

UiT

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Center for Sami Studies

Faculty of Humanities, Social Science and Education

## The Journey of Nepal Bhasa

*From Decline to Revitalization*

—  
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*Master of Philosophy in Indigenous Studies*

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**The Journey of Nepal Bhasa**  
From Decline to Revitalization

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by  
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May 2018

Dedicated to

My grandma, Nani Maya Dangol

&

My children, Prathamesh and Pranavi

मांभाय् झीगु म्हसिका खः  
(*Ma Bhay Jhigu Mhasika Kha*)

'MOTHER TONGUE IS OUR IDENTITY'

**Cover Photo:** A boy trying to spin the prayer wheels behind the Harati temple, Swoyambhu. The mantra Om Mane Padme Hum in these prayer wheels are written in Ranjana lipi. The boy in the photo is wearing the traditional Newari dress.  
**Model:** Master Prathamesh Prakash Shrestha  
**Photo courtesy:** Er. Rashil Maharjan



## I ABSTRACT

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Nepal Bhasa is a rich and highly developed language with a vast literature in both ancient and modern times. It is the language of Newar, mostly local inhabitant of Kathmandu. The once administrative language, Nepal Bhasa has been replaced by Nepali (Khas) language and has a limited area where it can be used. The language has faced almost 100 years of suppression and now is listed in the definitely endangered language list of UNESCO. Various revitalization programs have been brought up, but with limited success.

This main goal of this thesis on Nepal Bhasa is to find the actual reason behind the fall of this language and hesitation of the people who know Nepal Bhasa to use it. Simultaneously, it tries to find the ways to revitalize the language.

To find the main reason for the weakening of this language, I conducted semi-structured in-depth interviews to elicit the view of Newar people on this topic. A survey was conducted with the same purpose. With the help of my primary and secondary data I prove that due to the Linguistic hegemony of Nepali language, supported by Nepal's government, the area of Nepal Bhasa is curtailed hence gradually leading it to the verge of extinction.

The study also reveals how the government maintains the hegemony of Nepali language through its biased policy. At the end I present ways to revitalization as per the view of informants.

Keywords: Nepal Bhasa, Newar, Revitalization, Linguistic Hegemony,



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# 1. CONTENTS

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I	Abstract.....	i
II	Acknowledgements.....	ii
III	Nepal Bhasa Consonants in Ranjana Alphabet.....	v
IV	List of abbreviations.....	vi
V	Table of Figures.....	vii
VI	List of Tables.....	vii
1.	Chapter 1: Introduction.....	1
1.1	About Newar and Nepal Bhasa.....	1
1.2	Previous Research and Theoretical Approaches to the Study of Language Revitalization 3	
1.3	Description of the Research Problem.....	5
1.4	Research Aim and Objective.....	6
1.5	Research Question.....	6
1.6	Relevance.....	7
1.7	Insider-Outsider Dilemma.....	7
1.8	Source of Motivation.....	9
1.9	Methods and Data.....	9
1.10	Thesis Overview.....	10
2.	Chapter 2: Previous Work and Theoretical Aspect.....	13
2.1	Works on Cause of Language being Threatened.....	13
2.2	Theoretical Aspect.....	19
2.2.1	Hegemony.....	19
2.2.2	Cultural Hegemony.....	20
2.2.3	Linguistic Hegemony.....	21
2.3	Conclusion.....	24
3.	Chapter 3: Methods and Methodology.....	25
3.1	Introduction.....	25
3.2	Study Area.....	25
3.3	Selection and Size of the Research Participants Pool.....	26
3.4	Data Collection.....	28
3.4.1	Primary Data.....	28
3.4.2	Secondary Data.....	30
3.5	Research Challenges.....	31
3.5.1	In the Field.....	31
3.5.2	The Endless Talks and Time Management.....	32

3.5.3	After the Field Work.....	32
3.6	Emotional Attachment .....	32
3.7	Ethics and Reflexivity .....	33
Chapter 4:	History of Nepal Bhasa.....	37
3.8	The Malla Reign.....	38
3.9	The Shah Dynasty.....	39
3.10	The Rana Oligarchy .....	39
3.11	The Panchayat System .....	41
3.12	Multi Party Democratic Period to Republic Nepal.....	42
4.	Chapter 5: Data and Analysis .....	47
4.1	Interview Analysis .....	47
4.1.1	Decrease in the Use of Nepal Bhasa .....	47
4.1.2	Is the Nepali language the real culprit behind the fall of Nepal Bhasa? .....	49
4.1.3	Reasons for hesitation to use Nepal Bhasa at the individual level.....	50
4.1.4	Reasons for reluctance of Parents to use Nepal Bhasa with their Children .....	51
4.1.5	Revitalization .....	53
4.2	Questionnaire (Survey) .....	55
4.3	Discussion .....	65
4.3.1	Biased Government policy.....	66
4.3.2	Feeling of self-created inferiority .....	70
4.3.3	Failed Leadership .....	71
4.3.4	Interim conclusion: the Linguistic Hegemony of Nepali confirmed.....	71
4.3.5	Ways to revitalize .....	72
4.3.6	Loopholes.....	74
4.4	Summary.....	75
5.	Chapter 6: Conclusion .....	77
	References .....	81
	Appendix A Factor 1: Intergenerational Language Transmission (UNESCO) .....	85
	Appendix B: Interview questions.....	86
	Appendix C: Questionnaire.....	87
	Appendix D: Schools teaching in Nepal Bhasa.....	89
	Appendix E: Schools where Nepal Bhasa is taught from the pre-primary level.....	90
	Appendix F: List of schools teaching Nepal Bhasa at the Secondary Level .....	92
	Photo gallery.....	93

### III NEPAL BHASA CONSONANTS IN RANJANA ALPHABET<sup>1</sup>

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क	ख	ग	घ	ङ	च	छ	ज	झ	ञ
ka	kha	ga	gha	ṅa	ca	cha	ja	jha	ña
ट	ठ	ड	ढ	ण	त	थ	द	ध	न
ṭa	ṭha	ḍa	ḍha	ṇa	ta	tha	da	dha	na
प	फ	ब	भ	म	य	र	ल	व	
pa	pha	ba	bha	ma	ya	ra	la	va	
श	ष	स	ह	क्ष	त्र	ज्ञ			
sha	ṣa	sa	ha	kṣa	tra	jña			

**Some conjunct consonants**

ग्ग	ग्द	म्ब	त्थ	ङ्ख	ङ्ग
gga	gda	mba	ṭṭha	ṅkha	ṅga

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<sup>1</sup> Nepal Bhasa uses many scripts for writing purpose out of which Devanagari and Ranjana lipi are most used.

## **IV LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

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WCIP	The World Council of Indigenous Peoples
UNESCO	The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
GID	Graded Intergeneration Disruption Scale
WNO	World Newah Organization
NSNSC	Newa Schools in Newa Settlement Campaign
BA	Bachelor of Arts
MBA	Master of Business Administration
AD	Anno Domini
BS	Bikram Sambat
NS	Nepal Sambat
CBS	Central Bureau of Statistics
CDO	Chief District Officer
OBC	Other Backward Class
UK	United Kingdom
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
US/USA	United States of America

## V TABLE OF FIGURES

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Figure 1: Map of Nepal .....	25
Figure 2: Map of proposed Ethnic and Regional Autonomous States of Maoist.....	45
Figure 3: Which ruling period is more responsible for the downfall of Nepal Bhasa? .....	57
Figure 4: Why do you think that people who know Newari hesitate to speak it? .....	58
Figure 5: Do you think Nepal Bhasa can provide job opportunities? .....	59
Figure 6: Do you parents speak Nepal Bhasa?.....	60
Figure 7: Do you converse in Nepal Bhasa with your parents?.....	60
Figure 8: Do you use Nepal Bhasa with your children? .....	61
Figure 9: Do your children speak Nepal Bhasa? .....	61
Figure 10: Is it beneficial for a child to attend a pre-school where s/he can speak the mother tongue?.....	62
Figure 11: Would you send your child to a Nepal Bhasa Medium school? .....	63
Figure 12: Have you heard of the campaign Newa Schools in Newa Settlement 'NSNSC'?.....	64
Figure 13: Whose role do you think is important to revitalize and maintain this language? .....	64
Figure 14: Parent's dilemma in the Newar society.....	69
Figure 15: Use of Nepal Bhasa in an inscription in Swoyambhunath Temple .....	93
Figure 16: Use of Nepal Bhasa in a Prayer wheel in Swoyambhunath Temple .....	93

## VI LIST OF TABLES

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Table 1: Ten Largest Population by Language – 2011 .....	46
Table 2: Population of Questionnaire by Age Group.....	56
Table 3: Population of Questionnaire by Gender .....	56

# 1. CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

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Revitalization of language is a major global issue among the indigenous groups of every country nowadays. No matter whether it is Sami in Norway and Finland, Inari in Finland or Nepal Bhasa<sup>2</sup> in Nepal, all indigenous speakers and linguists are working equally hard to find the ways by which they can pass the language to the next generation and preserve it. Language helps to keep the culture alive, and it is one of the basic identity of the community.

