability and smooth international communications across national boundaries. This is simply not the case, particularly in areas such as the Himalayas, where many people are functionally tri- or quadri-lingual, speaking an ethnic or tribal mother tongue inside the home, a different language in the local market town, conversing in the national language at school or in dealings with the administration and often using an international language (or two) in dealings with the outside world. The monolingualism of much of the First World is as provincial as it is historically anomalous.

While the origins of the extraordinary diversity of human languages is intertwined with the evolution of cognition and culture, the spread of modern language families is a direct result of historical population movements and migrations across continents and the colonisation of new geographical and environmental zones. Human languages are not evenly distributed across the world: there are relatively few in Europe compared to abundance in the Pacific. The Himalayan region is home to great linguistic diversity, in part because the mountains act as a natural barrier to mobility and communication.

There are four solid reasons for supporting, preserving and documenting endangered languages. First, each and every language is a celebration of the rich cultural diversity of our planet; second, each language is an expression of a unique ethnic, social, regional or cultural identity and world view; third, language is the repository of the history and beliefs of a people; and finally, every language encodes a particular subset of fragile human knowledge about agriculture, botany, medicine and ecology.

Mother tongues are comprised of far more than grammar and words. For example, Thangmi (known in Nepali as *Thami*), a Tibeto-Burman language spoken by an ethnic community of around 30,000 people in eastern Nepal, is a mine of unique indigenous terms for local flora and fauna which have medical and ritual value. Much of this local knowledge is falling into disuse as fluency in Nepali, the national language, increases. When children cease to speak their mother tongue, the oral transmission of specific ethnobotanical and medical knowledge also comes to an end. As Rana Bahadur Thangmi, a local shaman and village leader, poignantly stated in an interview with one of the authors: 'It concerns me that our ancestral language is on the wane and will likely not be spoken by the next generation, but it upsets me far more to think that our culture is also dying. No one will think to translate into Nepali the knowledge that our forefathers collected in order that our grandchildren may know what we have known.'

In order to assess the state of language endangerment in Nepal, a number of key variables should be selected and used. Eight criteria were proposed by an International Expert meeting at a UNESCO program 'Safeguarding of the Endangered Languages', March 10-12, 2003 for assessing language vitality and endangerment. To supplement

the matrix of UNESCO criteria and improve its accuracy for Nepal, some relevant factors recommended by Crystal (2000) and others must also be included. When taken together, this matrix consists of the following variables:

1. Inter-generational language transmission
2. Absolute number of speakers,
3. Proportion of speakers within the total population
4. Loss of existing language domains
5. Response to new domains and media
6. Materials for language education and literacy
7. Government & institutional language attitudes and policies including official status and use
8. Community members' attitude towards their own languages
9. Amount and quality of documentation
10. Economic and socio-economic status of speakers
11. Access
12. Motivation
13. Age of speakers
14. Migration to urban areas and foreign countries for job or education

There is a complex interaction of variables relating to language vitality and endangerment in Nepal which require more research to be properly understood. However, on the basis of the information presently available, an attempt can be made to determine which languages of the indigenous speech communities in Nepal are being threatened or are endangered and to what extent. According to the degree of endangerment, each of these languages has been categorized in one of seven levels, which are as follows:

- i) Safe language
- ii) Almost safe language
- iii) Potentially endangered language
- iv) Endangered language
- v) Seriously endangered language
- vi) Moribund language
- vii) Extinct language

Of these, safe and almost safe languages refer to the languages with little danger of

being lost. The other five levels have been defined by Stephen Wurm (1998: 192) as follows:

- (i) *potentially endangered languages* are socially and economically disadvantaged, under heavy pressure from a large language, and beginning to lose child speakers
- (ii) *endangered languages* have few or no children learning the language, and the youngest good speakers are young adults
- (iii) *seriously endangered languages* have youngest good speakers aged 50 or older
- (iv) *moribund languages* have only a handful of good speakers left, mostly very old
- (v) *extinct languages* have no speakers left

Accordingly, the languages of the indigenous peoples in Nepal can be categorized into the following levels of endangerment:

(i) Safe languages (13)

The safe indigenous languages of Nepal are:

Newar, Limbu, Magar, Tharu, Tamang, Bantawa, Gurung, Rajbansi, Tibetan, Sherpa, Khaling, Kham, Nepalese Sign Language

The features that all these safe languages share are inter-generational language transmission, a large number of speakers, a high rate of language retention, an increasing response to new domains such as seminars/meetings, computer fonts, printed and electronic media, e.g. newspaper, radio, TV, and film, development of materials for language education and literacy, use of mother tongue as medium of instruction in transitional bilingual education program under the aegis of EFA (2004-2009), and above all, community members' positive attitude towards their own languages.

(ii) Almost safe languages (13)

Chamling, Santhali, Chepang, Danuwar, Dhangar/Jhangar, Thangmi, Kulung, Dhimal, Yakha, Thulung, Sanpang, Darai, Dolpo

Like the 'safe' languages, the 'almost safe' languages presently still have inter-generational language transmission, a fairly large community of speakers, a high rate of language retention and community members' positive attitude towards their own languages. However, they lack a response to new domains of language use and media and have not developed materials for language education and literacy.

(iii) Potentially endangered languages (8)

Kumal, Thakali, Chantyal, Dumi, Jirel, Athpahariya, Mugali, Belhare

These languages are characterised by a lack of intergenerational language transmission, a small community of speakers, and a lack of language use in education and media even though their speakers have a positive attitude towards their mother tongue.

(iv) Endangered languages (22)

Umbule, Puma, Yholmo, Nachiring, Dura, Meche, Pahari, Lepcha, Bote, Bahing, Kou, Raji, Hayu, Byansi, Yamphu, Ghale, Khariya, Chhiling, Lohorung, Sunuwar, Majhi, Bhujel

These languages are united by a very small size of elderly and sometimes adult speakers and are no longer spoken by their children, and the languages have shown no response to the new domains of media and materials for language education and literacy.

(v) Seriously endangered languages (12)

Mewahang, Kaike, Raute, Kisan, Churauti, Baram, Tilung, Jerung, Dungmali, Baragaule, Nar-Phu, Managwa

These languages have been marginalized and are now spoken by under 500 speakers and may face extinction unless some drastic measures are taken for their revitalization.

(vi) Moribund languages (7)

Lingkhim, Kusunda, Koche, Sam, Kagate, Chhintang, Lhomi

These languages are left with but a handful of mostly elderly speakers, often less than 100 in number, and are on the verge of extinction.

(vii) Extinct or nearly extinct languages

Baybansi, Chonkha, Longaba, Mugali, Sambya, Pongyong, Bungla, Chukwa, Hedangpa, Waling, Khandung

These languages are either no longer spoken at all, or only to a very rudimentary level. Given the state of decline and attrition in these languages, they cannot possibly survive to the next generation.

While the above categorization has been proposed on the basis of micro-level variables which are unique to individual languages and their communities, there are some broader factors which impinge on language endangerment. Such factors constitute macro-level

variables. These variables are 'broad indicators of the potential threat that exists to minority languages in a given region of the world' (Grenoble and Whaley 1998: 27).

Barring native languages from use in existing as well as new domains of administration, government and technology has the result of giving native languages low utility and prestige. This is further accentuated by the fact that Nepali is the *lingua franca* and the language for inter-ethnic communication. As a result, indigenous peoples tend to acquire Nepali at the expense of their native languages. Gender also seems to play a role in this process as males of ethnic groups have a higher rate of proficiency in Nepali and lower rate of retention in their native languages than females, as observed in the case of Kusunda speakers.

Despite the positive attitude of members of the speech community towards their native languages, the scarcity of resources continues to be an obstacle in promoting indigenous tongues since most of the ethnic groups concerned are constrained by economic vulnerability.

Historical factors have made the Nepali work force highly mobile. In the early days, the outflow of Nepali youth started with their recruitment in the regiments of the British army, employment in tea plantations in Darjeeling and Assam and manual labour across much of the Indian northeast. The flow of migration from mountains and hills to the Terai was particularly noteworthy during the third quarter of the last century. At the same time, increased urbanization produced cities which acted as magnets for rural people while developments in transport and communications made it easier for the rural people to these centres. In this changed context, learning the dominant language (in this case Nepali) helps the process of assimilation in a multi-ethnic capital city. In the Indian northeast, Nepali shifted from being a national language back home to a *lingua franca* or trade language for peoples of all ethnicities to communicate with one another. A consequence of such cultural assimilation and population movement has been the gradual erosion of indigenous languages.

The documentation of indigenous languages is an essential component in ensuring their vitality and promotion. Such documentation includes a precise inventory of linguistic forms used, a modern reference grammar, a basic dictionary, audio-visual recording of narrative texts and their analysis, and may include elements of applied linguistics for educational and revitalization purposes. There are still relatively few grammatical studies of Nepal's indigenous languages. National agencies such as Central Department of Linguistics at TU, the National Foundation for Development of Indigenous Nationalities (NFDIN), and the Royal Nepal Academy (RNA), and international agencies such as the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL), the South Asia Institute at Heidelberg University (SAI), the Himalayan Languages Project at Leiden University, and some Euro-

pean and American universities, have made significant contributions in documenting these languages. However, very few works on their applied aspects exist. There is still an urgent need for investigating the use of language in basic education and for the revitalization of endangered languages for their preservation and promotion. Having presented a situational analysis of indigenous languages of Nepal, we now move to address some contemporary issues.

Language and ecology

Linguistic diversity is an integral component in ecological stability and the fabric of cultural life, and we should remember that the evolution of a species or a language takes much longer than its extinction. Languages, like species, adapt to and reflect their environment. The Thangmi language, spoken in a highly mountainous region where topography is challenging, has four semantically distinct verbs which are translated into English as 'to come': *yusa* 'to come from above (down the mountain)', *wangsa* 'to come from below (or up the mountain)', *kyelsa* 'to come from level or around a natural obstacle' and *rasa* 'to come from unspecified or unknown direction'. To some extent, then, language thus mirrors ecology, and ecology reflects the linguistic and cultural forms of a people inhabiting a specific niche. The languages and cultures of millions of indigenous peoples of the Himalayas are in part endangered because their traditional homelands and ecological habitats are now under threat.

In the powerfully written *Vanishing Voices*, Daniel Nettle and Suzanne Romaine make an explicit link between language survival and environment issues: the extinction of languages is part of the larger picture of near-total collapse of the worldwide ecosystem. The struggle to preserve environment resources, such as the rainforest and ethnobotanical knowledge, cannot be separated from the struggle to maintain cultural diversity. The causes of language death and ecological destruction, in their view, are political.

Nettle and Romaine support their argument with an intriguing correlation: language diversity appears to be inversely related to latitude, and areas rich in languages also tend to be rich in ecology and species. Both biodiversity and linguistic diversity are concentrated between the tropics and in inaccessible environments, such as the Himalayas, while diversity of all forms of diversity tail off in deserts. Around the world then, there is a high level of co-occurrence of flora, fauna and languages, and humid tropical climates as well as forested areas are especially favourable to biological and linguistic diversification. Data from Nepal would appear to support this trend: the country is home to over 5,400 species of higher plants and 850 species of birds, 2.2% and 9.4% of the world's totals respectively (Shrestha and Vimal 1993: 3), a high level of biodiversity per unit area matched by a similarly high rate of linguistic variation.

The *Vanishing Voices* hypothesis is logical but also contentious, with some language activists and scholars arguing that the trends to which Nettle and Romaine allude are coincidental and causally unrelated. Whatever one's take on the interrelatedness of biological and linguistic diversity, one result is uncontested: languages have increasingly come to be described as valuable 'resources' to be protected, promoted and developed by governments. Distinct from, but deployed in a similar manner to discussions about water, fossil fuels and manpower resources, the linguistic resources of a nation are part of its rich intangible heritage. As discretely summed up by UNESCO in its universal declaration on cultural diversity of 2001, "cultural diversity is as necessary for humankind as biodiversity is for nature."

Language and the state

As the Nepalese linguist Chudamani Bandhu noted, Nepali has made great inroads "first as a lingua franca, then as an official language and ultimately as the national language" (1989: 121). Widely spoken both within Nepal, and also across much of northeast India and even some of Bhutan, the position of Nepali as a major South Asian language is assured. Between 1952 and 2001, according to official census statistics, the number of mother tongue Nepali speakers almost trebled from 4 million to 11 million (drawn from tables in Yadava 2003: 141). Revealingly, while 48.6% of the population returned Nepali as their mother tongue in the 2001 census, 53% stated that Nepali should be the only official language compared to 31% who felt that others languages should also be recognised as official languages. Interestingly, 16% of those polled independently said that they were eager to see minority languages used in official capacity in local government (Hachhethu 2004: 187).

During Panchayat rule in Nepal, from 1962-1989, the state promoted a doctrine of 'one nation, one culture, one language' and the nation-building project of that era was intolerant of indigenous and minority languages. In this era, while political, educational, developmental and administrative activities helped speakers of other languages to learn Nepali, little motivation existed for mother tongue Nepali speakers to learn other languages.

In these years, it was considered natural and preferable for Nepal to be monolingual, and minority languages and linguistic rights were largely disregarded. Since the Panchayat era, however, the Nepali government has made significant progress in recognising the multi-ethnic and multi-lingual nature of the nation. The *Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal*, codified on November 9, 1990, states that:

- (1) *The Nepali language in the Devanagari script is the language of the nation of Nepal. The Nepali language shall be the official language.*

(2) *All the languages spoken as the mother tongue in the various parts of Nepal are the national languages of Nepal. (Constitution of Nepal, Part I, Article 6)*

The ambiguity of the Constitution here is notable: while Nepali is the 'language of the nation' and the 'official language', mother tongues spoken by indigenous peoples are 'the national languages of Nepal'. Some commentators see the distinction as helpful, while others are critical of what they perceive to be an intentional semantic confusion, and they reject the claim that the Constitution of Nepal is a forward-looking and robust document which truly champions diversity and minority rights.

Language and the law

The constitutional ambiguity laid out above sets the stage for the key linguistic tension of modern Nepal. While Nepal's linguistic minorities have a number of national and international provisions enshrining their linguistic rights, such groups have little confidence in their ability to gain access to, and then effectively use, the legal system to defend these rights. Aside from one prominent case discussed below, language activists have rarely relied on legal provisions to ensure their rights, and debates about language, ethnicity and culture are not usually acted out in courts.

The case in question relates to a well-documented decision made by various local administrative bodies between August and November 1997—the Kathmandu Municipality, Dhanusha District Development Committee and Rajbiraj and Janakpur Municipalities—to use the locally dominant languages of Newar(i) and Maithili respectively as official media of communication in addition to Nepali. This right, they argued, had been enshrined in the *Local Self-Governance Act* of 1999 which deputed to local bodies the right to use, preserve and promote local languages. The decision by these local bodies to use regional languages was legally challenged and cases were filed in the Supreme Court, after which an interim order was issued on March 17, 1998 prohibiting the use of local and regional languages in administration. This order led to widely publicised discontent and public resentment among minority communities, and a number of action committees were promptly formed to address the ruling.