“Over the past fifty years and with increasing frequency, innovative programs have appeared around the world with the aim of revitalizing languages that are at risk of disappearing due to declining numbers of native speakers.” (Grenoble & Whaley, 2006:1)

The reason for a language going extinct or being in the process of extinction can be political, social or natural. From many examples across the world, it has transpired that in order to maintain the dominance of one major language other languages must be suppressed. For example, in 1893 the Hawaiian language of Hawaii was replaced by English (Townsend, 2014) after the Hawaiian Monarchy was brought down by the US. In each country, there are more than one community where the language is in danger.

## 1.1 ABOUT NEWAR AND NEPAL BHASA

Newars are mostly inhabitants of Kathmandu, the capital city of Nepal, but they can be found throughout the country in big and small settlements. They practice both Hinduism and Buddhism. According to the census of 2011, Nepal has 125 castes and ethnic groups' including the indigenous people. So far, 59 indigenous group has been recognised by the nation and one of them are the Newar. The population of Newar is 1,321,933, which is 5 percent of the total population, and hence represents the sixth largest ethnic group of Nepal.

Newars have their own caste system, language and culture. They are educated, hardworking people and skilled labourers. We can find this group engaged successfully in different field.

“The Newars have demonstrated their ability in almost all walks of life. They have proved their worth as top administrators, educationists, trader's magnates of industry, and high-level technicians. They are also adventure seekers, both within and without the country... The Jyapoos, one section of

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<sup>2</sup> Bhasa is a Newari word for language. Hence Nepal Bhasa means 'language of Nepal'.

the Newars, are among the best peasants in the world.” (Pradhan,1980 cited in Gellner, 1986:102)

Nepal Bhasa also known as Newari language is used by the Newar. The term Newari is more in use internationally, while the language is officially called Nepal Bhasa, along with *Newah Bhasa*<sup>3</sup>.

“Newari is an aboriginal language of Nepal. The present-day Kathmandu Valley, which was once known as Nepal itself, was the place where Nepal Bhasa, that is the Newari language, originated.” (Shrestha and Hoek, 1995: 73)

Newari was the administrative language of Nepal during 14<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> century. It was also used for the daily life communication. The language is no more used in official places and even the daily use of language has decreased among the Newars.

“The term Nevari, which is too common in western philology and linguistics, has never been current in Nepal. Even today Nevari speakers call their language Nepal Bhasa, i.e. the language of Nepal. Indeed, before the final conquest of Kathmandu by Prithvi Narayan in 1768, Nevari was the state language in the whole of the valley, which, by many of its inhabitants was considered as being Nepal in the true sense of the words.” (Lienhard, 1992:3)

Newars have many festivals which are celebrated lavishly. The *jatras*<sup>4</sup> like *Machindranath Jatra*, *Bhoto Jatra*, *Bisket Jatra*<sup>5</sup> are famous and are celebrated by the Newars every year. Even non-Newars love participating in these festivals. These festivals are celebrated according to the Nepal Sambat calendar. Nepal Sambat used to be the official calendar during the time of the Malla dynasty, but the calendar is no more in official use, having been replaced by the Bikram Sambat (BS) calendar. Nevertheless, the festivals of Nepal are celebrated according to Nepal Sambat (NS).

Places like Patan Durbar Square, Bhaktapur Durbar Square, *Nyatapole*<sup>6</sup> temple bear the few names belonging to famous Newari historical places of Nepal. They were built during the Malla period. Some of these historical monuments of Nepal are enlisted in UNESCO’s world heritage list, where one can find seven of Nepal’s historical monuments.

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<sup>3</sup> Nepal Bhasa or Newari language

<sup>4</sup> Festival/procession

<sup>5</sup> They are names of different festivals

<sup>6</sup> The five-roofed temple



## 1.2 PREVIOUS RESEARCH AND THEORETICAL APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF LANGUAGE REVITALIZATION

Many of the indigenous language have turned into minority language in the course of time. Nepal Bhasa, the language used by the Newars, was once a state language, but now it is at the verge of extinction. There can be many visible and invisible reasons for this change, but the result is that the language is in danger. In this thesis, I try to find out the reason for the poor state of the language now, as I believe that it is important to know the cause of a language being endangered in order to make its revitalization successful.

There have been many discussions among the linguists of Nepal and abroad about Nepal Bhasa. The use of language has been declining day by day and the linguist are working on how this language can be revitalized and preserved.

Bal Gopal Shrestha and Bert Van den Hoek (1995) in their article *The Newars: The Indigenous population of Kathmandu Valley in the Modern State of Nepal*, emphasize that a child must get basic education in his mother tongue. In their paper *Education in the Mother Tongue: A Case of Nepal Bhasa with a brief history of Nepal Bhasa*, they point out how this language has been suppressed in the Rana period. Their paper illustrates the biased nature of the government, which never supported Nepal Bhasa and other minority languages. It presents *Jagat SundarBvane Kuthi*<sup>7</sup>, a Newari school as a pioneer school, which supports education in the mother tongue. It then briefly presents the success of the school and ends with the suggestion to the government to introduce Nepal Bhasa in English Boarding School to support education in mother tongue.

Dr Tulsi Maharjan (2000/01) in his article *Hami kasari newarai bhai rahane?*<sup>8</sup> expresses his opinion on how can we maintain and preserve the unique feature of Newar cultural heritage in order to educate the upcoming generation. He gives a brief picture of his childhood in a Newar community. He demonstrates how with globalization even the Newar have changed their way of dressing and food habits. He remarks that the Newars of Kathmandu have been more influenced by western culture than the Newars residing in USA. He says that it is important for us to know the significance and uniqueness of our language in order to preserve it. He suggests some of the ways how can we preserve our language. He says that the younger generation must be taught about the importance of their mother tongue. We must follow our rituals and celebrate

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<sup>7</sup> Name of a school named after social activist Jagat Sundar Malla, who advocated for education in own mother tongue during Rana regime

<sup>8</sup> How we become Newars? translated from the original Nepal Bhasa article' *Jhi Newah gukhata jui fai?*

our festivals regularly and discuss them with the children. The elder generation must share their experience about Nepal Bhasa to others.

Bal Gopal Shrestha (2010/11) in his article *Maintenance of Language and Literature: The Case of Newars in Nepal* represents history of Nepal Bhasa and the years of suppression. According to him, Nepal Bhasa has seen more than 110 years of suppression but yet survived. He writes that from the time of the Rana period till date Nepal Bhasa's repression has seen no end. He remarks that there is need of urgent programs for revitalization and change in the policy of government to save this language. He further adds that there is a need of new constitution for the oppressed nationalities to end disclination on language, culture, religion, nationality, gender and caste.

Nareshbir Shakya (2007/8) in his article *Megu Bhay Sayeketa Ma Bhay Twatemwa*<sup>9</sup> emphasizes on the role of the parents to transfer the language to their children. He adds that it is obvious for parents to be concerned about the future of their children but the parents also need to understand that they are curtailing the ability of their kids by not teaching them Nepal Bhasa. He emphasizes that once the parent realizes their role in language preservation, the language will never be out of use. It is very important to include parents in the program of revitalization. The article by David and Maya Bradley (2002) in their book *Language Endangerment and Language Maintenance* presents the view that "language maintenance is the attitude of the speech community concerning their language" and emphasizes the research on 'attitudinal factors which disfavour language maintenance and may lead to language endangerment.'

It is also true that every community, including Newar, has deep attachment to its language and wants to preserve it. Various research and practices have been brought forward to revitalize the language and to preserve the language the use of which has gradually declined among the new generation. To carry out a successful revitalization program, it is important to learn the attitude of the community and plan accordingly, which can also be applied to Nepal Bhasa.

We can also find articles and books on Language Revitalization. Grenoble and Whaley's (2006) *Saving Languages: An Introduction to Language Revitalization* and Grenoble's (2013) *Language Revitalization* explain various models for Language Revitalization. They give examples of full immersion and partial immersion programs and the challenges related to them. It also brings out the notion that in order to revitalize the language, we have to start from the middle generation, that is the parents' generation also known as 'mother's knee approach',

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<sup>9</sup> To learn other languages, we don't have to leave our mother tongue

which emphasizes that ‘language is best learned and mastered at home’ (2006:57). We will be looking at this approach in relation to the revitalization of Nepal Bhasa later.

Erika Satta’s (2005) *For the Love of Thy Mother Tongue* concerns threatened languages and presents research on Inari Sami Language. Satta also discusses language nests and mother tongue teaching, focussing on two different approaches used for revitalization of language. The approaches she shares for revitalizing language are interesting and can be applied to revitalize Nepal Bhasa too.

The thesis work of Risten Birje Steinfjell (2014), *Taking Our Language Back Home- Motivation and Challenges in the South Sami Area* dwells on the revival that has taken place in the south Sami area. The main focus falls on the “home as an arena for language revitalization.” The same can be applied to Nepal Bhasa to save the language. Various linguist of Nepal Bhasa have emphasized the role of the home in language revitalization. Home is the first school of children and parents are the first teachers. Shakya (2007/8) also has emphasizes the role of parents.

With the causes of suppression, the ways of revitalization are connected, as to cure the problem we have to know the reason of the problem. The Newari language has been suppressed many times in the past directly or indirectly by different rulers and policies of Nepal for different reason, one of the reason being the maintenance of domination. Nepal Bhasa has seen generations, where once Newar were forced to use the dominant language to where Newar have started to adopt dominant language voluntarily. The action taken to suppress the use of the language has shown long-term effects. Hence, I use the concept of Hegemony, which I will later narrow down to Linguistic Hegemony for my research purpose to prove the point that its due to hegemony of official language, Nepali, Nepal Bhasa has faced decline. Hegemony is a term coined by Gramsci and means ‘the power or dominance that one social group holds over others’ (Lull, 1995:33). Similarly, linguistic hegemony is the dominance of one language over another language or languages, which is created by “convincing others to accept their language (dominant language) norms and usage as standard or paradigmatic” (Wiley,2000:113).

### **1.3 DESCRIPTION OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM**

Language plays a major role in keeping any culture alive. Every community has its own story, rituals and culture, which are passed to another generation facilitated by the community’s language. “Language is at the core of each culture, and it is only by language that culture can be transmitted and communicated” (Hoek ,1988 as cited in Shrestha and Hoek ,1995: 82).

Similarly, the indigenous community Newar use their own Newari language, Nepal Bhasa. But due to globalization, the “one nation – one language” policy and some other factors we can see the rapid decrease in the use of this language by the younger generations. Most of the people of this community use the official language Nepali, bringing the language Newari to the verge of extinction in the years to come. The wide use of Nepali language in administration, education and in local events can also be the reason for the decrease in the use of Newari. At the same time, the emphasis on English language in school accelerated the decrease in the use of Newari even more. While teaching language, the first preference is given to English as it is the Universal Language, and second preference goes to Nepali as it is the official language of Nepal. This has brought the other indigenous language to the state of being endangered. There have been many programs designed to save the language but still it is difficult to make younger generation converse in this language.

#### **1.4 RESEARCH AIM AND OBJECTIVE**

The aim of my research is twofold. Firstly, it aims to find out the reason for the declined use of Nepal Bhasa, the observed hesitation to use it even by people who know it well and the reluctance of parents to converse in Nepal Bhasa with their children.

Secondly, it focuses on revitalization: what possibilities for revitalization there are and why the current ways of revitalization have not improved the situation of the language. I target to achieve my aims by the following specific objectives.

- a. To find the reason behind the hesitation to use Nepal Bhasa by the Newars.
- b. To discuss the reluctance of Newar parents to converse in Nepal Bhasa with their children.
- c. To find the loophole in the current revitalization approaches.

#### **1.5 RESEARCH QUESTION**

To achieve the above mentioned aims and objectives, the following questions are raised:

- a. What is the main reason for the decline in the use of Newari language?
- b. Why do people who can speak Nepal Bhasa hesitate to use it? What is the reason behind this reluctance?
- c. How can we revitalize the language?
- d. Why are the current revitalization programs not able to uplift the status of the language?

## **1.6 RELEVANCE**

At first, the project is relevant to the Newar community, as the identity of the community is strongly connected with its language. As previously mentioned, the Newari language has been suppressed several times under different governing bodies. Therefore, the language needs serious protection and solid plans to be preserved for the future generations. As we find the cause for the decline in the use of Nepal Bhasa, we can implement effective revitalization programs of our own. My research is therefore relevant to everyone in the Newar community who is concerned with the revitalization of the language.

As a young parent and a Newar, this topic is relevant to me personally. It also relates to the older generation who have tried to give continuity to this language and have given up at some stage. Following Smith's (2008) claim that indigenous peoples have to set their own goals and not just follow the path set by others, we need to find our ways to make our endeavour successful rather than relying on suggestions by outsiders.

According to Smith (2008), we as indigenous communities have struggled since colonization to exercise our fundamental rights to represent ourselves. It is important that a research conducted through the perspective of indigenous studies provides the indigenous people with a platform for their opinions and the realities. This research tries to give voice to the opinions of the Newar about the suppression of their native language, Nepal Bhasa. My thesis therefore makes the unheard voice of Newars to be heard.

Secondly, my research is important for my country Nepal. Nepal Bhasa represents a rich literature and culture, which is one of the biggest asset of the country. Nepal is very famous for its tourism sector, which generate large revenues. If we can save the Nepal Bhasa, we can save the sentiments attached to historical places important for the tourism sector. For example, the *Nyatapole* Temple of Patan which means 'the Five-roofed Temple' has its name in Nepal Bhasa. If Nepal Bhasa becomes extinct then the name of this temple will lose its real identity.

Lastly, my research is relevant to all those group who are at the verge of losing their language due to similar reasons and situations. It is relevant to all the individuals who love their mother tongue, have tried and are trying to save their language.

## **1.7 INSIDER-OUTSIDER DILEMMA**

I am a Newar, a local inhabitant of Kathmandu. Nepal Bhasa is the medium of conversation in my family. I was raised amidst this language and am familiar with its cultural protocol. This fact is of great importance for my research, as in the words of Saugestad (2001:298) "a deep

understanding of the indigenous culture can only be achieved by a member of that culture”. If we go deeper into the caste system, then I am a *jyapuni*,<sup>10</sup> a farmer within the Newar community. With the first identity just as a Newar, I consider myself to be an insider. But when it comes to being *jyapuni*, I am an outsider to many of my informants. As I am a local of Kathmandu, I can image myself as an insider to residents of Kathmandu but for the people from other cities, I am an outsider. The rituals and beliefs of one Newar community is different from those of other Newar communities. In this way, I am an insider to my local community and outsider to the rest. In many other ways also, I was an outsider though being an insider while conducting research work. In sum, it is not straightforward to decide at times whether I am an outsider or an insider.

The people of Newar can be divided into two broad categories depending on their ability to use this language: those who use Nepal Bhasa on a daily basis and those who do not know this language at all or speak it very little. While interviewing the first group, I was an insider; while working with the second group, I was an outsider. An outsider researcher of the same community has to be humble as “the researcher belongs to a community as a member with a different set of roles and relationships, status and position” (Smith, 2008:138). I had to be careful about not acting boastful of my language knowledge to the informants who did not know Nepal Bhasa. I was also an outsider to many of my informants as a female researcher studying in Norway.

As an insider, the main challenge for me was not to overshadow the opinion of others with my own pre-knowledge. Being an insider researcher is challenging as the researcher might take her own view about community as granted (Smith, 2008:139). I had to follow the process of unlearning and learning in order to conduct thesis in an unbiased way.