Nevertheless, on June 1, 1999, the Supreme Court announced its final verdict and issued a *certiorari* declaring that the decisions of these local bodies to use regional languages were unconstitutional and illegal. The court's verdict raised serious questions about the sincerity of the government's commitment to the use of minority languages in administration and led to further frustration among minority language communities. Public demonstrations and mass meetings were called, and the Nepal Federation of Nationalities (NEFEN) organised a national conference on linguistic rights on March 16-17, 2000 with support from the *International Work Group on Indigenous Affairs*

(IWGIA). The proceedings of this conference were published in April 2000. Four resolutions were adopted during the conference, one of which demanded that:

'...legal provisions be made to allow the use of all mother-tongues and the verdict of the court be declared void since it runs against the values of the present Constitution of Nepal which recognises all mother-tongues as "national languages" and the Local Autonomy Act [LSGA] of 2055 which contains provisions for the use, preservation and promotion of mother-tongues by local bodies.' (NEFEN 2000: 8)

As the above example illustrates, many language activists in Nepal feel powerless to guarantee their rights in the face of government opposition. Moreover, disagreements exist between different indigenous peoples' movements on the correct path to achieve equality. At opposing ends of the continuum are advocates who propose working to change the system from within versus militant organizations who have allied themselves with the Maoist movement, believing that parliamentary debate will not deliver practical results at the grassroots level. The middle ground, however, is occupied by a plethora of organizations who support minority rights but who are fast losing faith in the government's desire to bring about any meaningful change.

There is widespread concern among ethnic activists and rural villagers alike that despite the legal provisions respecting their fundamental rights, an institutional inertia exists regarding the emotive issues of mother tongue education and the access of minority communities to positions in government and administration. Indigenous people, particularly in rural areas poorly serviced by infrastructure, have very limited access to the existing legal provisions to defend their rights and are intimidated by the very institutions which are meant to represent and protect them.

While the issues are complex, there are three principal reasons that indigenous people rarely resort to legal means to defend their rights. First, the machinery of government is still primarily controlled by 'high caste' groups who have held power for the last 250 years and have little incentive to change or relinquish control. Second, educated indigenous peoples in both urban and rural Nepal are reluctant to use official channels—legal or administrative—to redress inequalities since they believe the system to be weighted against their interests and know their chances of success to be limited. This is an understandable concern, as illustrated by the rulings against Newar and Maithili illustrated above, particularly since fluency in spoken Nepali and a high degree of literacy are prerequisites for legal exchange. These are skills which many indigenous people still do not have. Third, many indigenous peoples and linguistic minorities in rural areas are simply not aware of their rights, or even if they are, have little practical knowledge of how and where to assert them. The above factors, combined with continued social and linguistic discrimination, have inhibited the development and inclusive participation of

indigenous linguistic communities in the Nepali nation.

Given the disjuncture between the legal and constitutional provisions for linguistic equality on the one hand, and the reality of the overwhelming strength of Nepali on the other, the despair of activist groups representing minority ethnic and linguistic communities is quite understandable. We suggest that the crisis lies less in the formulation of policy, and rather more in the desire of governing classes to change the status quo. Since many obstacles relate to implementation, concerned groups need to focus their energies on providing a clear roadmap for achieving their present goals alongside formulating new bills, acts and amendments.

Language and the census

Periodic and in depth national censuses are essential tools for understanding the ethnolinguistic composition of a nation. Some countries do not even include questions about language in their surveys for fear of the political ramifications of research in this area, and that it is rare to find census questions about the usual language of the home, subsidiary languages spoken, practical multilingualism or an appreciation of the fact that reading skills may be distinguished from writing skills in any given language. While the challenges outlined above are faced by all countries embarking on the painstaking process of a national census, Nepal has a number of particular hazards of its own.

The challenges of census-taking faced by Nepal are accentuated by the lack of infrastructure, the extremity of the physical terrain, the profound absence of motorable roads and the cultural prejudices of some of the ruling elite. Walks of up to ten days from the road-head to access alpine valleys have been known to deter many census collectors from actually visiting these areas. The disjuncture between urban educated Nepalis and their often semi-literate rural cousins is stark, and both literal and figurative miscommunication are common when the former ask potentially invasive questions of the latter.

The first census of Nepal was conducted in 1911 with the aim of surveying population growth, migration and social structure. Thereafter, the first systematic census was conducted between 1952 and 1954, and there have been regular census enumerations every decade since then.

There is a surprisingly high variation in the number of languages reported in the censuses of Nepal since the 1950s: 44 languages were returned in 1952-1954, 36 in 1961, 17 in 1971, 18 in 1981, 32 in 1991 and 92 in 2001. This massive oscillation cannot be said to reflect the actual state of languages spoken in Nepal, but reflects rather the changing political ideologies of the nation state over the last half century. Census statistics are routinely conscripted to argue for monolingual and multilingual visions of Nepal, even

when both sides agree that the data are unreliable.

The 2001 census is by far the most rigorously enumerated one so far, with carefully collected data on both ethnicity and language. Two specific questions pertaining to language were asked in the 2001 census: Which language do you speak as a mother tongue and which language do you speak as a second language? The guidelines issued by the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) define ‘mother tongue’ as “the language acquired first by children in their childhood from their parents and used in their households since they start speaking”, while ‘second language’ is defined as any language other than the mother tongue learned and used to speak with neighbours (as cited in Yadava 2003: 138).

It is encouraging to note that HMG Nepal has recognised the difference between language and ethnicity, and has started to collect data on both. Until recently, the language category in the census often served as a substitute for enumerating ethnicity. However, now that this obstacle has been overcome, the CBS should give serious thought to enumerating bilingualism and multilingualism the forthcoming census of 2011. Such data will provide a far more accurate picture of language use in Nepal.

Language and media

The freedoms enshrined in the constitution of post-1990 Nepal led to a boom in all forms of media production, primarily the print sector and FM radio. Ethnic and linguistic minorities have used their newly-found freedoms to great effect, with a plethora of journals, newspapers and magazines in local languages now available in Kathmandu and in district centres. Even centrally-run media providers have sought to catch up with the informal and private sectors, with state-owned Radio Nepal broadcasting news bulletins in several mother tongues, including Hindi, Magar, Newar and Tamang, and Nepal Television (NTV) producing a limited number of small-screen tele-films in local languages.

This freedom of linguistic expression has done much to instil a sense of civic and community pride in local languages and minority mother tongues, and marked a real change of course from the Panchayat-era policy which discouraged dissemination of information in any language other than Nepali. To this day, however, Nepal is widely believed to be a nation formed in large part through a common language: Nepali. Chudamani Bandhu suggests that the beginning of the publication of the Nepali daily, *Gorkhapatra*, in 1901 was a major event “in the history of the Nepali language” and one which marked “the beginning of modern Nepali” (1989: 125-126). HMG fears that this sense of national cohesion may be eroded through supporting minorities language media, and has

shown some trepidation at further extending state media services for other minority languages.

Some of the most exciting recent developments in media are coming from the digital sector. Nepal-based and Nepali language Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) have blossomed over the last decade, and software localisation projects (including a Nepali version of Linux) and newly standardised Nepali fonts are making it easier for first-time computer users who have little or no literacy in English to learn basic computing skills in and through Nepali. While access to ICT infrastructure is still limited to a tiny percentage of Nepal's population, the completion of the East-West information superhighway and the deployment of VSAT Internet access in some remote district capitals are signs that access is being extended to those on the wrong side of the Nepal's digital divide (Pandey and Shrestha 2005). It remains to be seen whether minority language communities across Nepal will embrace the new possibilities afforded by these technologies, but the signs are good. A number of language activists are already constructing databases of lexical corpora along with literacy materials making use of Devanagari Unicode, which although designed for Nepali, can be retasked for many of Nepal's minority mother tongues working towards standardisation.

Language and education

Until 1990, the national education policy was largely intolerant of indigenous and minority languages. Since 1990 though, Nepal has come a long way in acknowledging diversity: Article 18 of the Constitution states that 'each community shall have the right to operate schools up to the primary level in its own mother tongue for imparting education to its children', even though this provision remains essentially inactive at present. This constitutional guarantee is very much in line with contemporary research and international best practices.

As John Daniel, Assistant Director-General for Education in UNESCO, writes: 'Years of research have shown that children who begin their education in their mother tongue make a better start, and continue to perform better, than those for whom school starts with a new language. The same applies to adults seeking to become literate'. This is particularly important because about 476 million of the world's illiterate people speak minority languages and live in countries where children are for the most part not taught in their mother tongue. Languages are recognised as forming an integral part of a people's cultural and historical identity, as reflected in the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (2001).

The National Foundation for the Development of Indigenous Nationalities (NFDIN) in Nepal also views the existence of a specific and unique language as a primary basis for the identification of an ethnicity or '*adibasi janajati*'. The Foundation is implementing

a range of policies to support endangered and indigenous languages. Dictionary projects are particularly popular, since the products have both practical benefits and symbolic capital: linguistic minorities can canvas central and local government more effectively for mother tongue education when a lexical corpus has been prepared and the process of standardising an unwritten language is already underway. There is an increasing realisation that successful language maintenance efforts ideally combine literacy and education with an improvement in the economic and political standing of the minority language community.

Language and gender

Across the greater Himalayan region, disaggregated census data demonstrate that women retain fluency in their ethnic mother tongue for longer than men but are on the whole less literate. While men from disadvantaged mountain areas commonly engage in trade with other communities or seek wage labour in local centres and neighbouring states, thereby learning regional *lingua francas* and foreign languages, women are still in many cases the natural resource managers of a community. Whether collecting firewood and forest products, fetching water, working the fields or raising children, women in remote Himalayan villages of Nepal have plenty of cause to use their indigenous mother tongue in daily life.

One of the recommendations of the Education for All (EFA) five-year project which commenced last year was that Nepal now take steps to ensure that rural primary schools are staffed by more local women teachers who can explain words and concepts using the mother tongue of the students as a medium to help them transition to functional bilingualism. Part of this movement requires a change of mindset: dispensing with the prevailing belief that Nepal's indigenous unwritten languages are backward, primitive and somehow shameful, and moving to embrace ethnic languages as symbols of diversity and indigenous knowledge. NFDIN is leading by example through training 200 local women to work in their own communities.

Major questions remain, however, about how patterns of language use and competence relate to gender. To date, most literacy programmes for adult women have focussed on achieving basic numeracy and literacy in Nepali, and not in local mother tongues. We hope that women's empowerment projects will increasingly realise the importance of revalorising the ethnic heritage and languages of the communities they aim to support.

Language and conflict

The deployment of 'language' in public arenas, whether ethnic or national, can quickly become very politicised. The clamouring of linguistic minorities in Nepal for education in their mother tongue is as much about basic linguistic rights as it is a call for national

recognition and participation in the governance of the modern nation state. Ethnic and linguistic differences are quick to be invoked in times of conflict.

In Nepal, the violent conflict between Maoist rebels and government forces which has claimed over 12,000 lives since 1996 has tapped into the pre-existing concerns of ethnic and linguistic minorities. Some analysts even argue that the marginalisation of Nepal's disadvantaged and ethnic groups is one of the root causes of the Maoist insurgency. The Maoists have been very adept at co-opting indigenous peoples and their outstanding grievances into their overall political struggle for a constituent assembly and radical communist reforms. In their 40-point demands, the Maoist leadership address the basic rights of indigenous peoples and their mother tongues, arguing for local autonomy for communities where ethnic peoples are dominant and the provision of education in the mother tongue through secondary school.

The teaching of Sanskrit is also an inflammatory topic in contemporary Nepal. Sanskrit, the liturgical and classical language of India, to which modern spoken languages such as Hindi and Nepali are related, is intimately associated with issues such as caste, Hinduism and highly structured learning. Anti-Sanskritism has at points been one of the rallying cries of the Maoists, and one which finds favour with almost all indigenous people who see Sanskrit as the linguistic embodiment of a hegemonic heritage which they do not share. A number of ethnic and linguistic activists are at pains to point out that their platform is not so much anti-Sanskrit as it is pro-ethnic language, and that they simply want all of Nepal's mother tongues to be given the recognition and support that is accorded to Sanskrit. Sanskrit is still the only language in Nepal for which government scholarships are available for university-level study, despite the fact that Sanskrit is the mother tongue of no one in Nepal. This adds insult to injury for the indigenous peoples and linguistic minorities of Nepal, many of whom are still smarting from the imposition of Nepali as the national language in the 1990 constitution and the earlier introduction of compulsory Sanskrit up to high school level.

Language policy in neighbouring nations

Given the incredible linguistic diversity of the Himalayan region, it is interesting to compare how other nation states in the area do, or do not, address the linguistic rights of minority language communities within their borders. This comparative perspective is instructive for framing the linguistic provisions enshrined in Nepal's 1990 constitution.

Article 3 of the constitution of Bangladesh as adopted on 4 November 1972 defines the 'state language of the Republic' as Bangla, while Article 1.8 of the entirely bilingual (Dzongkha and English) Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan, circulated by email in on 26 March 2005, clearly states that 'Dzongkha is the National Language of Bhutan'.

The constitution of Pakistan, adopted on 10 April 1973, is similarly unambiguous on the importance of a national language promoting unity: 'the national language of Pakistan is Urdu, and arrangements shall be made for its being used for official and other purposes' (Article 251.1). However, unlike Bangladesh and Bhutan, the constitution of Pakistan accepts that 'the English language may be used for official purposes' until the transition to Urdu is complete, and that provincial assemblies may 'by law prescribe measures for the teaching, promotion and use of a provincial language in addition to the national language' (Article 251.3)

While the laws of Bangladesh, Bhutan and even Pakistan promote a monolingual national identity, the constitution of the People's Republic of China adopted on 4 December 1982 is seemingly more tolerant of minority languages. While the state 'promotes the nationwide use of Putonghua [Mandarin]' according to Article 19, 'people of all nationalities have the freedom to use and develop their own spoken and written languages, and to preserve or reform their own ways and customs' particularly in autonomous areas or in local government (Articles 4 and 21).

The Republic of India has a more nuanced view of linguistic diversity, and many clauses of its constitution, most recently updated in 1996, allude to or explicitly specify the rights of minority language communities. Although article 343 of the constitution states that the 'official language of the Union shall be Hindi in the Devanagari script', parliamentary business may also be transacted in English (Article 120). Across India, however, individual states have considerable control over which languages should be used as the official media of state legislative and administrative business, and the Eighth Schedule of the constitution lists 18 languages which have been officially endorsed by the central government as languages of state communication.