As the research progressed, I realised that my knowledge about this language was limited and there were areas which I was unfamiliar with. It also amused me when I could not totally understand some articles and video clips in pure Nepal Bhasa. I have used Nepal Bhasa only for day-to-day conversation, which is a bit different than the Nepal Bhasa used for literary work. I felt as an outsider who didn't have knowledge of this language at all.

Wilson (2001:214) is of the view that research conducted by an outsider always involves higher degree of challenges. It is very difficult to conduct research as an outsider, as some of the informants hesitate to open to an outsider. It indeed took some time for them to get accustomed to me.

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<sup>10</sup> *Jyapu* – a male farmer; *jyapuni* – a female farmer

Overall, I found it difficult to position myself as an insider or an outsider. In the beginning, I thought I was an insider but as the research work progressed, I realized that within my Newar community, I was an outsider in various ways.

## **1.8 SOURCE OF MOTIVATION**

The main source of motivation behind my research is my concern for my language. It is a sense of responsibility that has encouraged me to do something for the preservation of my language. The declining use of Nepal Bhasa outside the community gave rise to the view that this language cannot support a Newar to survive in the outer world, where Nepali and English are dominant. Due to this, the people who know Nepal Bhasa also stop using it.

On the contrary, I see that young parents are quite serious about preserving the language. I have come through a phase where parents had stopped transferring the language to their children stating that when their children go to school and face the outside world, then Nepal Bhasa is not going to help them. Such parents start to converse in Nepali with their children to make them more competitive. What I see now is that young parents encourage their children to converse in Nepal Bhasa, as they believe that once the children go to school, they will learn Nepali automatically, while the children will never get to learn Nepal Bhasa if the children are not exposed to it at home. So, I am much more motivated by the concern of these young parents towards preserving the language and passing it onto next generation. One of the best example here I can provide is of my husband who doesn't speak Newari language but tells me to use it with the kids so that they can learn the language.

I am also equally concern that my children would not be able to communicate with older relatives, who can speak and understand only Nepal Bhasa. I also feel other young parents share the fear that if the coming generation do not learn Nepal Bhasa, then there will be a gap between generations.

As a young parent myself, I believe that there must be a midway through which Nepal Bhasa can be transferred without hampering the growth of a child in the outside world, where the use of Nepali and English is dominant, and Newari is marginal.

## **1.9 METHODS AND DATA**

I have used mainly qualitative research methods to gather the data. I have chosen this approach as the qualitative approach supports my aim to understand the feeling of the informant along with the collection of data. I interviewed Newar people to understand their view about the

decline in the use of this language. I also got their opinion about their role in the revitalization of the language. I chose a semi structured, in-depth interview method as according to Chilisa (2012: 204), “it is the focussed interview method that focuses on the issue to be covered.” I have taken help of a questionnaire for a quantitative approach. This method was not preferred at first but due to lack of time to include many people, this method was handy.

I have collected both primary and secondary data to support my research. I interviewed people who have been working in different ways for the preservation of Nepal Bhasa. The research area was mainly Kathmandu, the capital city of Nepal and home to most of the Newari people. I could not travel out of Kathmandu Valley but managed to interview informants living in Kathmandu, who have migrated to Kathmandu from other cities.

Language learning begins at home, and women play a very important role in it, so I emphasized on the view of young mothers in my research. I also included college students in this research through interview. I have used a snowball sampling method to choose parents and random sampling for the purpose of the questionnaire. Since at the last moment I had to choose new informants, I used snowball sampling. It is a method where informants are referred to by already selected informants, who know that these people possess some characteristics that are of research interest (Birnacki, Waldorf 1981:141). In Random sampling “every member of the population has a known probability of being included in the sample” (Alvi, 2016:12). I used this sampling method to have random people as my population.

I clearly explained to the informants my motive behind the interviews, as it is the right of the informant “to be fully informed about all relevant aspects of the research, before they agreed to take part” in the research (Paul, 2010:15). I followed the ethics of the research throughout the research process right from the starting phase of question preparation. Ethics help us to maintain respect between the researcher and the researched subject which is important in every step of the research. Researcher and researched people both “should respect each other’s privacy and should not interfere in each other’s freedom of action” (Paul, 2010:13).

## **1.10 THESIS OVERVIEW**

The thesis is divided into six chapters.

The first chapter is the current one: Introduction. Here I have presented the background of Nepal Bhasa. I have briefly laid out previous research on the study of language revitalization and why the theoretical approach of linguistic hegemony is suitable for my thesis. I have put forward



the description of the research problem, methods and data, relevance, the insider-outsider approach and the factors which motivated me to research this topic.

The second chapter is the theoretical part. Here, I discuss the term Hegemony, cultural hegemony and linguistic hegemony. I include previous literature about the reason for downfall of certain languages and also some works in revitalization of language along with literary work in Nepal Bhasa. I briefly explain some of these works and how they contribute to my research work.

Chapter three is the methodology part. I explain in detail the methods I use in my research. I introduce the people and groups whom I have interviewed or who have taken part in my research. I have conducted purposive interviews with some Newars, those who have good knowledge about this language, to understand their view about the state of this language and its cause. To understand the reason behind the poor state of language, we must understand the situation of language in the past, so it was necessary to include people who have studied Nepal Bhasa in depth. The other interviewees are layman. I mention here the problems I faced before and while collecting the samples.

Chapter four deals with the history of the Nepal Bhasa from early era. It aims to highlight the transformation of this language from an administrative language to an endangered language. The historical part is very important as it shows how the language was brought down multiple times in different regime to give power to Nepali, which was the language of the new ruler. The chapter is thus tightly linked to my theoretical approach of linguistic hegemony.

Chapter five provides the analytic part. Here, I present my findings and relate them to my theoretical approach. I discuss the reason I have established for the downfall of this language. This chapter also includes suggestions as to how to revitalize the language.

Chapter six is the concluding part. It contains a summary of my research including the reason for language endangerment and ways of revitalization.



## 2. CHAPTER 2: PREVIOUS WORK AND THEORETICAL ASPECT

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This chapter is divided into two parts. The first part focuses on previous works examining the cause for language weakening. Since throughout this thesis I try to find out the reason for the downfall of Nepal Bhasa, I try to present examples of other similar cases. I show that some cases discussed in works by other writers bear similarities to that of Nepal Bhasa. I also list the works on revitalization process and try to establish whether they are applicable to the case of Nepal Bhasa or not.

The second part presents the theoretical approach where I discuss the concepts of Hegemony, Cultural Hegemony and Linguistic Hegemony. I present various views on linguistic hegemony by different writers. I mention some of the works on the scenario created in different parts of the world by linguistic hegemony and compare how they are similar to the context of Nepal. The use of linguistic hegemony is used to show the hegemony of Nepali over other language.

### 2.1 WORKS ON CAUSE OF LANGUAGE BEING THREATENED

Stephen A. Wurm (1991) discusses in his article *Language Death and Disappearance: Causes and Circumstances* the reasons for language death and disappearance. According to him, factors like death of all speakers, changes in the ecology of languages, such as culture contact and clash, economic and political situation can be the main reasons behind it.

I would like to present a few more points related to the economic category. Wurm says that at the economic level, the language of the economically stronger community is adopted by the economically weak community due to various advantages. The shift of language can benefit the later with monetary benefits, access to high-class goods and services and also better employment opportunities. The weaker group starts thinking of its language as useless to the current economic situation. This realization makes the group use its language less and shift to the strong language.

I find this development reflected in my own language situation. With Nepali being the dominant language, the Newar people have started to shift to it for better opportunities. Newars have begun to realize that there are fewer opportunities for speakers of Nepal Bhasa and hence learning of this language is not important. Wurm has provided multiple examples of minorities in USSR, China and Aboriginal Australia illustrating such cases. In Russia, the minority languages are encouraged to survive and are also helped by the government through elementary education. However, the younger generations adopt Russian for economic advancement. In Wurm's (1991:15) words, "the young generations increasingly adopt Russian as their language

as the only means of economic advancement, in response to Russian cultural pressure, and to political pressure aiming at Russification”. Comparing Nepal Bhasa of Nepal with the minority languages of Russia, I find that in Russia the government did include the minor languages in the education curriculum but failed to provide a platform for its use; whereas in Nepal, the government has merely mentioned the rights to using mother tongue in its constitution but has failed to do anything in this regard.

Next, I would like to also elaborate the point of political influence as this is related to my case study too. According to Wurm, political influence encompasses pressures of various kind, like colonialism and conquest of the area where these indigenous people live. When an area is conquered, the conquerors force their language upon the conquered. Similarly, in Nepal, during the unification of Nepal, the then Gorkhali Bhasa was forced upon the Newar of Kathmandu. Only Gorkhali Bhasa was given official recognition by the constitution making all other language of Nepal less important.

Wurm also presents the forces acting against language loss and death. He says that the use of a to-be-doomed language as a secret language against the oppressors can help saving the language. He illustrates this with examples of Australian Aboriginal languages of southeastern Australia. He says that these languages act like a booster of the self-esteem of people, who in other situation find them in inferior position. He further gives examples of Hiri Motu of Papua Guinea and Maori of New Zealand, falling in a similar category. He suggests that a way to preserve language can be to take pride in it and not label it as an inferior language. Such kind of booster seems to be needed in the Newar community, too, where some of them see Nepal Bhasa as an inferior language and have shifted to Nepali in the name of being standard and modern.

David Crystal (2000) states in his book *What is Language Death* that “a language is effectively dead when there is only one speaker left, with no member of the younger generation interested in learning it” (2000:11). He gives examples of the languages Ubu and Kasabe which died with the death of their last speakers, Tefik Esenc and Bogon respectively. He compares the death of the language with that of a person, which is always sad. He further discusses the reasons for language death, organizing them into four main categories: natural catastrophes, war and genocide, overt repression and cultural/ political/economic dominance. In regard to Nepal Bhasa, the language is not in such a poor state as there are still members of younger generation who are interested in learning the language. The only problem is that there is a gradual decline, with the majority of people being inclined towards Nepali and English for various reason.

Julia Sallabank (2010) in *Language Endangerment: Problem and Solutions* discusses the four reasons given by David Crystal for language endangerment and further splits the fourth one into five common factors; economic, cultural dominance, political, historical and attitudinal. Most of the above factors are applicable to the endangerment of Nepal Bhasa also. Under the economic factor, Sallabank gives the example of rural poverty leading to migration. When a group migrates, it tends to adopt the language of a new place. Another factor is cultural dominance of the majority community, which ‘folklorises’ the language and literature of the indigenous people through their education and literature. In Nepal, the education policy supports Nepali language discriminating other languages of Nepal. Under the political factor, one of the main reason given is ban on the use of minority language in public life. The case with Nepal Bhasa is similar. The language was banned under the Rana period and the Panchayat period. The people who worked in favour of this language were punished. The same thing can be applied to the historical factor also, where the rise of one group leads to their cultural dominance. The last factor is attitudinal, which I believe is one of the main factor for the current situation of Nepal Bhasa. When the dominant language is linked with opportunities and prosperity, automatically the other minor languages are regarded to be less useful. This leads to language shift from oppressed language to dominant language. Sallabank further recommends ways and reasons that a language should be saved with brief study on Guernsey, an island in the English Channel.

Mark Janse (2003) in *Language Death and Language Maintenance* opines that “languages in the process of dying are endangered languages” and presents the five levels of language endangerment by Wurm. He mentions that generally the factors determining language death are non-linguistic and can be divided into socioeconomic and socio-political. Examples of socioeconomic factors are “lack of economic opportunities, rapid economic transformations, on-going industrialization work patterns, migration and so on”. Whereas examples of socio-political factors are “official language policies, discrimination, stigmatization, repression, war etc.” These socio-political factors are also the reason for the current poor state of Nepal Bhasa. The language has been oppressed and discriminated by official language policies.

Janse explains the term ‘linguicide’ as a concept analogous to genocide and presents examples of the “English Only” policy of the United States government with regards to the Native Americans. On the topic revitalization, he claims that at the community level, the language can be saved if the children are encouraged to learn the language with the help of the elders in a playing environment. He emphasizes on the importance of literacy program and mother tongue

education however their success is dependent on the language policy of the country. Such revitalization programs seem to be a necessity for the revitalization of Nepal Bhasa, too.

In another article, *Maintenance of Language and Literature: the Case of Newar in Nepal*, Shrestha (Newah Vijnana, 2010/11) has written that Newars have been through the phase of suppression several times but yet survived. Shrestha mentions the importance of Nepal's government for maintaining and preserving the endangered languages of Nepal. At the same time, the urgency of a new constitution to establish Nepal as a multinational, multicultural, multilingual and multi-religious country in practice is also suggested. It is important to save the languages and culture of Nepal to maintain its status as mentioned.

Birendra Bhaila (2017) presents in his article titled, *Language Death: Case of Newari Language* the language situation in his city Banepa. He mentions that 80% of the population of Banepa are Newar, but they hardly communicate in Nepal Bhasa. They have some knowledge of this language but cannot speak it as in school and other official places Nepali and English have a strong hold. He further gives reason for not using Newari and the motives to save it. The first reason he gives is inter-caste marriage. When a Newar is married with a person of another caste, they don't know each other's native language. Rather than learning the language of each other, the easy way is sought: they choose to converse in Nepali. As a result, the offspring is also brought up with none of the father's or mother's mother tongue but with Nepali as lingua franca. The next reason Bhaila gives is accent. He gives example of a Newar child who is brought up using Nepal Bhasa at home. When this child goes to school where Nepali and English are the language of teaching, the child has to acquire a new language and its intonation. Newar have a different accent for which they are teased and ill-treated. He also mentions that it is difficult to get a job in media with such an accent and hence the use of language decreases.

The third reason Bhaila presents is language policy. He states that Nepali is prioritized everywhere. Whether it's in trade, politics, court, military or national education system, Nepali is taken as the language of the elite, whereas minority languages are seen as the languages of the poor and uneducated.

The final reason Bhaila presents is the domination of English Language. He claims that due to the hegemony of English, the use of Newari has declined in the professional and education domains. At the end he emphasizes that to save a language the attitude of the community towards the language must be positive. At the same time, we need to teach the younger generation to respect the mother tongue.

In her article *Language Revitalization* Leanne Hinton (2003) argues that the processes of emperialization, industrialization, and globalization have made casualties out of indigenous

languages and cultures. She also stresses that, “the indigenous languages of more diverse locales are unable to play that unifying role as a state or country”, which has made revitalization more complicated. Under the heading *Language Death and Avenues to Revitalization*, she marks the importance of the family as the most essential factor for revitalizing or preserving the language than any other method. However, the support of other methods is helpful and beneficial. She further quotes Native American author Richard E. Littlebear to show how different methods cannot help maintaining a language without help of family. As discussed above, the role of the family is undeniable in the Newar community too.

Let’s continue here with Richard E. Littlebear, a native American educator and author, who has been working on maintenance ways of native American languages. In his preface to the book *Stabilizing Indigenous Languages Supporting Preservation of Native American Language*, he shows how important it is to have a family as a base for language revitalization. No other work can last long, and there is replacement for everything but not for family. I would like to present a part of his writing as it is, as paraphrasing will decrease the charm of the work.

For instance, some of us said, “Let’s get our languages into written form” and we did and still our Native American languages kept on dying.

Then we said, “Let’s make dictionaries for our languages” and we did and still the languages kept on dying.

Then we said, “Let’s get linguists trained in our own languages” and we did, and still the languages kept on dying.

Then we said, “Let’s train our own people who speak our languages to become linguists” and we did and still our languages kept on dying.

Then we said, “Let’s apply for a federal bilingual education grant” and we did and got a grant and still our languages kept on dying.

Then we said, “Let’s let the schools teach the languages” and we did, and still the languages kept on dying.

Then we said, “Let’s develop culturally-relevant materials” and we did and still our languages kept on dying.

Then we said, “Let’s use language masters to teach our languages” and we did, and still our languages kept on dying.

Then we said, “Let’s tape-record the elders speaking our languages” and we did and still our languages kept on dying.

Then we said, “Let’s video-tape our elders speaking and doing cultural activities” and we did and still our languages kept on dying.

Then we said, “Let’s put our native language speakers on CD-ROM” and we did and still the languages kept on dying.