Looking at constitutional and legal provisions alone, then, the Constitution of Nepal is not unsympathetic to minority languages, particularly when compared to some of its staunchly monolingual neighbours. It can be argued that small nations, almost by definition, must strive to foster linguistic unity—somewhat in the manner that Bhutan is attempting—to avoid Balkanisation and ethnic strife. Nation states such as China and India, being at once so vast and heterogeneous, have little choice but to tolerate and even encourage local languages as tools of administration and education.

Another conclusion which might be drawn is that constitutional ambiguity is a way forwards. Ram Kumar Dahal, writing on the multiplicity of speech communities in India, notes that the aim of including English as the 'auxiliary language for at least fifteen years' was to help standardise and institutionalise Hindi 'all over India' (2000: 156-157). India's failure to achieve this goal has resulted in various languages of administration and communication, leading to the kind of code-switching and rampant multilin-

gualism which is so often immortalised in Bollywood films.

Signs of hope and the way forwards

The preservation of a language in its fullest sense entails the maintenance of the speech community. Reversing language death therefore requires the preservation of the culture and habitat in which a language is spoken. While many of the languages spoken as mother tongues in the Himalayas today will likely only survive, if at all, as second languages in the coming years, that is in itself no small feat. Supporting minority languages and halting linguistic decline must become an integral element in securing the sustainable livelihoods of diverse mountain peoples. Integrated development programmes which focus on the vulnerability of marginalised peoples in Nepal should introduce a component of support for the languages and livelihoods which are presently under threat.

A number of national and international organisations working to support indigenous minority communities are worth mentioning here. Terralingua <www.terralingua.org> supports the integrated protection, maintenance and restoration of the world's biological, cultural, and linguistic diversity through an innovative program of research, education, policy and on-the-ground action. Collaborating with the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and UNESCO, Terralingua have authored a number of excellent reports on biocultural diversity and indigenous and traditional peoples in the world's 200 global ecoregions.

The British Department for International Development (DFID), through its Enabling State Programme (ESP), has recently provided a three-year grant to the Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities (NEFIN) to support the empowerment of Nepal's marginalised ethnic groups. Entitled the Janajati (indigenous ethnic group) Empowerment Programme (JEP), the project has the explicit purpose of increasing the participation of Nepal's disadvantaged ethnic peoples in socioeconomic and political processes at central and district levels. Focussing on local capacity building and strengthening civil society networks, JEP proposes to preserve and further develop Nepal's ethnic languages and help advocate for linguistic rights.

In terms of research output, the Central Department of Linguistics (CDL) in Nepal has embarked upon an ambitious interdisciplinary project known as the Linguistic Survey of Nepal (LINSUN) which will identify and analyse Nepal's languages to produce an encyclopaedia of Nepal's languages and an archive for linguistic data on endangered languages. The Chintang and Puma Documentation Project (CPDP), spearheaded by the University of Leipzig in conjunction with CDL in Nepal, is working on the linguistic and ethnographic documentation of two endangered Kiranti languages of Nepal. The core objective of the project is to provide audiovisual documentation of language practice with rich linguistic and ethnographic description.

Language revitalisation campaigns aim to increase the prestige, wealth and power of speakers of endangered mother tongues, to give the language a strong presence in the education system and to provide the language with a written form to encourage literacy and improve access to electronic technology. Linguistic diversity is, after all, the human store of historically acquired knowledge about how to use and maintain some of the world's most vulnerable and biologically diverse environments. As the writers of UNESCO's hard-hitting report conclude, 'If during the next century we lose more than half of our languages, we also seriously undermine our chances for life on Earth. From this perspective, fostering the health and vigour of ecosystems is one and the same goal as fostering the health and vigour of human societies, their cultures, and their languages. We need an integrated biocultural approach to the planet's environmental crisis' (2003: 44). Biocultural development projects need to involve and mobilise communities to build positive values for indigenous languages.

To sum up, this paper offers a situational analysis to help frame current debates about language policy and the linguistic diversity of Nepal. We hope that the other two papers in this volume, which focus on policy, planning and recommendations and capacity building, institutional support and coordination, respectively, will be able to draw on the background details gathered together here.

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Comments by the commentators

Commentator 1: Dr. Chudamani Bhandu

This paper has been written using the academic approach based on the facts. The paper is praiseworthy and has been written in a very practical way. To sum up, it had dealt with the form of oral and textual transmissions. It is important to give importance to linguistic diversity as much as to the biodiversity for preservation and promotion. I would like to add my views.

‘Bankariyas’ live in the jungles near Hetauda, so there lies the confusion where to place them, either in ‘Hills’ or ‘Inner Terai’. Also their history from where they came from is not mentioned.

I read a very important paper presented by David Bradely, which defined the Himalayan languages very clearly. In this paper the total number of languages in the ‘Mountain Region’ is written as 10 but it is possible that the languages from the Hills and the Mountains can be misplaced due to no clear geographical demarcation. Very little study has been done on the Himalayan languages. During the last classification, languages spoken in the Rai communities were written as ‘Rai languages’ but there has been significant progress in this paper as it has classified them under the different languages. I think this paper will be a very good reference for those who want to study the languages spoken in Nepal.

Under the topic ‘Writing System’, the writers seemed to be insistent on it, which is good for the protection of the language but if observed in the national level, it may create some confusion. If Devnagari script were used to preserve languages for scriptless languages, it would be more convenient to include other aspects also. Santhali language, which is spoken both in India and Nepal, uses Devanagari as well as Roman script.

‘Patterns of Language Endangerment’ has been presented very well but it is a fact that it is very difficult to categorize some languages. It would have been better to place the ‘Sino-Tibetan languages of Nepal’ under a different class as it is in the developing state and many linguists are engaged in their study.

The clarification of the relation between ‘language and ecology’ has been done very perfectly. In Kusunda language, there are many names of trees, plants, yams, birds, etc.

Under the topic ‘Language and the Law’, it is better to use one official language in the court as the use of different languages may create more obstacles. What the constitution has declared I understand that Nepali is the official language and the rest of the languages are national languages.

It is the fact that the languages used in the radio transmission plays a vital role in the protection and promotion of the languages and in this electronic era, the government is making a positive effort towards utilizing the Unicode medium for the promotion of the languages. The government, some national and international organizations and Madan Pustakalaya are developing the Unicode where 'Devanagari' has been identified as the basic script.

The use of language has to comply with the time. Though inclusion of different languages in the Proficiency Level has been done, lack of study materials has created an obstacle. Now, the NFDIN should organize a creative workshop to develop creative writers in indigenous languages so that new study materials can be developed.

As women play a major role in the preservation and promotion of the languages, they should be trained as teachers for more effective outputs.

The overlapping of the research and study between the RNA and T.U. should be avoided. We should utilize the available resources effectively. It is important to increase the use of languages in different offices, media, etc.

Commentator 2: Mr. Malla K. Sundar

As an activist of language and culture, I am a bit frustrated after going through the paper. Academically it may be high sounding but not from the view of an activist. I disagree with the last statement made under the section: Language and the Law; I would argue that the crisis lies not in the formulation of policy, but rather in the desire of governing classes to change the status quo. The reason for language death is directly related to the policy of the state.

The Constitution of Nepal had started the constitutional discrimination between the languages then and thereby creating 'the Language of the Nation' and the 'National Languages'. On the basis of the Constitution, the Supreme Court announced its final verdict and issued a certiorari declaring that the decisions to use regional languages were unconstitutional and illegal on the 1st June 1999. As far as the linguistic discrimination remains the problems of language shift and language death are inevitable. From academic suggestions and research, one may be able to document and develop grammars and dictionaries but cannot lengthen the life of a language. There are lots of documents in Sanskrit and Latin yet they are dead languages instead of living languages. We do not need such type of research and suggestions. We prefer to look at the Nepali language problems from the right based approached. On page 33, the paper stated that this is not due to the lack of constitutional provisions but for me the Constitution has stripped us from our rights, so the constitution needs to be changed. Until and unless the

constitution delegates authority and defines the region for the use of a language, the present linguistic rights ('bhashik adhikar') will not be recognized. We the NEFIN and the activists want authority of an autonomous nation where every indigenous society can speak its own language. No development is possible in the sector of linguistic rights, or policy strategy without addressing the lack of constitutional provisions. Two major drawbacks of this paper are that it does not refer to the two documents. First, the declaration of NEFIN from the First National Assembly of National languages, March 16-17, 2000. Second document is published by the Nepal Bhasha Sangharsha Samittee. After the 1st June verdict of the Supreme Court, Bhasha Sangharsha Samittee organized a seminar where suggestions were collected regarding what should be amended in the Constitution for the linguistic rights. Without reflecting these two documents, our language problem cannot be solved by any academic studies. I would like to state as an activist that we do not oppose Sanskrit but we do oppose the imposition by the government to study Sanskrit. So, I strongly request the presenters to withdraw the term 'Anti-Sanskritism' from the paper and view the language problems from a right-based approach. The linguists should respect the ideas of those who are involved in the linguistic movement.

Queries and Suggestions from the Floor

Gopal Dahit from Bardiya

Mr. Dahit said that the paper was good, as it analyzed the situations of the indigenous languages very well and pointed out that the sub-categorization of the Indo-European Language Family was a bit confusing as it had stated Tharu (Magar) in the Eastern and Tharu in the Central region. Despite the differences in the form of verbs used in the Tharu language, almost everything is similar whether spoken in the east or west of Nepal. To publish books and materials in Nepali there are publishers like Sajha Publication and the government spends 38 lakh on it but only a small fraction of the fund is available to publish the declarations and other materials in the indigenous languages. The paper lacked to mention whether the Nation had provided national resources and help for the preservation and promotion of the indigenous languages. Due to the improper distribution of the national resources the state failed to manage the resources and materials for the successful implementation of the education in the mother tongue. The CDC has published study materials but there is no fund allocated to transport them to the respective places.

Dan Raj Regmi

The Census report, 2001 showed that there are 10,000 Bhujel speakers in Morang but

there are none on the spot. In Tanahun, the report showed 427 yet there are 3500-4500 Bhujel speakers so the data should be rechecked and the paper would have been better if primary data were collected instead of using too much secondary data. The Bhujels from Baglung speak Kham language and not Bhujel. We have prepared and published a document on Bhujel language.

Ang Lama Sherpa

The people living in the high Himalayas are called 'Bhote' so there is no confusion where their languages fall. Dr. Chundamani's suggestion to use Devanagari script as the base script is objectionable as this may further lead to extinction of the already endangered languages. The Sherpa language should be included in the 'Sino-Tibetan Language Family' but the paper failed to provide a clear picture where it lies.

Ajit Man Tamang

The paper is very impressive from the academic view. I think it is important to include all the recommendations from the past conferences and seminars conducted on indigenous languages. The distribution of languages on the regional basis seems confusing. Yholmo should be in the mountain rather than in the Hills. The languages of the mountains and the hills seem interchangeable. Also in the sub-group of the Sino-Tibetan Languages, instead of using **TGTh** for Tamang, Gurung and Thakali a new name Tamang should have been used as they themselves had accepted it. Data should be updated. The script used by Tibetan is known as Uchhen or Ume. Tamang societies have accepted Uchhen or Tanhik script, which was not mentioned anywhere in the paper. Thakali language belongs to the Tamangic language but the paper presented it under a different sub-group. Thus, more in-depth studies should be done regarding the naming of the languages whereas research should be done on Uchhen script as it is widely used in religious books. There are more Yholmo speakers than the Yholmu population so how can it fall under the endangered language? To preserve and promote the endangered languages, the government should play an active role.

Tej Gauchan

The data on Lepcha population (3,660) is from the census report, 2048 whereas the census report, 2050 shows 12,973. This should be corrected. The reason why most indigenous students fail in Sanskrit language is due to the strict imposition of the language. This has a negative impact on the nation further. Besides, Thakali and Panchgaunle are expressed as different languages but Mr. Gurung has placed Thakali, Marphali and Tingaule under Thakali language.

Mahesh Kormocha

The paper didn't talk clearly about two classes of the scripts, Old and New scripts.

Visnu Singh Rai

This paper seemed to be based entirely on the secondary data as it showed only 8 Chintang speakers but in reality there are more than 3000 speakers. As this is a written document, it should be corrected.

H.B. Kham

I disagree on the paper as it viewed 'Kham' language in the safe language category, but in reality it is a dead language. 'Kham' language should be mentioned as a separate language group in all the documents.

Narayan Gurung

I would like to request Mr. Yadava to clarify what he meant by 'Newar is a community and not a caste'. What is the difference between community and caste?. 'Gurung' language in use is called 'Tamukhhi'. So, in place of 'Gurung', 'Tamukhhi' should be written in the paper. We Gurung call ourselves Tamu.

Tika Ram Chaudhary

I am dissatisfied on the paper as the paper seemed to be based upon another paper and lacked the primary data from the local communities. The paper lacked to mention the 18 Magaraat languages.

Dilendra Subba

The population of the 'Limbus' is incorrect and it should be corrected. The script for 'Limbu' language is the 'Shreejunga', which is not mentioned in the paper. Shreejunga script has been computerized but due to some technical difficulties in the past, Devanagari script was initially used.

Replies from the Paper Writers**Dr. Mark Turin**

Academicians are not activists so the paper is solely an academic one. It may differ from the political views.

Prof. Dr. Yogendra Prasad Yadava

We will add the suggestions in our recommendations. The distribution of Bankarariya on the regional basis has not been done yet. (To Bandhu's query) and there is still a scope for the modification on the mountainous and hill languages. We are trying to import the 'Santhali' script for its preservation and promotion from the website available in the Internet. At the moment Nepali Sign Language is an evolving language but they lacked sufficient research on it. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is being used in Nepali language and they are considering about using it for the preservation and promotion of the endangered languages. In the paper, Rana and Tharu are classified into two castes. It was expressed on the basis of linguistic judgment provided by the resource persons studying the Tharu language but they agree that social judgment is also an important factor to be considered in such case. On the basis of the lexical similarities and differences we can express our linguistic judgments. If the speakers want to have a single language then there is no objection from the linguists.

The Curriculum Development Center (CDC) has not supplied the textbooks for the mother language education and the EFA should also provide teachers as well. About Kusunda, the census report is not clear and needs to be corrected. Kusunda are found in Biratnagar also. I would like to thank Ang Lama Sherpa for enlightening that Bhote not being a caste but a local community living in the high Himalayas. It is important to have a script so that it can be used in documentation which helps to keep the language alive. I would like to apologize for not being able to include the policy 2050 prepared by the Federation of Indigenous Nationalities in the paper. As there are lots of problems regarding the naming of the languages, we would appreciate some help from the participants. While considering the names given to different languages in Nepali, it is very important to take into account the speaker's attitude and the society themselves should decide upon the names of the languages rather than the researchers or linguists.