Finally, someone will say, “Let’s flash-freeze the remaining speakers of our languages so when technology catches up these speakers can be thawed-out and Stabilizing Indigenous Languages revived and we will have ready-made Native American languages speakers” (Littlebear, 1996: xiii)

Littlebear believes that to reverse the influence of English, it is important for families to retrieve their rightful position as the first teacher of the languages. The same is also applicable to all other languages which are endangered and need to be maintained and revitalized.

Fishman (1991) in his Reversing Language Shift (RLS) theory explains how a language can be revitalized. He emphasizes the importance of knowledge of ideological clarification of the actors – those who are engaged in revitalization process. He further develops 8 levels of Graded Intergenerational Disruption scale (GIDS), where a language can be classified in comparison with other languages. The revitalization of that language can be effectively planned and worked out based on the position occupied in GIDS.

Dr. Bal Gopal Shrestha (Newah Vijnana: 1998/99), presents in his article *The Newars: The Indigenous Population of the Kathmandu Valley in the Modern State of Nepal* the historical background of the Newar identity. He briefly presents the literary publications and organizations in the past in favour of Newar Bhasa. Further, he sheds light on the Newar language movement. He mentions the formation of Nepal Bhasa *Mamka Khalah* and *Nevah De Dabu* and their role in the revitalization of Nepal Bhasa.

Mr. Dipak Tuladhar (2018), who is closely related to the revitalization of Nepal Bhasa, has written numerous articles in favour of education in mother tongue. In his article, *Matribhasama Shiksha: Nepal Bhasako Anubhav*<sup>11</sup>, he writes about the importance of education in mother tongue. He asserts that when the young generation learns the language to the level of fluency they help maintaining and preserving the language. I came across his letter which he had written to the editor of *Gorkhapatra Dainik*<sup>12</sup>, the National Daily Newspaper on 19<sup>th</sup> Feb. 2007, where he asked the question “Which language is Nepali language?” The question is targeted at the Constitution of Nepal, where Nepali is mentioned as the official language and all other language spoken in Nepal are national language of Nepal. He further clarifies his point that the term Nepali is an adjective which belongs to all the languages of Nepal and not of one language in

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<sup>11</sup> Education in Mother tongue: Experience of Nepal Bhasa, article provided by Mr. Dipak Tuladhar

<sup>12</sup> The national daily newspaper of Nepal



particular. Further he argues that when all other languages of Nepal are known by their original name then why only the Khas language <sup>13</sup>is known as Nepali language?

As mentioned in *Nepal Vijnana* (2010/11) by Ijirose Shrestha, 137 thesis works and research papers in Nepal Bhasa have been submitted to Tribhuvan University till date. Many of the works are not directly related to language but each of those works done in Nepal Bhasa is an effort to keep the language preserved for the generation to come. I would like to mention here that some of them which are directly related to maintenance and revitalization of this language. Sanu Raja Shakya (2009) in his Master's thesis *Nepal Bhasa Andolan* presents the Nepal Bhasa movement which took place between 1990-2006. Bandana Sharma (1999) writes in her thesis, *2022 Sal ya Nepal Bhasa Andolan*, about the protest movements for Nepal Bhasa in the year 2022 BS (1965). The protest was against the One-Language policy of the government and was aimed to assure the linguistic rights of Nepal Bhasa writers.

Sunita Manadhar (2006) in her thesis work *Ma Bhasan Shikshya: Jagat Sundar Bwona Kuthi ya Yogdan*<sup>14</sup> writes about the contribution of Mother Tongue Education at *Jagat Sundar Bwonekuthi*<sup>15</sup>, the first school in Nepal Bhasa medium. The school is a pioneer school for all other Nepal Bhasa schools that have opened till date. The success of this school has encouraged other Newar and Non-Newar people to open schools in Nepal Bhasa and the parents to send their kids to Nepal Bhasa medium school. It has helped in the preservation of the language. Apart from this I could not access the works of Revitalization of Language by the writers of Nepal Bhasa. Hence, I conclude this part here.

## **2.2 THEORETICAL ASPECT**

I am using the concept of Linguistic Hegemony to prove that due to the dominance of Nepali, there is decrease in the use of Nepal Bhasa nowadays. I start with the concept of Hegemony and Cultural Hegemony and consequently narrow it down to the concept of Linguistic Hegemony.

### **2.2.1 Hegemony**

Hegemony comes from the Greek verb meaning 'to lead'. The term, as conceptualised by the Italian political writer Antonio Gramsci (1891–1937), means intellectual and moral leadership

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<sup>13</sup> Also known as Gorkhali language

<sup>14</sup> Education in mother tongue contribution of school, *Jagat Sundar Bwona Kuthi*

<sup>15</sup> The first school to teach in Nepal Bhasa medium named after social activist, Jagat Sundar Malla, who advocated for education in mother tongue against Rana regime.

through consent and persuasion. The concept of hegemony provides a philosophical outline, where we can explore the power relations between the two groups: a dominant group and a minority group. It explains how a dominant group can secure its power and position in a minority group. Gramsci saw the capitalist state as being formed by two overlapping spheres: 'a political society and a civil society'. The first one rules through force, while the second one rules through consent. Gramsci further says that in the modern society it is not possible to have the first kind of rule and hence continues his theory with the second one, where the oppression is a matter of consent (Gramsci, 1971).

As explained by Wexler and Whitson (1982:31), "[h]egemony denotes the supremacy of one class over the other classes, which is established or maintained other than by exclusive reliance or coercive power." They further add that Gramsci's Hegemony "is normally exercised more by 'intellectual and moral leadership' than by coercion" (1982:32). The Gramscian concept of hegemony is essentially comprised of three affiliated processes: (1) leadership without force, (2) leadership through legitimation and (3) leadership through consensual rule (Suarez, 2000:513).

### **2.2.2 Cultural Hegemony**

Antonio Gramsci developed the concept of cultural hegemony based on Karl Marx's theory. Gramsci (1985: 26) defines it as the "domination of a culturally diverse society by the ruling class, who manipulates the culture of society, beliefs, explanations, perceptions, and values that the ruling class behaviors become the world view that is imposed and accepted as the cultural norm." It supports the idea that the dominant ideology of a society reflects the beliefs and interests of the ruling class. The reflection makes the ruling people believe that the 'economic and social conditions' of the society they live in are natural and inevitable and hence follow the same. The term Cultural Hegemony refers to the domination or rule achieved through ideological and cultural means (Cole, 2017).

According to Lears (1985:572), "[t]he concept of cultural hegemony offers intellectual and cultural historians an opportunity to connect ideas with the "social matrix" that they are constantly being urged to locate, without reducing the ideas to mere epiphenomena."

Ives (2004) asserts that "Gramsci's insights on language are powerful in relating institutional analysis to philosophical and cultural questions of meaning." The idea of hegemony is similar to that of culture with some added principles to it. It is similar as through its contribution, culture embraces a specific distinction of power, hierarchy and influence.

Antonio Gramsci mentions that the only means of keeping cultural hegemony by super leaders is not the handling of power and coercion. Instead, consent, language, use of intellectual men and educational instruments are the ways regarding the implementation of cultural hegemony. As Gramsci states,

“Every time the question of the language surfaces, it means that a series of other problems are coming to the fore: the formation and enlargement of the governing class, the need to establish more intimate and secure relationships between the governing groups and the national-popular mass, in other words to reorganize cultural hegemony.” Gramsci (1985:183-184)

He proposes that cultural hegemony is shiftable from the dominant class to the lower class. He further clarifies that whenever a ruling class begins to undergo destruction for some reason or another, it creates an opportunity for the ruled class to get the power through broad movement which is capable of battling the norms set by the ruling class. If the opportunity is not utilized then the power remains with the same dominant class (Ahmadi, 2014).

### **2.2.3 Linguistic Hegemony**

Linguistic hegemony is the suppression of a minority language by the dominant language. It can be achieved when a dominant group is able to persuade the minority people to abandon their language and shift to the dominant language.

According to Wiley (2000:113), “[l]inguistic hegemony is achieved when dominant groups create a consensus by convincing others to accept their language norms and usage as standard or paradigmatic.” For example, if a person is made to believe that one’s failure is due to one’s inefficiency in the dominant language, he will without anyone’s force shift from his mother language to the dominant language. However, it is indirectly forced upon him/her. “It influences more subtly so individuals and organizations seem to choose freely to use language in a certain way. In both cases, the hegemonic structure exerts control through power relations” (Ives 2009:662).