Yholmo is categorized as endangered language on the basis of the population. The names Barhagaunle and Tingaunle were done according to Dr. Gurung's suggestion.

I accept the mistake in the population of Thakali speakers and the Limbus and will correct them after consulting the latest census reports. It is very important to understand if it is compatible or not to consult the society's attitude while suggesting the use of Devanagari script for the scriptless languages. We also accept the limitations of this paper as it is based upon other papers. If field based studies were to be done an entirely different picture can be obtained. This kind of microanalysis will help us a lot in the future and we are glad to have this opportunity to refresh the distribution of languages from today's seminar. While making a regional demarcation, consultation with the re-

searchers is a must. Region has also played an important role in making the society lag behind in development. Kham language is a distinct language but it did not appear as a separate language in the Census Report. Ph.D. thesis has been done on Belhare language but it has not yet been enumerated. I am not in the position to give my views regarding Newar being a caste or a community.

Remarks from the Chairperson: Bairagi Kainla

I hope that the inputs obtained from this micro-analysis of the linguistic situation and contemporary issues will be very helpful for the development of policies and programs in the sector of languages. It is the pleasure of the linguists to have as many languages as possible in existence.

The Nepali symbolic language (sanketik) is a safe language, as it doesn't belong to any caste. At present the language category has shifted from 4 to 7. The problem in recognizing a language category is not due to the presence of many languages but because of the very few present speakers. It is important to know whether it is correct to categorize the languages depending upon the number of speakers. The negative aspect of politics is also seen in the domination of languages. Strong language groups always try to dominate the weaker ones.

Closing remarks from Sant Bahadur Gurung

I would like to thank the chairperson for his precious time, the presentators, commentators and the participants. I am glad to have achieved very concrete suggestions. I would like to conclude the first session wishing that it would have had been better if the participants had presented their queries in written form.

II Session

Commencement of the session

Session II was chaired by Prof. Dr. Kamal Prakash Malla. The paper, entitled “Indigenous Languages of Nepal: Policy, Planning and Recommendations”, was jointly presented by Prof. Dr. N.K. Rai and Dr. David Watters. In their paper D. Watters and Rai look into the nature and scope of language and suggest appropriate planning and policy for indigenous languages of Nepal and make concrete recommendations to implement them. They focus on the use of these languages in education including literacy since they argue that mother tongue education is not just a right but also a “bridge” to participation in the wider world.

Dr. Madhav Pokharel and Dr. Clare O’ Leary were the invited commentators on the paper. Finally, there were questions from the floor and their replies from the paper presenters.



Chair Person

Dr. Kamal Prakash Malla (Left), Dr. Novel K. Rai and Dr. David Watters presenting the papers (2nd and 3rd from left)
Dr. Madhav Pokhrel and Dr. Clare O'Leary commentators of the papers. (Right)



Mr. Gopal Dahit comments from the floor



Mr. Ajit Man Tamang comments from the floor



Comments from the commentators



Dr. Novel K. Rai replying to the commentators



Suggestions from the Chair, Dr. Kamal P. Malla (Left)

The Indigenous Languages of Nepal (ILN):

Policy, Planning & Recommendations

Dr. David E. Watters
Department of Linguistics
University of Oregon
&

Prof. Dr. Novel Kishore Rai
Centre for Nepal and Asian Studies (CNAS)
Tribhuvan University

Introduction

Language is a supremely human achievement, and philosophers have long recognized that language, above all else, is the one thing that distinguishes us from every other biological species. No human society, however “backward” and technologically underdeveloped, exists without it. The big surprise in the twentieth century was the discovery that there is no such thing as a “primitive” language. In human language, there are no Darwinian missing links – no partially developed languages poor in grammar and consisting of a few dozen words. All are fully human, cognitively complex, and marvelous in design. Every language represents, in some sense, a different view of the world, a different “conceptual universe.” All, then, are worthy of recognition and policy accommodations that promote their well-being and preservation.

Because language is multi-dimensional and touches virtually every aspect of our human lives, a fully comprehensive national language policy would necessitate language planning at various levels of national life – education, literature development, broadcast, administration, jurisprudence, religion, trade, and language preservation, to name just a few. None of these things, however, make any sense if national education policy does not recognize the central importance of the mother-tongue in human development and education. We view this one tenet as absolutely foundational to all other language policies, and as a result, we will make it the major emphasis of this paper.

Background

During the “black years” of the Rana Regime and continuing on through the years of Panchayat rule in the Kingdom of Nepal, the state promulgated the doctrine of “one nation, one culture, one language,” and the national education policy was largely intolerant of indigenous and minority languages. Following the democratic “peoples’ movement” of 1990, however, the framers of the new Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal made a wise and significant step forward in recognizing the inherent rights of linguistic minorities. Article 4 of Part 1 of the 1990 Constitution of Nepal acknowledges that Nepal is a “multi-ethnic, multi-lingual” nation, and Article 18 goes a step further by making important legislative guarantees for minority languages – “each community shall have the right to operate schools up to the primary level in its own mother tongue for imparting education to its children.”

Policy makers, however, have been quick to point out that a constitutional right to primary education in the mother tongue is not the same as an active policy toward such. The argument goes that “if a minority language community has no interest in pursuing the provision, the government has no obligation to provide it.” We agree up to a point. Thus, for the first fifteen years of democracy, educational reform has been based on the hands-off, pragmatic policy of “Let’s wait and see.” We propose, however, that the “wait and see” period is over. Numerous grass-roots, minority language societies have sprung up in many parts of the country since 1990 demanding their “guaranteed” linguistic rights. Educators and government policy makers would be well advised to take these demands seriously.

Anthropologist Dor Bahadur Bista (1991: 151–152) saw Nepal’s ethnic minorities, i.e. those who have “remained untouched by Hindu caste principles,” as “Nepal’s greatest treasure.” He noted that though they make up a very sizeable proportion of the national population, they “live in remote areas, at a little above subsistence level, with little or no education, and no opportunities to develop and actualize their aspirations.” The Maoists have capitalized on this situation (de Sales 2000), while educators and policy makers have largely turned a blind eye. We all know the outcome.

The question that begs answering then is, “Can anything be done? Can minority language groups be brought into the mainstream of Nepalese culture and politics, while continuing to maintain a culture and identity of their own?” Our answer, drawing on “best practices” from multi-language education programs from around the world, is “Yes!” But, it will require deliberate planning and an active, hands-on policy that embraces the basic components of mother-tongue education as a “foundation” and “bridge” to full participation in the mainstream culture and language of the nation. As Turin (2005) has stated, it “requires a change of mindset: dispensing with the prevailing

belief that Nepal's indigenous unwritten languages are backward, primitive and somehow shameful, and moving to embrace ethnic languages as symbols of diversity and indigenous knowledge."

Robinson (quoted in *The Mother-Tongue Dilemma*, UNESCO 2003b) likewise notes that "for a multilingual approach to work, governments must see linguistic diversity as a boon and not a problem to be dealt with."

Building a strong and united educational system

Claims or demands for linguistic rights are often among the first rights that minorities voice when there is an evolution and political change towards democracy. Such demands can appear as a threat to political stability, and opponents sometimes assert that linguistic and cultural diversity, if entertained, will lead to ethnic strife. They argue that a single language and culture are necessary for national unity. This was the assumption that prevailed during the Rana and Panchayat eras, and not an easy one to displace.

However, the idea that successful integration means giving up your mother tongue is no longer accepted. Susan Malone (2004) comments that "a glance at recent and current history shows that the opposite is more often true: it is when their language and ethnicity are suppressed that people are more likely to rebel." She cites cases like the cessation of Bangladesh from Pakistan over the issue of language; the Lithuanians' anger over the mandatory use of Russian in their schools, which also led to conflict; as well as the current agitation of the Catalonians "against what they perceive as the Spanish government's linguistic and cultural imperialism."

What we advocate here is not the promotion of the mother-tongue to the detriment or displacement of Nepali. The place of Nepali as the national *lingua franca*, the language of status and language of higher education in the nation-state is firmly established. The claims to linguistic rights from minority and indigenous groups in Nepal is not a cry for autonomy, but a cry to be able to participate in the wider life of the nation on a par with those whose mother-tongue is Nepali. It is generally not recognized, at least not in Nepal, that children from minority language communities are at a distinct disadvantage over children whose mother-tongue is the official language. Among these disadvantaged children, discouragement is high, resulting in high drop-out rates (Toba, Toba, and Rai 2005).

United Nations Resolution A/56/116 (sometimes referred to as the "2015 Dakar Goals") recognizes that "...literacy is crucial to the acquisition, by every child, youth and adult, of essential life skills that enable them to address the challenges they can face in life, and [literacy] represents an essential step in basic education, which is an indispensable means for effective participation in the societies and economies of the twenty-first cen-

tury..." The Resolution (Paragraph 7) also supports the concept of *literacy for all* by reaffirming that "literacy for all is at the heart of basic education for all and that creating literate environments and societies is essential for achieving the goals of eradicating poverty, reducing child mortality, curbing population growth, achieving gender equality and ensuring sustainable development, peace and democracy..."

The Resolution also recognizes certain "disadvantaged groups," groups of people that urgently require special attention; "in particular, ethnic and linguistic minorities, indigenous populations, migrants, refugees, people with disabilities, aged people and pre-school children..."

Research has shown that children who begin education in their mother tongue make a better start, and continue to perform better, than those who are forced to learn in a new language as the medium of instruction. The principle applies also to adults seeking to become literate. Nadine Dutcher (2003) shows that in Guatemala an evaluation of students from 1986 to 1991 revealed that "bilingually taught children outperformed students in comparison schools on 7 out of 10 measures of academic achievement," and that "on the other 3 measures the average scores were about the same."

UNESCO (2003a), recognizing the same foundational truths, supports "mother-tongue instruction as a means of improving educational quality." In their Principles, they state that "Mother-tongue instruction is essential for initial instruction and literacy." Furthermore, they state that "every pupil should begin his [or her] formal education in his [or her] mother tongue," and that "adult illiterates should [also] make their first steps to literacy through their mother tongue..."

The Education Policy and Data Center (EPDC) notes that the greatest disparities in education occur between urban and rural populations, and that for Education for All to be effective, "under-served population groups must receive special focus."

Mother-tongue education not just a right, but a "bridge" to participation in the wider world.

In a multi-ethnic, multi-lingual nation like Nepal, the primary goal of mother-tongue education is to give all people, regardless of linguistic or ethnic background, equal access and ability in the language of the larger community and to that of the national education system. It is a "right" in the sense that it is the primary means through which minorities have access to the same quality of education as the rest of the population. It is also a "right" in the more fundamental sense of allowing minorities to preserve their own unique languages and cultures while at the same time participating in the opportunities of the wider world (see Bajracharya, Bhattachan, Dahal, and Khattri 2005).

Parents of children in some “endangered language communities” of Nepal have been observed encouraging the use of Nepali in the home, to the exclusion of their own mother-tongue, on the grounds that their children will be disadvantaged at school. Unfortunately, they are correct. Their children *are* disadvantaged. The results are devastating and irreversible – many minority languages are on the brink of extinction.

It is a well established fact, however, that children have the capacity to master several languages at the same time, so long as their environment fosters such. But in an educational environment that does not value the diversity of languages and the contribution that ethnic and linguistic diversity makes to the well-being of the nation, speakers of minority languages will continue to be marginalized and minority languages will continue to die. Both for the unity and strength of the nation and for the good of the indigenous nationalities themselves, steps must be taken in the educational sector that encourage language minorities to pass their languages on to their children with the confidence that they will not “lose out” as a result. This can happen only by giving them, at the same time, “bridge materials” and planned access to the national educational system.

“In today’s diverse world giving individuals confidence also means giving them the ability to communicate outside their own language group, either in another national language or in an international language” (UNESCO 2003b).

Thus, we do not advocate promoting indigenous languages at the expense of the speakers themselves. To give minority communities false enticements to continue in their native languages at the expense of economic well-being would be justifiably looked upon as an act of linguistic imperialism and paternalism (the “linguistic zoo” mentality). Rather, steps need to be taken to level the playing field. Where minority languages continue to survive in the face of economic and political pressure, it is because its speakers have learned to participate in the majority culture while at the same time receiving benefit, often more communal or spiritual than economic, from the minority culture (Watters 2002). People must be able to view their own language as a valuable heritage worth preserving, and national education policy makers must create policies that support this view. Speaking a minority language should be a good thing, not a disadvantage.

Linda King, Senior Programme Specialist with UNESCO’s Division for the Promotion of Quality Education, notes that though there are technical issues involved in education in the mother tongue, “The main thing is to respect local languages and legitimize them within the school system as well as giving pupils access to a national and foreign language” (quoted in *The Mother Tongue Dilemma*, UNESCO 2003b).

Urgent recommendations

Given the central importance of mother-tongue education in human development and national well-being, we make the following recommendations to be implemented without further delay.

Because most of the indigenous languages of Nepal are unwritten languages without alphabets and without literature (some on the verge of extinction)...

- ◆ there is an urgent need, through linguistic surveys, to determine those minority languages for which mother-tongue literacy programs are most urgent and most viable. This is based in part on the determination of the “status” of the language in a given geographical region, and its domains of use. Standard dialect varieties should be identified and selected for each mother-tongue region;
- ◆ linguistic documentation and descriptive studies should be carried out in the languages identified;
- ◆ the development of multi-lingual dictionaries;
- ◆ the development of grammars – descriptive grammars, reference grammars, and pedagogical grammars;
- ◆ practical orthographies need to be developed for these languages, including choice of script. A great deal of knowledge has been acquired in this area by linguists and literacy specialists in the past decades. This should not be attempted without the input of linguistic experts.
- ◆ model primers should be developed for these languages employing content that is sensitive to the local language, local teaching style, local art, and local culture. There are notable examples, some developed in Nepal, that can guide us (see, for example, Daniel Watters’ Mugali Primer Series). This involves *much more* than just translating Nepali primers into local languages – culture cannot be translated that easily.
- ◆ an evaluation of primers produced in 12 national languages by the Curriculum Development Centre (HMG). What primer development models, if any, were used in their development? How have the primers been introduced, implemented? It is important to measure current and future donor input against performance.
- ◆ the founding of a “National Language Academy,” having autonomous status, and having the responsibility of understanding and articulating “best practice” policies with respect to mother-tongue and multilingual education.