According to Ives (2004:83), “linguistic hegemony can come through many organisations in the hegemonic structure, such as government, education, business, religious institutions, and the media.” A government can impose a language upon its subject, especially on the minority group, unconsciously through its media and medium of education. The language used in religious organizations can brainwash the minority group and make them believe that it will be beneficial to change their language.

Debra Suarez (2002:513) explains the concept of linguistic hegemony and sheds light on “various aspects of social power relations, including the social power relationship between majority and minority languages and language groups.” Suarez asserts that linguistic hegemony can be asserted in many ways, and a successful linguistic hegemony ends in language shift which entails language loss of a minority group.

Suarez further argues that saving a minority language is important but to achieve this goal, minority language users do not necessarily have to resist the dominant language. Seen from a different perspective to save the minor language, the minor language users need to learn the language used by majority, not for language shift but to understand their world and to create a safe place for their language and identity. Suarez (202:515) asserts that, “[r]esistance is not through monolingualism in the minority language, but rather in bilingualism.” The same case can be applied to Nepal also. Nepal is known as multilingual country and to maintain this status, it has to give importance to all the languages. The government must bring out programs where it supports the mother tongue of all citizen. The citizens must be encouraged to continue using their mother tongue along with learning and using Nepali. In the case of Nepal, bilingualism must be stimulated as there are many people in Nepal whose first language is not Nepali.

In what follows, I present some of the work showing the effect of linguistic hegemony on minor languages.

In his paper *Linguistic Hegemony and Minority Resistance* Thomas Hylland Eriksen (1992) claims that it is not necessary to have a national language and that linguistic diversity should be at least tolerated if not promoted. He then illustrates examples of many languages that have faced linguistic hegemony but were also able to resist it. He mentions the language of Greenlandic Inuit, which has survived after a dramatic decline. It was successfully revitalized due to several reasons. One of the reason was that the colonial power granted freedom to use the language proving that it is very necessary to have the support of a dominant society to revitalize a minority language. The other factors were well-defined isolated territory, political representation in the state, support of supra-national organizations such as WCIP, large and occupationally relative diverse community and the preservation of documents before the decline in the use of language.

As a contrast, Eriksen provides the example of the Dyirbal of northeastern Queensland, Australia. From of various reasons for the devastated state of Dyirbal, I would like to mention some in relation to my paper. The first is compulsory education in the dominant language and another important factor is the absence of a political organization being able to negotiate with the authorities.

I find these reasons similar to those underlying the state of Nepal Bhasa, as even in Nepal there is compulsory education in Nepali language. Moreover, the so-called leaders of Nepal Bhasa are not able to negotiate with the authorities about the rights of the indigenous community.

It will not be possible to include all case studies from Eriksen's paper but I think here I must mention the case of Kenya. Kenya is a good example of linguistic harmony; which Nepal needs to follow. The people of Kenya are trilingual with English and Swahili as the official languages, and apart from that they learn their mother tongue too. Though there is tension between the two official languages, they both have co-existed without dominating each other. At the same time having two official languages does not affect the position of the mother tongue.

In his paper *Linguistic Hegemony of the English Language in Nigeria*, Abolaji Samuel Mustapha (2014) reviews the trend for the linguistic hegemony of English. He also proposes a resistance mechanism in the context of Nigeria where English is dominant. He presents the views of different writers about linguistic hegemony and remarks that to investigate the hegemony of English, we need to observe how linguistic hegemony functions. He points out how English is able to maintain its dominant status through major publications in scientific communication and through 70% to 80% academic publication in the language. He also includes an interesting fact that "English language that was once confined to some limited tribes in the British Isles but narrowly escaped extinction under the influence of French language has emerged today to become second to only one language in the world". This can be taken as an example and inspiration to revitalize any language that is at the verge of extinction.

He further suggests the ways to resist English in Nigeria focusing on the resistance mechanism of Suarez. He adds that at first, the minorities have to be proficient in English, the dominant language, and then fuel the faith towards minority language maintenance. He ends with five suggestions to promote Nigeria's local language out of which two points can be related to the promotion of Nepal Bhasa too. The first is integration of local language in the school curriculum and next is to provide scholarship and grants in courses related to local languages.

In their study about English and American Linguistic Hegemony, Yeonhee Yoo and Gon Namkung (2012) analyse how the American Linguistic power is able to maintain their political hegemony through ETS (Educational Testing Service). They further quote that linguistic hegemony is a power which empowers some and disempower others. They argue that Language Testing is a form of power. This is related to the Nepali context, as to be eligible for government jobs, the requirement is to have a very good knowledge of Nepali. Hence it directly supports the native speakers of Nepali, decreasing the possibility of other native speakers to get

government jobs as Nepali is learnt as a second language by many native speakers, their language being the first language to them.

The hegemonic structure of the government makes the language available in such an easy way that a person will feel that it is easier and more beneficial to change the language one uses. Due to linguistic hegemony, many minority groups have faced loss of their language. The shift is so unnoticeable and smooth that it is too late before we realize that the language has disappeared forever. 'Environmental and political turmoil' can be two of the main reasons for linguistic hegemony to be successful. They can uproot groups of people of a minor community and leave them with only option to shuffle into the dominant culture for survival. In the process of assimilation their language is suppressed (Crystal, 2000).

A successful linguistic hegemony leads to language shift from the marginal language to the dominant language, which sooner or later results in language loss.

### **2.3 CONCLUSION**

The term linguistic hegemony for me represents the official language of Nepal which has been forced upon not only Newar people but also other indigenous people of Nepal. Due to several oppressions, the use of Nepal Bhasa has decreased. I use the theoretical approach of linguistic hegemony to prove my hypothesis that due to hegemony of Nepal's official language Nepali, Nepal Bhasa has been limited to an indigenous language and is under serious threat of extinction. I explain this development in the context of four different periods of Nepal: the Shah unification period, the Rana period, the Shah democratic period and at last the current period where Nepal is a Republic country with a multi-party system. In the history part of this thesis, I show how an administrative language was brought down to the status of minority language. I demonstrate that the language loss which Nepal is facing now is due to linguistic hegemony of Nepali, which is indirectly forced upon the minorities through job opportunities and education policy.

### 3. CHAPTER 3: METHODS AND METHODOLOGY

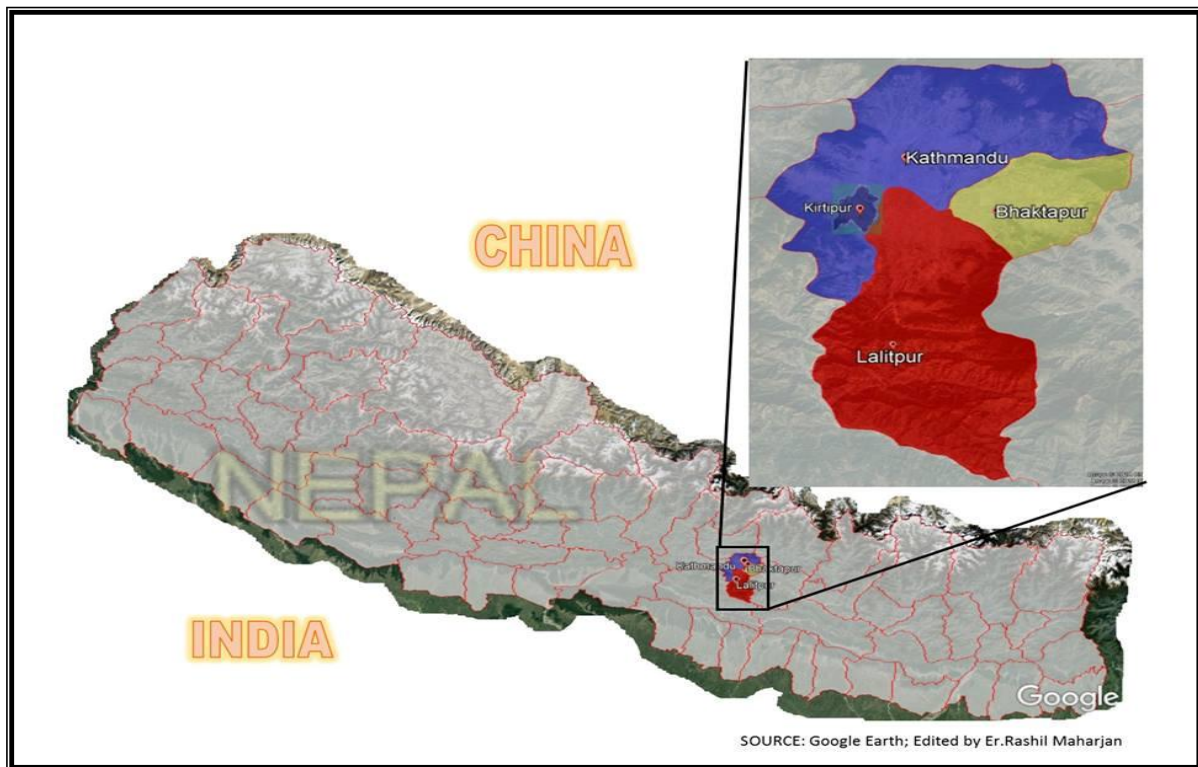
*Research Methodology is a way to systematically solve the research problem.*