Mid-term recommendations

In some cases, running concurrent with “urgent recommendations,” several policies should be implemented as soon as possible, including:

- ◆ one or more “pilot projects” in mother-tongue education for language communities which have met some of the “urgent” requirements, i.e. urgency, viability, development of an adequate orthography, completion of sound primers, etc. Primers *should not* be mere translations of existing Nepali primers.
- ◆ the training of competent and fully qualified teachers who are familiar with the life of the indigenous people and are able to teach in the mother tongue. An emphasis should be placed on *women* mother-tongue teachers, at least one in every primary setting.
- ◆ giving priority of employment to teachers who speak the minority languages of the regions to which they are assigned. This ensures, at a minimum, that the mother-tongue can be used to explain new concepts that are introduced in the Language of Wider Communication (LWC), in this case, Nepali.
- ◆ development of adequate “bridge materials,” designed to take the minority-language student from basic competence in his or her mother tongue to competence and ability in Nepali. This *must* be completed by the time mother-tongue students have completed the initial pilot project reading programs.
- ◆ postponing the introduction of international languages like English to a later phase, after skills in the mother-tongue and the LWC have been adequately addressed;
- ◆ a provision, by the Public Service Commission, to give basic orientation and training to CDOs, LDOs, and DEOs in the local languages spoken in their appointed districts;
- ◆ the appointment of a linguist to the Royal Nepal Academy;
- ◆ the appointment of a linguist to the Central Bureau of Statistics;
- ◆ radio announcements and bulletins pertaining to health, environment and other social issues should be propagated in the mother-tongue.
- ◆ regional broadcast service in regional languages by Radio Nepal;
- ◆ FM programs owned and operated by local communities;

Longer-term recommendations

Recognizing UNESCO’s Principle I (2003a), that “literacy can only be maintained if there is an adequate supply of reading material. for adolescents and adults as well as for

school children, and for entertainment as well as for study,” we recommend:

- ◆ the production and distribution of teaching materials, reading materials, and other learning resources in all mother tongues being promoted in the national educational program. This will require the development of mother tongue writers and authors.
- ◆ ongoing educational programs for the continued development of qualified mother-tongue teachers;
- ◆ ongoing production of primers, readers, and manuals for mother tongue education. This includes the ongoing production and research into the production of adequate bridge materials.
- ◆ development of materials for the revitalization and maintenance of heritage languages. This is the opposite of the “mother-tongue → Nepali” bridge, in that it is a “Nepali → mother-tongue” bridge (see UNESCO 2005).
- ◆ the introduction of local, indigenous languages into the curriculum as “elective” subjects, on a par with Sanskrit and classical languages. This enables mother-tongue Nepali speakers to participate in the life and culture of minority peoples, thereby promoting positive attitudes to minority and indigenous languages and the cultures they express.

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Comments by the commentators

Commentator 1: Dr. Madhav Pokharel

The paper written by two of my colleagues David E. Watters and Novel Kishore Rai [in this volume] has first set the general theoretical sociolinguistic framework to explain why a government facing multilingual situation in a country should adopt a language policy and have an efficient and strategic language planning to do justice to each of the mother tongues spoken in the country.

The paper does not analyze the linguistic situations and problems languages of Nepal are facing in the country and a critical evaluation of the steps Nepal has taken to document, accommodate, develop and preserve them is almost missing, but they are sarcastic towards the government's attitude of 'wait and see' so far in the direction of documentation, preservation and development of Nepalese languages which are facing different patterns of language endangerment. However, their theoretical highlights help the readers to understand and compare the language problems in the country.

The writers have stressed that the government's responsibility is needed with strategic language planning and an active hands-on policy to cope with the various patterns of endangerment the languages of Nepal are undergoing, irrespective of the interest of the language community.

There seems to be confusion among many people of Nepal and some of the policy makers that the promotion of minority languages will deteriorate the status of Nepali. The writers clearly note that the "Promotion of a minority language is not in the detriment to Nepali" and that "Nepali as a national lingua franca, the language of status and higher education in the nation-state is firmly established". They clarify that the cry for the promotion and development of minority languages is to be able to participate in the nation building.

The paper also notes that bilingually taught students have better performance of their language competence with an implication that if children from the minority language background are taught simultaneously in their mother tongue(s), national language Nepali and an international language like English their performance is enhanced rather than handicapped. The writers suggest that Nepal should also benefit from such experimental evidence by 'building a strong and united education system'. They suggest that 'underserved population must receive special focus' in language planning.

In the mid-nineties Government of Nepal formed a commission under the leadership of Bairagi Kainla to study linguistic problems, statuses and situations of Nepalese mother tongues and suggest what type of language policy the Government should adopt and

how strategically languages of the nation can be planned. The Commission gave recommendations based on the interactions with the mother tongue experts, linguists and politicians. More than a decade has passed. Following the suggestion, Central Department of Linguistics has come into existence at Tribhuvan University; regional radio programs in a few mother tongues are started and Curriculum Development Center at Sano Thimi has been preparing textbooks in the mother tongues, but the government has not adequately followed the sentiments of the recommendations. This paper has not mentioned anything about the Commission, but several of the suggestions this paper has given at the end are repetitions from the Commission's recommendations. My point is: if the process of giving suggestions and recommendations continues without any substantial follow-up, then it will be too late before we can do any justice to the kaleidoscopic linguistic cultures each of the mother tongues bear, because in every two decades a few mother tongues come on the verge of extinction.

Following points of the paper call special attention:

Mother-tongue education not just a right, but a bridge to participation in the wider world

- ◆ Mother tongue education is a primary means through which minorities have the same quality education as the rest of the population.
- ◆ Minorities should be encouraged to preserve their own language by participating.
- ◆ In the present situation parents encourage their children not to use their own mother tongue. We should, therefore, encourage minority parents to pass their mother tongue to their children.
- ◆ We do not advocate promoting indigenous languages at the expense of the speakers themselves.
- ◆ Where minority languages continue to survive in the face of economic and political pressure, it is because its speakers have learned to participate in the majority culture while at the same time receiving benefit, often more communal and spiritual than economic, from minority culture.
- ◆ We should respect local languages and legitimate them within the school system as well as giving peoples access to national and foreign language.

Watters and Rai have divided their recommendations in three different sections. Briefly, they are as follows:

Urgent recommendations

- ◆ There should be linguistic surveys to get the clear picture of the states of Nepalese languages.

- ◆ There should be linguistic documentation and descriptive studies of each of the mother tongues.
- ◆ The government should create an environment to publish multi-lingual dictionaries in each of the mother tongues.
- ◆ Different types of grammars (descriptive, reference and pedagogic) are to be prepared.
- ◆ All the mother tongues should be helped and encouraged to develop practical orthographies. This should not be attempted without the input of linguistic experts.
- ◆ Model primers with contents of sensitive issues (local language, local teaching style, local culture and local art) should be developed.
- ◆ There should be evaluations of primers already prepared by Curriculum Development Center.
- ◆ The government should found National Language Academy compared to the Central Institute of Indian Languages (CIIL) to help the government to make language policy and language planning; and coordinate between mother tongue speakers, linguists, anthropologists and government planners to do linguistic surveys and documentation, to develop grammars and dictionaries and in several other ways.

Midterm recommendations

- ◆ One or more pilot projects
- ◆ Teachers' training with priority to employment of teachers speaking minority language(s)
- ◆ Developing bridge materials from the competence and ability in native language to national language
- ◆ Postponing the introduction of an international language to a later phase after skills in the mother tongues properly addressed
- ◆ Provision by Public Service Commission to train CDOs, LDOs, in the local languages of their appointed areas
- ◆ Appointment of a linguist to the Royal Nepal Academy
- ◆ Appointment of a linguist to the Central Bureau of Statistics
- ◆ Radio announcements in the mother tongues on health, environment and social issues
- ◆ Regional broadcast services

- ◆ FM programs owned and operated by local communities

Long term recommendations

- ◆ Developing of mother tongue writers for the production of teaching materials, reading materials and learning resources
- ◆ Ongoing educational programs for qualified teachers
- ◆ Ongoing production of materials
- ◆ Materials for the revitalizing and maintenance of mother tongues
- ◆ Introduction of local languages into the curriculum as an elective subject in par with Sanskrit and classical languages

The writers have based these recommendations on sociolinguistic, psycholinguistic, applied linguistic and sociological experiments done in the field of language policy and strategic language planning. I believe that the concerned policy makers would follow these recommendations to promote harmony among nationalities and preservation and development of mother tongues by establishing a National Language Academy similar to the Central Institute of Indian Languages (CIIL). The founder director of the CIIL Professor Dr. D.B. Pattnayak (personal communication) once suggested that Nepal Government should send a team of experts to visit CIIL and study how the Institute is serving the Government of India in the matter of language planning. Then possibly Nepal Government would step forward towards how all the mother tongues in this country could be justifiably developed.

Commentator 2: Dr. Clare O'Leary

I have the opportunity to serve in 3 different countries like Pakistan (3 years), India and Nepal (12 years). In comparison to the neighboring countries, Nepal has at least put the policies regarding ILN in the 1990 Constitution, which is a very positive development. This is a good start though not a perfect one. To make the articles happen, collaboration between the government and the institutions or organizations is a must. More active involvement of the minority speakers are needed. The waiting period should be over and it is time to move to action. It is important for those concerned about making the policies become real in action that they would stand back and consider for the language groups what I can do, we do or we do together to accept the marginalized minority language groups who have both economical and educational disadvantages in many instances throughout the countries to accept them to successfully develop and implement more effective education and institutions. Without support, it is unrealistic. They need support from inside and outside. The best practices in education in linguistic diverse societies around the world point to a mortal language approach. There is no reason

to assume that the promotion of Nepali will mean the subtractive use of other languages. Promoting both Nepali and another tongue will be supportive to the community in a supportive way. The displacement of local mother tongue by Nepali when parents feel pressured to send their children to Nepali/English medium school and fail to foster the knowledge. That is a loss for the nation and to the cultural heritage of Nepal. The diversity of Nepal should be preserved and if verbal assertion of minority language policies are to become really practical, several steps should be taken into cooperation and collaboration between three types of bodies.

1. Academic bodies: Institutions, Universities, Non-formal Institutions and agencies.
2. Policy making bodies: Local, National and International Levels.
3. Practitioners: Those who really implement the programs, formal and non-formal sectors, children and adults. If these policies are to be translated into actions these people are actually to be involved in decision making in how to make it possible.

There are not adequate resources within anyone of these streams to implement the best practices. We would like it to happen. However collaboration steps can be taken.

Identify practical and implement able steps within community, which pass through collaboration. Identify what could be done for such community and people with the resources that exist now. Don't wait until all the ideal resources will be available before you start. Implementing practical steps will only happen with good planning and planning needs to consider various recommendations stated in this paper.

Materials like dictionaries and textbooks need to be produced to have an ideal implementation. If materials are produced without enough study, they become useless thus documentation is needed for good planning. Concrete education materials, culturally relevant, basic-reading materials, bridge materials (in Nepali and mother language) should be developed. Conduct pilot projects, identify the experimental programmes, learn and evaluate them. If successful than use them in Planning. Help mother tongue speakers to participate in decision-making programs. Identify the right people, the mother tongue speakers. For financial sources, there are sources for some money. Donor agencies, INGOs, Institutions can help pay for some programmes which are realistic. There are three kinds of problem areas:

1. Linguistic problems: Inadequate expertise.
2. Attitude problems: Not sufficient people for minority language in the community. They don't think that it is important to learn mother tongue.

3. Program management problem: Lack of planning (lack of teachers, materials etc), distribution problem, lack of funding etc.

These three problems should be overcome for a successful planning.

Queries and Suggestions from the Floor

Tej Gauchan

The terms 'Language of the Nation' and 'National Languages' seem contradictory. Is it possible to suggest the right term? The need for a separate autonomous organization to look after all aspects of ILN arose 12 years ago but still it hasn't been implemented. Is there any organization responsible for the implementation process? If yes, they should play an active part; if no, such kind of organization has to be established. Is it possible for a single academy to look after all the works on languages or is it necessary to establish a new one?

Tika Ram Chaudhary

The urgent recommendation stating the need to take inputs from linguistic specialists is a very good one. Among uneducated population, most belong to the indigenous groups so long term planning has to be done for their upliftment. So it would be better for NFDIN to put the Non-formal education in the urgent recommendation rather than the long term recommendation. For making policy, planning and coordination, NFDIN should follow the four basic principals: 1) Preservation of the mother language and emphasis on education in mother tongue; 2) mother culture and traditions should not be excluded during policy making and planning; 3) the skills prevailing in the existing society or culture should be taken as a basic skill and should be included in the education system; and 4) there is an urgent need to include the modern technology in the society.

Ang Nawang Sherpa

Is it possible that Sanskrit and Tibetan languages be considered as the national languages? It is a fact that the Tibetan language used by the northern dwellers is a national language. The suggestions provided in the seminars in the past should have produced some results. If not, suspicion may remain. The indigenous people should provide suggestions regarding the improvements to be made in the existing education policy. For the development of the languages, family plays an important role. As the paper has pointed out that the existing education policies are obstacles in the development of ILN, then NFDIN should provide suggestions to the government on how and where to make amendments for the development of an effective policy.

Family plays an important role in the preservation and promotion of the mother languages. NFDIN should provide awareness programmes about using mother tongue at home for the preservation of culture and language.

Is it necessary to establish another organization for the development of languages? Isn't NFDIN sufficient? Follow up activities should be carried out and reports should be made available in the next seminars.

Gopal Dahit

Local languages should be taught at every level of education (primary, high school and university levels). The government should provide financial aid for the continuity of the newspapers published in mother tongues. Good publications and declarations should be translated into the mother tongues and made available at grass root level. A separate organization is required to publish the manifesto and declarations of indigenous groups. NFDIN and RNA are not sufficient for the development of ILN. Publishing 2 books annually are not good enough. Trilingual policy should be adopted. To provide higher education to indigenous peoples, scholarships should be made available.

Ajit Man Tamang

It is more important to publish the materials in trilingual rather than bilingual. In the Curriculum Development Centre (CDC), a post for a linguist is a must. In NTV, respective linguists should be appointed where the density of the language speakers is heavy. Language policies should be included at the district levels also.

Dilendra Subba

During curriculum development, the government is only interested in the formal programmes and not in the non-formal programmes. The government should give equal interest in both the programmes. To promote the use of mother tongues, it should be declared the official languages in the local communities.

Prof. Dr.Yogendra Prasad Yadava

The paper is very comprehensive and clear. We need some suggestions to start the second phase program and if possible, it would be more practical to narrow down the recommendations and policies. We should leave behind the broad national perspectives and focus more on the collaboration between the organizations and institutions.

I think it is better to put the linguistic survey as the umbrella term and put the rest under it in the form of subpoints. We have developed a proposal for the Linguistic Survey of Nepal.

Sant B. Gurung

We believe in networking and cooperation with the donor agencies and national and international linguistic institutions for funding and co-operation and we are doing the same. One of the main objectives of this seminar is to establish a committee for networking and cooperation among the national and international institutes.

Dr. Chundamani Bandhu

If possible, it would be better if we could suggest how many languages should be taught in the 1st year, 2nd year and the 3rd year of the study. For the development of the educational materials, bilingual bridge materials should be published and included in the society. Why not collect and publish folk stories from the field. If urgent need to teach in mother tongue arises, local women should be trained as teachers for effective outcomes. This should be included in the urgent recommendations. Among the enumerated and non-enumerated languages declared by the NFDIN, it is possible that only the proposals for enumerated languages get selected. So to bring the depressed linguistic society into the mainstream, we should reconsider the selection process.

Replies from the Paper Presenters

Answers to the Commentators' Queries by the paper presenters

Dr. N.K. Rai

We will definitely add the suggestions in our recommendations. It is necessary to have a single version on whether to have a National Language Academy or not. NFDIN works on the different aspects of languages; so is it possible that we establish an academy exclusively working only for development of the national languages? The government has not allocated budget for the primary level mother tongue teachers. In such cases, to suggest education in mother tongue at every level seems impractical. To provide trainings for 200 women teachers seems unachievable but 20 sounds practical. It is important that the text materials should not be a translated document rather it should include the cultural and social aspects of the local communities for easy understanding.

Remarks from the Chairperson: Dr. K.P. Malla

Discussion should be focused on the indigenous languages of Nepal but I found the discussion on the whole of the Nepal's language. For primary level education in mother tongue, which language at which level should be made clear for proper implementation. The National Education commission, 2049 has declared that English subject is included

into the course only in class 4 and one optional course can be taken while the financial burden should be borne by the local societies. Also the NEC has accepted the indigenous languages to be included in the optional course. But the government didn't seem eager to implement the agreements. In the past 15 years, there has not yet been declared the use of local languages or the indigenous languages in any of the public domains. At present when the insurgents make the issues about providing recognition to the indigenous languages and capitalized the concept, then only did the government seem to show some interest in such agreement. Budget has been allocated for the publication of the textbooks or study materials but no records can be found regarding how many books have been published or where it has been implemented so far. Even if mentioned as the national languages in the Constitution of the Kingdom, the high court has barred its use in the public domain. Only the language of the nation is allowed to be in use. Policy matters when they are implemented into actions. But I couldn't find any clear actions stated in the entire paper.

Closing remarks from Sant Bahadur Gurung

I would like to thank again the chairman, presenters, commentators and the participants for their valuable inputs throughout the session.



Prof. Tej Ratna Kansakar (Left) Commentators
 Dr. Harka Bahadur Gurung (Middle) Chair Person
 Prof. Nirmal Man Tuladhar (Middle) Presenter
 Dr. Stephen Watters (Right) Presenter



Prof. Tej Ratna Kansakar commenting on the paper



Comments from the floor



Prof. Nirmal Man Tuladhar replying to the commentors



Dr. Stephen Watters replying to the commentors



Closing remarks from Mr. Pradeep Bajracharya

III Session

Commencement of the session

Third Session commenced with the topic "ILN: Capacity Building, Institutional Support and Coordination". Dr. Harka Gurung was the chairperson and the paper presenters were Stephen Watters and Prof. Nirmal Man Tuladhar.

This paper provides a framework for establishing coordination among diverse existing national and international agencies in order to carry out the works related to the preservation and promotion of indigenous languages and their use in education and other fields. It consists of three sections. In the first section, the authors present a list of agencies and individuals involved in language work in Nepal. It is not a complete list but it does give a fairly broad picture of those involved in the field. The second section of the paper suggests a model of cooperation known as Community of Practice (CoP), which refers to a loosely affiliated group of people that share and collaborate in getting over problems. The third section of the paper makes some specific suggestions about the form of the collaboration which may be said to comprise three groups of people: academics, practitioners and policy makers. Finally, the paper writers suggest that support and coordination can become possible as organizations and individuals see the need for such.

Prof. Tej Ratna Kansakar was the invited commentator on this paper. It was followed by questions from the floor and their replies from the paper presenters.

The Indigenous Languages of Nepal (ILN): Situation, Policy Planning & Coordination

Friday, October 28, 2005

Indigenous Languages of Nepal: Capacity Building, Institutional Support and Coordination

Stephen Watters

SIL International

Nirmal Man Tuladhar

Centre for Nepal and Asian Studies (CNAS)

1. Introduction

In the previous papers presented at this symposium, the current language situation has been described, the merits of multi-lingual education have been explained, and recommendations to HMG have been given. We have heard of the importance of language in both development and cultural preservation. In this paper, we speak of who is doing language work in Nepal, and a framework for how these institutions might work more closely together in solving problems in language development in Nepal.

In the first section of the paper, we present a list of agencies and individuals involved in language work in Nepal. This list is not comprehensive, but it does give a fairly broad picture of who is involved. It is important to note that the language communities themselves, even if they are not involved in language “work” per say, are a central, foundational part of any language development effort.

In the second section of the paper, we introduce a model of cooperation known as Community of Practice (CoP) — a loosely affiliated group of people that share and collaborate in overcoming common problems. In fact, there may already be a good deal of this collaboration going on in informal ways. The model suggests that the extent to which this informal collaboration is going on is the extent to which problem solving can happen.

In the third section of the paper, we make some specific suggestions about the form of the collaboration. We find it helpful to think about three groups of people: academics,

practitioners and policy makers. It is probably the case that the CoP idea can be found within each of these groups, even if it is in a limited form. In addition, we believe that each of these groups can help contribute to the other groups, particularly in bringing solutions to one another. That is, policy should be informed by practice, and practice and academics should be interwoven in obvious ways. Toward this end, we suggest a CoP type of community in which these three groups can come up with genuine practical solutions in sustainable development and preservation programs for the minority groups of Nepal. One short term obtainable goal we would like to see come out of such collaborative efforts is a “resource centre” out of which language communities can be served, and serve themselves.

While the title of our paper suggests that we speak of capacity building, institutional support, and coordination, in fact, we have remained broad in these issues, and speak rather of collaborative interaction between the organizations and individuals involved. In as much as this is possible, we suggest that support and coordination can become possible as organizations and individuals see the need for such.

2. Organizations and Individuals in Language Work

One of the early efforts at building capacity and institutional support in language work in Nepal began with an agreement between the Institute of Nepal and Asian Studies (INAS) and the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) in 1972 under the umbrella of Tribhuvan University. Under this initiative an MA and PhD in Linguistics was launched, as well as four projects: a linguistic survey of Nepal, study of bilingualism in Nepal, linguistic description of unwritten languages of Nepal, and dictionaries and glossaries. References to the reports and papers from that period can be found in Sueyoshi Toba's *A Bibliography of Nepalese Languages and Linguistics*. The first seminar on the language situation in Nepal was sponsored by INAS in 1974.

Since that time there has been much progress in capacity building and institutional support. One institution which has been vital in research in Nepal is CNAS (which was INAS). It has provided an affiliation to many foreign scholars working on Nepalese Studies, including some 70 foreign linguists who have conducted studies of different languages of Nepal.

Another important part of the linguistic landscape has been that of the Linguistic Society of Nepal which was founded in 1979 with the objective of the advancement of scientific study and research in language. It has held an annual conference for the last 25 years, as well as conducted workshops, seminars, and talk programmes. The Society worked as a pressure group to establish the Central Department of Linguistics at Tribhuvan University — an effort that took some thirteen years.

The Central Department of Linguistics (CDL) was established in May 1996. Each year about ten students complete the post-graduate degree in MA, and currently fifteen students have enrolled for Ph.D. programme in linguistics at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, TU. There are approximately fifty students enrolled in this years linguistics programme, of which twenty percent are from minority groups of Nepal. Each year many of these students go on to work in teaching capacities and with NGOs involved in various development programmes around the country.

One current project under CDL is the Encyclopedia of Nepalese Languages Project which seeks to provide a typological overview of significant genetic subgroups of the languages of Nepal, and a sketch grammar of several of the major languages within those subgroups. Another current project under CDL is "The Chintang and Puma Documentation Project (CPDP)" carried out in cooperation with University of Leipzig. The main objective is to provide audiovisual documentation of language practice of Chintang and Puma, along with an ethnography. It is a 3-year project funded by the Volkswagen Foundation. The project office is at the CNAS building.

In addition to the above, there is a broad range of work under the auspices of HMG, INGOs, NGO and individuals. We are grateful to a number of people who have collated lists of organizations and individuals involved in language work in Nepal. We want to particularly thank Enterprise Development International (EDI) and Dr. Clare O'Leary and Lynn Moore for letting us copy freely from their lists. This should not be considered a comprehensive list, particularly under the NGO section.

2.1. HMG-Nepal:

- A. Ministry of Education & Sports
- B. Department of Education (MoES)
- C. National NFE Council (MoES)
- D. National Non Formal Education Centre
- E. Curriculum Development Centre
- F. National Federation for the Development of Indigenous Nationalities
- G. Social Welfare Council
- H. Nepali Languages in Information Technology (NLIT)

2.2. Tribhuvan University

- A. Central Department of Linguistics (CDL)
- B. Centre for Nepalese and Asian Studies (CNAS)
- C. Research Centre for Education Innovation and Development (CERID)
- D. Central Department of English (Faculty of Education)
- E. Central Department of Nepali (Faculty of Education)

2.3. UN Agencies

- A. UNICEF
- B. UNESCO

2.4. Bilateral Organizations

- A. DANIDA: (Denmark)
- B. Embassy of Norway: Bilingual Education Project

2.5. INGOs

- A. World Bank
- B. ICIMOD
- C. Janajati Empowerment Project (DFID)
- D. Action Aid Nepal
- E. PACT Nepal
- F. Plan Nepal
- G. Save the Children USA
- H. World Education
- I. World Vision
- J. World Neighbours
- K. UMN (United Mission to Nepal)
- L. Enterprise Development International (EDI)

2.6. NGOs

- A. Nepal Nationalities Language Preservation Institute
- B. National Resource Centre for Non Formal Education (NRC-NFE)
- C. Education, Curriculum and Training Associates (ECTA)
- D. International Nepal Fellowship
- E. National Indigenous Women's Federation (13 organisations)
- F. Madan Puruskar Pustakalaya (MPP)

2.7. Individuals

In addition to the above organizations, as has been noted above, there have been a significant number of expatriate individuals involved in research programmes over the years. Most of these have been affiliated with Tribhuvan University through CNAS, CERID, or the Central Department of Linguistics (CDL). The Himalayan Languages Project at Leiden University is a research project which has contributed significantly to academic research in the languages of the Himalaya, including languages in Nepal.

One noteworthy group of individuals is what we have termed the “friends of Nepal,” who over many years make occasional trips to Nepal under their own auspices. These are individuals associated with Universities and Institutes from around the world. Much

of the work done by these individuals is academic in nature, rather than focused on language development.

2.8. Web Related Language Links

An important component of support for language related work is that which can be found on the web. The following are useful links with information on endangered and minority languages. These web sites are excellent resources of information, as well as portals to potential funders. The following list has been culled from *The Cornell Conference on Language and Poverty* (web site: <http://ling.cornell.edu/language_and_poverty/links.html> with a few additions of our own.

- ◆ An excellent bibliography on language endangerment compiled by Tasaku Tsunoda at the University of Tokyo is at: <<http://www.tooyoo.l.u-tokyo.ac.jp/BibLE/index.html>>
- ◆ Diversité Langues <<http://www.telug.quebec.ca/diverscite/entree.htm>>
- ◆ Digital Himalayan Project <<http://www.digitalhimalaya.com>>
- ◆ Gesellschaft für Bedrohte Sprachen <http://www.uni-koeln.de/gbs/e_index.html>
- ◆ Endanger.htm (focuses on issues in U.S. language policy) <<http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/jwcrawford/endanger.htm>>
- ◆ Endangered Languages Fund <<http://sapir.ling.yale.edu/~elf/>>
- ◆ **Foundation for Endangered Languages <<http://www.ogmios.org/links.html>>
- ◆ Hans Rausing Endangered Languages Project, SOAS, University of London <<http://www.hrelp.org/>>
- ◆ International Clearing House for Endangered Languages <<http://www.tooyoo.l.u-tokyo.ac.jp/iche3ichel.html>>
- ◆ Linguistic Society of American Committee on Endangered Languages and their Preservation <<http://www.indigenous-language.org/endangered/>>
- ◆ MELIN (Minority European Languages Information Network) <<http://www.ite.ie/melin.htm>>
- ◆ MILLE Website (UK non-indigenous minority languages) <<http://www.ling.lancs.ac.uk/monkey/ihe/mille/1fra1.htm>>
- ◆ Mercator—dret i legsiacio linguistics (Linguistic rights in the EU) <<http://www.ciemer.org/mercator/index-gb.htm>>
- ◆ SIL International <<http://www.sil.org>>

- ◆ Terralingua: Partnerships for Linguistic & Biological Diversity <<http://www.terralingua.org/>>
- ◆ **Volkswagen Foundation, Documentation of Endangered Languages <<http://www.mpi.nl/DOBES>>
- ◆ Yinka Dene Language Institute (Dene languages, information on Canadian native languages) <<http://www.ydli.org>>
- ◆ Poverty, Inequality and Development Initiative of Cornell <<http://www.arts.cornell.edu/poverty/>>

As noted above, a number of the above sites are potential donors for documentation programs of endangered languages. In particular, we would like to draw your attention to:

1. Endangered Languages Documentation Programme at SOAS (School of Oriental and African Studies)
2. Foundation for Endangered Languages (<http://www.ogmios.org/grant.htm>)
3. Wenner-Gren
4. Volkswagen
5. National Endowment for the Humanities
6. The Endangered Language Fund

3. Community of Practice

While the view taken of language development by HMG is often ambiguous and unclear, the list above points clearly to the fact that there are many organizations (both international and national) and academic and research oriented projects that are keenly interested in the development and social issues surrounding language. Given the current political situation, it is likely that ambiguity will remain the status quo, but in spite of this, we suggest it is important that the above organizations, institutions, and individuals “come together” to share and collaborate on issues of common interest, and that in fact, it is only through “coming together” that sustainable solutions can be brought about. Once such model of “coming together” is known as Community of Practice — a usually informal group of people committed to problem solving through sharing and collaboration.

3.1. A Brief Introduction

The individuals credited with Communities of Practice are Etienne Wenger and Jean Lave, although such communities have been in existence since the advent of human

society. In studying apprenticeships as a window to learning theory, they found that the relationship was not simply one of master and student, but that the learning came from other journeymen and more advanced apprentices. In other words, apprentices tended to learn more from other apprentices rather than from only “the master.” The term community of practice was coined to refer to the community that acts as a “living curriculum” for the apprentice.

Wenger (2004:1) defines CoP in the following way: “Communities of practice are groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly.” But not everything that is called a community is really a community as defined here. Wenger gives some basic characteristics:

A. A shared interest:

- i. not just a network
- ii. commitment to the domain
- iii. shared competence

B. A community

- i. engage in joint activities and discussions
- ii. help each other, learn together
- iii. share information

C. A Practice

- i. not merely a community of interest
- ii. are practitioners
- iii. a shared practice with experiences, stories, tools, and ways of addressing recurring problems

It is by developing these three areas that Communities of Practice can be formed, and grown to be communities of knowledge and empowerment.

3.2. Communities of Practice and Language Development

Wenger (2004:6) shows that this idea of learning has had applications in numerous spheres, particularly in knowledge based organizations, but also in government, education, professional associations, development projects, and civic life. With regard to International Development he says:

“There is increasing recognition that the challenge of developing nations is as much a knowledge as a financial challenge. A number of people believe that a communities-of-practice approach can provide a new paradigm for development work. It emphasizes knowledge building among practitioners. Some development agencies now see their

role as conveners of such communities, rather than as providers of knowledge.”

Whatever the readers philosophical approach to development, it behooves language workers to understand the importance of sharing in a common practice with one another, but more importantly to provide the impetus and resources to local level language practitioners for the development of these kinds of communities.

4. Proposal for CoP in Nepal

As noted above, there are different types of organizations and individuals who are involved in language work: academics, language development practitioners, and policy makers. Each group have a degree of interaction among themselves, as for example the annual Linguistic Society of Nepal meetings which is primarily about academics, or the occasional meetings organized by literacy workers. There is some interaction between the different types of groups mentioned above, as for example the interaction between the Central Department of Linguistics (i.e. academic) and the Janajati Pratistan (i.e. development and policy). However, as Malone (2004) has noted:

Clearly, implementing a minority language education program is not a simple undertaking. There are few, if any, minority language communities that possess all the resources needed to establish and sustain their own program. A collaborative effort involving the minority community, government and non-government organizations and funding agencies will be needed if this relatively small percentage of the world's learners are to participate meaningfully in **Education for All**. Can it be done? As minority language communities around the world have shown, yes, with good planning and cooperation, it can indeed be done.

The problems for language development in Nepal (an indeed for most countries) are varied in nature. O'Leary and Moore (2003) suggest that there are three kinds of basic problems in language development: linguistic problems, attitude problems, and program management problems. Linguistic problems are those such as inadequate expertise in dealing with orthography and language standardization. Attitude problems are those which deal with people's preferences and perceptions toward Nepali and the mother tongue. Program management problems are those such as a lack of trained mother-tongue speakers, lack of training materials for teachers, lack of funds, etc..

It is clear that the expertise for resolving these kinds of problems rarely lies with one organization or individual. Rather each of the types of groups mentioned above (i.e. academics, practitioners, policy makers) have an important role in the overall language development movement, but can be stymied in their efforts when they ignore the knowledge and resources of the other groups. While Wenger outlines the three characteristics

of a CoP above, it's difficult to say what it is that ignites an interactive learning community. There aren't any "silver bullets" or "sure fire methods." One way of getting started, though, is "creating space" for interaction i.e. being intentional about it, rather than just "letting it happen."

We suggest a number of different "spaces:"

- ◆ inter-disciplinary interaction i.e. academics, practitioners, and policy makers
- ◆ within the disciplines themselves i.e. Linguistic Society of Nepal
- ◆ between language communities i.e. Sherpas collaborating with Tamangs
- ◆ within a language community i.e. Sherpa teachers working with orthography developers

A specific example of what one such "space" could look like is to organize something like a resource centre for literacy and language development. The purpose of such a centre would be to facilitate partnership, networking and collaboration among literacy stakeholders in Nepal. Such a centre could facilitate:

- ◆ awareness of the importance of functional mother tongue transitional adult literacy
- ◆ building capacity in Community Based Organisations (CBOs) and other literacy stakeholders
- ◆ research activities aimed at reviewing existing literacy programmes with a view of improving effectiveness and efficiency in their delivery mechanisms
- ◆ collection and documentation of useful literature on literacy and non-formal education
- ◆ develop a resource library of materials on literacy

In the end, what form a collaborative community takes is less important to us, as it is that the issues of language development and cultural preservation are genuinely being addressed. This requires more than talking and sharing — as noted in the inherent characteristics of a CoP. It requires "doing" i.e. implementation, and it is in the "doing" that in fact learning happens. This "doing" will require more than what is being done now, but could be facilitated by CoP type knowledge communities composed of minority speakers, academics, organizations, and policy makers. Many language development problems encountered in Nepal are not unique to Nepal, and the lessons learned from other places, and the "best practices" which have emerged from those situations can serve to give ideas of how problems can be solved. But the application of these solutions need collaboration between all parties, and cannot be sustained by one party alone.

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Commentator: Dr. Tej R. Kansakar**1. Introductory Remarks**

The paper, apart from the Introduction, consists of three main sections: Organization and Individuals in Language Work, Community of Practice (CoP), and Proposal for CoP in Nepal. The paper in this connection focuses on two main inputs to language research and language development in Nepal, namely the inputs from Tribhuvan University (TU) related organizations such as the Central Department of Linguistics (CDL), Research Centre for Nepal and Asian Studies (CNAS), Linguistics Society of Nepal (LSN), Centre for Educational Research, Innovation and Development (CERID), Faculty of Education, etc; and secondly, the work undertaken on the auspices of IIMG, INGO's, various projects and individuals. These also include web-related language links with information on endangered and minority languages. As suggested by the writers, the lists provided under INGO's, NGO's and web sites related to language links will need to be annotated with contact information and a short summary of the work being conducted by each organization before publication of this paper.

The following comments focus on three levels of capacity building and institutional support: (1) Community and social level, (2) Institutional level, and (3) Local and National level coordination.

2. Capacity building at the Community level**2.1 Education and Language Development**

- (a) Spread of education, improvement in literacy with focus on adult literacy
- (b) Education in the mother-tongue
- (c) Development of Script for unwritten languages
- (d) Training of local manpower: teachers and administrators
- (e) Development of teaching materials and reading materials
- (f) Promote awareness of one's language and culture
- (g) Development of leadership qualities, etc.

2.2 Social change and development as main goals

- (a) Important factors that produce social change
- (b) Physical environment and demographic structure
- (c) Language and cultural diffusion: Language contacts lead to Bilinguals who in turn bring language changes and social changes.
- (d) Spread of new ideas, ideologies and value systems

- (e) Decision-making in educational policy, political and economic systems.

3. Institutional level

3.1 Capacity building under the CDL

- (a) The Department has no fund allocations for faculty and student research on languages of Nepal as requisite for MA degree and faculty development.
- (b) Project collaboration between CDL and National Federation for Development of Indigenous Nationalities (NFDIN).
- (c) CDL and LSN to conduct workshop seminars on language issues and problems.
- (d) CDL to have advisor role to HMG on Population Census and to initiate language planning for education, management and technical fields.
- (e) Basic goals of language planning are non-linguistic and are related to national integration, economic progress, mobilization and development of human resources, upliftment of backward minority groups, creation of competent and technical manpower for social modernization.
- (f) To advice TU on curriculum reform, manpower development, training and production of necessary materials to improve language education at school and university levels.
- (g) To collaborate with NGO's and INGO's on projects of mutual interest, e.g. literacy, sociolinguistic surveys etc.
- (h) In all these contexts, language must be seen as a key factor in the progress and prosperity of the nation.

3.2 Capacity building under CNAS

- (a) Need to re-activate CNAS as a viable research centre.
- (b) Adequate funds must be available from TU and other sources for implementing research projects.
- (c) To attract competent researchers, both national and international scholars, and to motivate the existing staff.
- (d) To formulate research programming for short-term and long-term projects with Terms of Reference (ToR) and specific deadlines
- (e) The CNAS flagship *Contributions to Nepalese Studies* is not adequate for publication of serious research reports. It is also necessary to publish research monographs for international dissemination.
- (f) Standard research publications can generate many funding possibilities and joint projects with foreign universities and organizations.

- (g) At the national level, collaboration and joint projects on macro and micro research can be initiated between CNAS and CERID, CDL, LSN and relevant NGO's in the country.

4. Proposal for Community of Practice (CoP)

The proposal for CoP in Nepal can be feasible with proper planning and cooperation among the minority community, government and non-government organizations with support from funding agencies. Such collaborative efforts are clearly essential as the minority communities do not have the required resources and trained manpower to sustain such programmes. The following additional suggestions can be taken into account for more effective coordination between local level and national level organizations:

- (a) It is entirely feasible and practical to initiate group interaction and discourse on language issues and language problems at the local level. The Bhâsâ-ko kurâ forum held weekly at Yala Maya Kendra provides stimulating interaction among professionals, scholars, journalists and students, but the discussions are not result-oriented.
- (b) The Proposal made by the writers to establish a Research Centre for Literacy and Language Development is highly commendable and should be implemented at first as a pilot project in selected areas where local communities demonstrate awareness and motivation.
- (c) I have been advocating the establishment of a National Institute of Nepalese Language for training, preparation of materials for bilingual education, to conduct sociolinguistic surveys of language communities and practical research on the languages of Nepal with priority on endangered, undocumented minority languages. An Institute of this kind at the national level could contribute immensely to social harmony and material welfare through mutual respect for each other's language and culture.
- (d) Above all, we need to avoid politicization of language issues in Nepal which will only bring divisions in society. We must aim to establish the spirit of social, ethnic and linguistic harmony.
- (e) Finally, many people here tend to feel that political and economic questions are the only ones that are relevant for the development of the country. Let us not ignore the fact that linguistic and cultural questions are of equal importance.

Questions and Suggestions from the Floor

Birman Sherpa

The government is responsible for the killing of the languages. Language inclusion is a must but is the present condition favorable for doing so? The government didn't help in the publication and promotion of the materials. CLD should also promote the languages; otherwise it may remain as a documentation organization.

Dan Raj Regmi

The model presented is very good. While discussing the indigenous languages, non-indigenous but interested people should also be consulted.

Ajit Man Tamang

NFDIN has not been able to invite the students who have been doing research and documentation of the ILN. The funding for the scholars who do the documentation of the ILN are not paid well. They take more than 6 months.

Jibendra Dev Giri

Thanks for the very perfect presentation. Empowerment of the Linguistic Department is a must. The Royal Nepal Academy has documented the indigenous languages and has been trying its best to work in the linguistic fields but the paper lacked to mention the Royal Nepal Academy in its list.

Tika Ram Chaudhary

Community practices seem more practical. There are National Non-Formal Educational center under the Ministry and National Non-Formal Educational Council. There exists a networking of non-formal committees within the National Non- Formal Education Center. NFDIN can participate into the network and help in material development sector, training sector and curriculum sectors for the upliftment of the indigenous languages and culture.

Prof. Dr. Yogendra Prasad Yadava

To provide space for interaction is a very practical approach but even as it provided a very good framework for coordination, no clear vision has been offered. Institutional support is a must here. Let us suggest NFDIN to act as coordinating body.

Prof. Dr. Chundamani Bandhu

Need for a good networking and information system is a must and adequate funding should be provided for complete research. Overlapping of research works should be avoided. Updating and dissemination of knowledge should be done regularly.

Replies from the Paper Presenters

Prof. Nirmal Man Tuladhar

We will include RNA in the support institutions' list. I do accept that no research has been carried out at CNAS due to lack of funding.

Remarks from the Chairperson: Dr. Harka Gurung

I would like to conclude the session thanking the presenters, commentators and the participants for their active participation as well as their patience to stay throughout the session.

Closing remarks on behalf of Sant Bahadur Gurung: Pradeep Bajracharya

I would like to apologize for the inconvenience due to the rescheduling of the seminar. The discussions were very fruitful and all of them were able to receive valuable suggestions and recommendations. We promised to record every suggestion and recommendation and document them for future perusal. In conclusion, I would like to thank the session chairman, paper presenters and participants for their active participation and valuable suggestions.

Recommendations/Findings of the seminar

Three papers were presented at this seminar. Each presentation was followed by commentator's views and comments from the floor. To summarize, we can list the following recommendations/ findings of the seminar: ²

1. The NFDIN, concerning institutes and organizations should collect the first hand data from the resources available so as to plan systematically for the development and enhancement of the indigenous languages of Nepal, existing and endangered.

² For details see the three full papers inside this volume.

2. The seminar has analyzed the reality of the present and past situation of the languages of the indigenous nationalities so as to draw the true picture of the indigenous languages that can guide for future planning and programming and put into action for promulgation, participation and policy formulation for the development of the people concerned, their language, culture and, above all, their community.
3. The seminar has helped and facilitated the concerning organizations and individuals in the formulation of the plans and policies for the future actions to be taken for the development and implementation of the programmes of the existing and endangered indigenous languages of the indigenous nationalities.
4. The seminar has tried to create an awareness among the indigenous nationalities for the progress and prosperity of the indigenous languages and its community.
5. The seminar has put forward suggestions and recommendations for formulating policies, action plans and implementation procedures as far as possible.
6. The seminar has endeavored to establish and retain cooperation and coordination with all the indigenous nationalities, organizations, agencies, institutes and individuals nationally and internationally for the progress and prosperity of the indigenous languages.
7. The seminar recommends and proposes social inclusion, recognition of the indigenous languages and ethnic culture of the society in the formulation of the national and international policies of the government and its amendments as and when felt necessary.
8. The seminar has decided to publish the relevant and important documents of the indigenous languages and distribute them to the concerning organizations and institutes.
9. The seminar has strongly recommended to introduce mother tongue education as a primary means through which minorities get quality education.
10. The seminar has pleaded for respecting local languages and encouraging parents to use them with their children along with the access to the language of the nation.
11. As envisaged in the seminar, there should be linguistic documentation and descriptive studies of each of the mother tongues and the government should create a favorable environment for their maximum use in education and practice.
12. It is necessary to prioritize teachers training and production of teaching and learning materials in various mother tongues.

13. There should be an ongoing programmes of capacity building from the local to national levels of manpowers that work from need assessment of implementation through documentation, curriculum development, teaching materials & evaluation procedures.

Appendices

Appendix I: Introduction of Paper Contributors, Commentators and Session Chair Persons

Prof. Dr. Chuda Mani Bandhu is professor on Nepali Linguistics and the founder Head of the Central Department of Linguistics, T.U. from 1996-2000. He worked as a full time active member of the Royal Nepal Academy from 1984 to 1990, taught general and Nepali linguistics, published books and research paper both in Nepali and English languages, participated in various national and international seminars on linguistics, folklore and literature. He was the founder member and General Secretary of Nepali folklore society from 1999-2001.

Clare O'Leary is a distinguished sociolinguist associated with SIL International.

David E. Watters has been making annual sojourns to Nepal since 1969, sometimes staying for two or three months and at other times for two or three years. In 2002 Dr. Watters published a comprehensive grammar of Kham (a language of Rukum and Rolpa Districts) through Cambridge University Press. Recently, this year, Watters also published a grammar of Kusunda with the participation of Yogendra P Yadava, Madhav P. Pokharel, and Balaram Prasain. He currently teaches a course at the Central Department of Linguistics, T.U., on Functional-Typological grammar. He is also involved as one of the editors of the forthcoming Handbook of Nepal's Languages, in fulfillment of an MoU between the Department of Linguistics, University of Oregon, and the Central Department of Linguistics, Tribhuvan University.

The Late Harka Gurung graduated with B.A Hons. (1959) from Patna College, Post Graduated Diploma, Geography (1961) and Ph.D (1965) from the University of Edinburgh. Academic assignments include Demonstrator, University of Edinburgh (1963-64); Research Fellow, University of London (1964-66); Lecturer, Tribhuvan University (1966-68) and visiting fellow, East-West Center Honolulu (1984-85). He served Nepal Government as Member and Vice-Chairman, National Planning Commission (1968-75); Minister of State for Education, Industry and Commerce (1975-77); Minister of state for Tourism, Public Works and Transport (1977-78). He has done consultancy work for HMG/Nepal, ADB, ESCAP, USAID and The World Bank. Dr. Gurung is author of numerous books and papers. His main areas of professional interest include demography, planning, environment, geography and tourism. He has been Board Member of Lumbini Development Trust, ICIMOD, IIEP/UNESCO. Presently, he was associated with New ERA Consultants, Kathmandu. He died tragically last year by the helicopter crash at Taplejung.

Professor Emeritus of English, **Dr. Kamal Prakash Malla** graduated from Patna University in 1957, studied English from Leeds University, U.K, completed a Ph.D Linguistics from Edinburgh University in 1974 and taught English language. He was the Rector of Tribhuvan University from 1977 to 1979. He has published profusely on minority issues, history and culture and educational deprivation.

Madhav P. Pokharel is professor at the Central Department of Linguistics, Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu, Nepal and member of Linguistics Society of America. He completed his Ph.D thesis on "Experimental Analysis of Nepali Sound System" from Institute of for the Language and Cultures of Asia and Africa (ILCAA), Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, Tokyo in 1989 and attended Linguistic courses given by Noam Chomsky at the Linguistic Society of America, Harvard University and Massachusetts Institutes of Technology in 2005. He worked as Japan foundation Fellow in Kobe University during 1994-1995 and worked as Foreign Language Expert at the China Radio International (CRI) during 2000-2001. *Nepali Syntax* (1997) and *Phonetics and the Pronunciation of Nepali* (2000) are some of his notable publications in Nepali.

Malla K Sundar is an eminent political, human rights and language activist. He writes profusely on language rights in Nepal through local newspapers and other publication.

Mark Turin is a linguistic anthropologist based jointly at Cambridge and Cornell universities. He was a member of the Himalayan Languages Project. His doctoral dissertation, soon to be published by Brill, is a grammar of Thangmi with an ethnolinguistic introduction to the speakers and their culture. Dr. Turin is presently director of the Digital Himalaya Project (www.digitalhimalaya.com). He is currently conducting the preliminary stages of the first modern linguistic survey of Sikkim. Together with Tej Ratna Kansakar, he co-edited *Themes in Himalayan Languages and Linguistics* (2003) following the 5th Himalayan Languages Symposium, which was held in Kathmandu.

Nirmal Man Tuladhar is professor of linguistics and Executive Director of Centre for Nepal and Asian Studies (CNAS), Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu, Nepal. He also takes classes at the Central Department of Linguistics, T.U, Kathmandu. Prof. Tuladhar has a number of publications and has been the Chief Editor of Contributions to Nepalese Studies. He completed the sociolinguistic study of Jirel language.

Noval Kisore Rai, currently working with CNAS, is Professor of Nepali language teaching. He earned his PhD on descriptive study of Bantawa from Deccan college, Pune University. Former Humboldt fellow, Professor Rai is working as team leader in Chintang/Puma documentation project. Currently he is the president of Linguistic Society of Nepal.

Stephen Watters is a linguist with SIL International who has been working in the Hima-

layan region for many years. He received a BA in Linguistics at the University of Texas at Arlington and conducted research on Dzongkha. He is currently involved as research associate at the Central Department of Linguistics, Tribhuvan University and is an editor in the Encyclopedia of Nepalese Languages Project. He participates actively in academic research and language development issues in the Himalaya.

Professor Emeritus **Tej Ratna Kansakar** did his Master's degree in English language and literature from Tribhuvan University in 1964; postgraduate diploma in English Language Teaching at Leeds University during 1967-68; studied modern linguistics and phonetics in the USA, India and Thailand and was awarded a Ph.D degree in Newari linguistics in 1980. He taught English language and literature, phonetics and phonology, morphology and applied linguistics since his 36 years of teaching with supervision and evaluation of MA and doctoral dissertations. He is the founder member of the Linguistic Society of Nepal having served as its Secretary to President at different times, Fulbright scholar at the University of Oregon, USA (1994-95), a Senior Visiting Scholar at the IIAS, University of Leiden, the Netherlands in 1996 and Visiting Professor at the RILCAA, Tokyo University during 2001-02. His publications over the past four decades include *Lexicography in Nepal* (1998), *Dictionary of Classical Newari* (2000), *A Basic Course in English Phonetics for Nepalese students* (1998) and numerous papers on linguistics. He is currently working on a reference grammar of the Newar language.

Til Bikram Nembang, a lifemember of Royal Nepal Academy, is a renowned Nepali poet coming from the minority Limbu ethnic group of Panchther district of Nepal. Popularly known by his pen name "Bairagi Kainla" he is a leading writer in new wave of poetry that has a revolutionary impact on Nepali literature. He was the convener of an 11-member National Language and Policy Recommendation Commission in 1993 and the Thematic Group on Indigenous People and Linguistic Minorities to prepare a Nepal National Plan of action for Education for All in 2002. His numerous publications started with the poetic creation of *Bairagi Kainlaka Kavitaru* through Sajha Prakashan in 1974 and he is awarded with the Sajha Puraskar in 2031 vs and Gorkha Dakshin Bahu (2nd class) in 2051 vs. He compiled Limbu-Nepali-English Dictionary published by Royal Nepal Academy. Currently he is working on the Folklores of Limbus with the upliftment of the language, literature and culture of the indigenous people of Nepal.

Yogendra P Yadava is professor and head of linguistics at Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu and life-member of Royal Nepal Academy. The major areas of his interest include generative syntax, language typology, and lexicography. Dr. Yadava completed PhD in linguistics at the Central Institute for English and foreign Languages, Hyderabad, India writing a dissertation on Maithili syntax. He has co-edited *Lexicography in Nepal* (1998), *Topics in Nepalese Linguistics* (1999), and *Contemporary Issues in Nepalese*

Linguistics (2005) and edited *Readings in Maithili Language, Literature and Culture* (1999). Currently he is engaged in Bhashasanchar, an EU-funded project for localization of information and communication technology in Nepali language. Formerly the president of Linguistic Society of Nepal, Professor Yadava is now the chief editor of *Nepalese Linguistics* and member of South Asia Association of Language Processing (SAAALP).

Appendix II

INAUGURATION SESSION

Date	: October 29 th 2005
Time	: 09:00 – 10:30 a.m.
Venue	: Hotel Malla, Lainchour, Kathmandu
Chair	: Sant Bd. Gurung Vice Chairman, Governing Council National Foundation For Development of Indigenous Nationalities (NFDIN)
Chief Guest	: Honorable Khadga Bahadur G.C. Minister, Ministry of Local Development Co-chairman of Governing Council, NFDIN
Special Guest	: Honorable Chhakka Bahadur Lama Assistant Minister, Ministry of Local Development
Welcome Speech	: Mr. Tamla Ukyab Member-Secretary, NFDIN
Inauguration	: Honorable Minister Khadga Bahadur G.C.
Remarks	: Dr. Yogendra Prasad Yadava Chief, Central Department of Linguistics, T.U. Dr. Basudev Tripathi Vice-Chancellor, Nepal Royal Academy Honorable Prof. Dr. Ram Prasad Chaudhary Member, National Planning Commission Honorable Mr. Chhakka Bahadur Lama Assistant Minister, Ministry of Local Development
Inaugural Remarks	: Honorable Khadga Bahadur G.C. Minister, Ministry of Local Development & Co-Chariman, Governing Council, NFDIN
Concluding Remarks	: Sant Bahadur Gurung Vice Chairman, Governing Council, NFDIN from the Chair

Appendix III

SEMINAR SESSION

I SESSION 10:30-12:00 a.m.

Topic : ILN : Situation, Issues & Analysis

Chair : Mr. Bairagi Kaila

Presenter: 1. Professor Dr. Yogendra P. Yadava. T.U.
2. Dr. Mark Turin

Commentator: 1. Professor Dr. Chudamani Bandhu
2. Dr. Maureen Lee

Floor Discussion

Reply by the presentators

Remarks by the Chair

LUNCH 12:00-1:00 P.M.

II SESSION 1:00-2:30 P.M

Topic : ILN: Policy, Planning & Recommendations

Chair : Dr. Kamal Prakash Malla

Presenter : 1. Dr. N.K. Rai
2. Dr. David Watters.

Commentators: 1. Professor Dr. Madhav Pokhrel
2. Dr. Clare O'Leary

Floor Discussion

Reply by the presentators

Remark by the chair

III SESSION 2:30 – 4:00 p.m.

Topic : ILN: Capacity Building, Institutional Support & Coordination

Chair : Dr. Harka Gurung

Presenter : 1. Prof. Nirmal Tuladhar
2. Stephen Watters

Commentators: 1. Prof. Tej Ratna Kansakar

Floor Discussion

Reply by the presentators

Remark by the chair

CLOSING 4:00 – 4:30 p.m

Hi-Tea 4:30 p.m

Appendix IV

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

I. Participants from MLD

S.N	Name in	Designation	Address/Organisation
1	Hon. Mr. Khadga Bahadur G.C.	Minister	Ministry of Local Development Pulchowk, Lalitpur
2	Hon. Mr. Chhakka Bahadur Lama	Assistant Minister	Ministry of Local Development Pulchowk, Lalitpur
3	Mr. Dolakha Bahadru Gurung	Secretary	Ministry of Local Development Pulchowk, Lalitpur
4	Mr. Som Lal Subedi	Joint Secretary	Ministry of Local Development Pulchowk, Lalitpur

II. Academicians

1	Hon. Prof. Dr. Basudev Tripathi	Vice-Chancellor	Royal Nepal Academy Kamaladi, Kathmandu
2	Hon. Prof. Dr. Ram Prasad Choudhary	Member	National Planning Commission Singhdarbar
3	Prof. Jibendra Giri	Member	Royal Nepal Academy Kamaladi, Kathmandu

III. Linguistics and Experts

1	Dr. Harka Gurung	Advisor	New Era, Gyaneswor, Kalopul
2	Dr. Yogendra Prasad Yadava	Professor	Dept.of Linguistics, TU
3	Dr. Mark Turin	Professor	Dept.of Linguistics, TU
4	Dr. Chudamani Bandhu	Professor	Sanepa
6	Dr. Kamal Prakash Malla	Professor	Maitidevi, Kathmandu
7	Dr. Novel Kishor Rai	Professor	Dept.of Linguistics, TU
8	Dr. David Watters	Professor	Dept.of Linguistics, TU
9	Dr. Madhav Pokhrel	Professor	Dept.of Linguistics, TU
10	Dr. Clare O'Leary	Professor	Dept.of Linguistics, TU
11	Mr. Bairagi Kainla	Scholar	Sukedhara, Dhumbrahi Ktm.
12	Prof. Nirmal Man Tuladhar	Professor	CNAS, TU
13	Dr. Stephen Watters	Professor	Dept.of Linguistics, TU
14	Dr. Tej Ratna Kansakar	Professor	Dept.of Linguistics, TU
15	Ms. Lindsay Friedman	Freelancer	

IV. Participants

1	Mr. Malla K. Sundar	Chairman	Newa Deya Dabu, Ombhal
2	Mr. Mahesh Kormocha	Advisor	Sunuwar Sewa Samaj
3	Ms. Pabitra Rana	Student	Dept.of Linguistics, TU
4	Mr. Ajit Man Lama (Tamang)	Student	Dept.of Linguistics, TU
5	Mr. Dilendra Subba	Student	Nakhipot, Lalitpur
6	Mr. Hit Bahadur Kham	Journalist	Kantipur Tinkune, Kathmandu
7	Mr. Gopal Dahit	Ex. Assistant Minister	Kirtipur
8	Mr. Narayan Gurung	Campus Chief	Swaraswati Campus
9	Mr. Sanjog Lapha	Journalist	Kalopul Sagarmatha FM
10	Mr. Lokpriya Sunuwar	Chairman	Bagbazar Sunuwar Sewa Samaj
11	Mr. Omkareswor Shrestha	Student	Dept.of Linguistics, TU
12	Mr. Jyoti Pradhan	Student	Dept.of Linguistics, TU
13	Ms. Sulochana Sapkota	Student	Dept.of Linguistics, TU
14	Mr. Kedar Nath Rai	Chairman	Harishidhhi Mewahang Rai Samaj
15	Mr. Bishnu Singh Rai	Lecturer	Dept. of Linguistics, TU
16	Mr. Angwang Sherpa	Janajati Activist	Sherpa Sangh
17	Mr. Birman Sherpa	Journalist	Baudha
18	Mr. Bir Bahadur Thami	Scholar	Dhobighat
19	Mr. Amar Gurung	Managing Director	Madan Puraskar Pustakalaya
20	Mr. Dan Raj Regmi	Lecturer	Linguistics Society Nepal
21	Mr. Tej Prasad Gauchan	Student	Thakali Swea Samaj, Balaju
22	Mr. Netramani Rai	Researcher	Dumi Kirat Rai Fansikim
23	Mr. Tikaram Choudhary	Instructor	CTEVT
24	Prof. Pat Hall	Professor	

V. NFDIN Staff

1	Mr. Pradip Lal Bajracharya	Senior Monitoring Officer	NFDIN
2	Mr. Kulan Kumar Lama	Account Officer	„
3	Ms. Suchitra Rana	Section Officer	„
4	Ms. Sarina Gurung	Communication Officer	„
5	Ms. Khushiya Subba	Section Officer	„
6	Mr. Nabin Bhuju	Assistant	„
7	Mr. Dinesh Gurung	Assistant	„
8	Ms. Gauri Manandhar	Assistant	„
9	Mr. Sanu Tamang	Helper	„
10	Mr. Lok Bahadur Thami	Helper	„