*– C.R.Kothari*

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

I begin this chapter by introducing my study area from where I have collected the data. The chapter then continues with information about my informants and size of informant pool. In this chapter, I also lay out the various approaches I have used to collect data and explain why these methods are applicable. This is followed by the challenges I faced during the collection of data. The chapter concludes with the parameter of ethics.

#### 3.2 STUDY AREA



*Figure 1: Map of Nepal*

My study area is Kathmandu, home to most of the Newar inhabitants. It is known “historically as a Newar settlement and accommodates at least 67 caste/ ethnic groups” (Subedi,2010:185). According to the Census of 2011, the population of Nepal is 26,494,504. The total number of people residing in Kathmandu Valley is 2,517,023. The Valley is further divided into Kathmandu district, Bhaktapur district and Lalitpur district with population of 1,744,240;

304,651 and 468,132, respectively. The capital city can be also further divided into five municipalities; Kathmandu Metropolitan city, Lalitpur Sub Metropolitan city, Bhaktapur Municipality, Kirtipur Municipality and Madhyapur Thimi Municipality. I planned to visit all these five municipalities but due to various reason I had to curtail my study area. The problem is discussed later in this chapter.

I conducted my research in Kathmandu Metropolitan City, Lalitpur Sub Municipality and Kirtipur Municipality.

### **3.3 SELECTION AND SIZE OF THE RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS POOL**

According to the Census of 2011, 5% of the population of Nepal are Newar and only 3.2% of the population speaks Nepal Bhasa, that is 1,321,933 and 846,557 people, respectively. My research population is part of this 5% population of Nepal. It is very difficult to choose participants who can represent these people. I chose them wisely taking in account that they should represent such a large mass.

In the beginning of my field work I planned to interview 20 people. However, due to different situations I had to cut down the size to 11. As planned, I chose half of my informants from a population that works for Nepal Bhasa in a way or another, to enable a deep discussion with a notion that to have reliable answers and in-depth conversation, it is very important to have “encultured informants” (Spradley,1979:47). The remaining half of the population are layman. I included parents and the teenagers in this group to have everyone’s point of view. Below is the list of my informants.

#### *The First Group ‘Encultured Group’*

- Informant 1: Mr Santu Maharjan, founder of *Jyapu Mahaguthi*<sup>16</sup>
- Informant 2: Mr Dipak Tuladhar, founder of Modern Newa English School  
He is also the co-ordinator of Newa Schools in Newa Settlement Campaign.
- Informant 3: Mr Subhash Ram Prajapati, Secretary of WNO<sup>17</sup>  
He is founder of Dabuli Nepal and founder of Nepal Bhasa and Culture School. He is a Nepal Bhasa researcher.

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<sup>16</sup> It is a community organisation established for the *Jyapus* (farmers) in 1992. Its main aim was to bring together all the *Jyapu* community and work for the welfare of *Jyapus* unitedly.

<sup>17</sup> World Newa Organization (*Halin Newah Daboo*) has been playing a very important role in uniting all the Newar organizations worldwide and has been working together for preservation of language and pass it to the next generation. It was initiated in London, UK in 2011 AD.



- Informant 4: Ms Manjari Pradhan, an Archaeological Officer in Archaeology Department  
She has a Master's degree in Culture and she is a Nepal Bhasa writer.
- Informant 5: Mr Mahesh Man Dangol *Lajuwa*<sup>18</sup>, a Nepal Bhasa writer.  
He has done his B.A. in Nepal Bhasa. He is a MBA holder and currently he is doing his Masters in Buddhism.

*The Second Group 'Parents'*

- Informant 6: Ms Rajani Joshi Malla, mother of a teenager
- Informant 7: Mr Suman Pradhan, father to 6-year-old daughter
- Informant 8: Ms Lijala Shrestha,<sup>19</sup> mother of a toddler
- Informant 9: Ms Nasala Maharjan,<sup>20</sup> mother of a new-born baby

*The Third Group 'High School Students'*

- Informant 10: Mr Shreemad Pradhan
- Informant 11: Miss Ekata Tandukar

The idea was to discuss the history of suppression and reason for downfall of the language first and to continue with a discussion of the revitalization process. The informants with knowledge of the history of Nepal Bhasa were the best choice for discussing the history. For this purpose, my first group served best. We also discussed ways to revitalize Nepal Bhasa. The parents group were helpful to shed light on the linked between the older generation and the young generation, as they have seen the difference and experienced the change. Since for an unbiased research it is important to encompass informants from all groups, I decided to include younger generation too. In the process of interview, I realised that this generation and their attitude is also very important to preserve the language. After all, they are the ones to take the responsibility of the language in the coming years.

The first five informants fall under purposive sampling. I had to use the snowball sampling<sup>21</sup> method to choose rest of my participants as I could not meet the people in person as initially planned. Due to various reason, many of the people I chose to interview were not able to participate. I took help of available informants to get to new informants. I interviewed them

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<sup>18</sup> It is his title name meaning passerby.

<sup>19</sup> It is not the real name of the participant. Lijala means reflection in Nepal Bhasa.

<sup>20</sup> It is not the real name of the participant. Nasala is a Newari name which means water taken to purify a person before certain act.

<sup>21</sup> It is a method where informants are referred to by already selected informants who know that these people possess some characteristics that are of research interest (Biernacki, Waldorf 1981:141)

personally, only the medium was different. Although for all others I met and conducted the interview face to face, for one of them I had to make a video call and for another one – a phone call.

Apart from them, many participants were involved in my paper through online survey. The population covered by a quantitative approach was 50. The idea was to get the point of view of a mass. As I analysed later, I found that eighty percent of my informants belonged to the age group 25–45.

### **3.4 DATA COLLECTION**

Data Collection is an important part of research. Normally, there are three different kind of methods to collect data: qualitative, quantitative and mixed approach of both (Williams, 2007:65). The data can be collected through interviews, focus groups, surveys, telephone interviews, fieldnotes, taped social interaction or questionnaires (Heaton, 2004:37). For this research, qualitative and quantitative methods were used. I used semi structured<sup>22</sup>, in-depth interviews to discuss the topic in detail. The population of interviewed informants was 11. In order to include more people in my research, I took help of a questionnaire. It is the most common technique to collect data where the researcher can easily include large number of people. Here, the population was 50 Newar people of different ages. According to Komhauser (1951:423). “[q]uestionnaire and interviews represent the most common method of data collection.” The data I collected can be broadly divided into **primary data** and **secondary data**.

#### **3.4.1 Primary Data**

Primary data are the first-hand data designed to meet the need of the research. Primary data are “collected for the specific research problem at hand, using procedures that fit the research problem at hand, using procedures that fit the research problem best” (Hox and Boeije, 2005:593). The procedures I followed to collect my primary data are interview and questionnaire for Survey.

#### ***Interview***

An interview is “a conversation with purpose” (Kvale 2006:483). The method of interviewing people allows the researcher to get deep into the research matter. The selection of semi structured in-depth interview to collect the data served my purpose best. According to Chilisa

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<sup>22</sup> semi-structured interviews are focussed interviews that have questions contained in an interview guide. (Chilisa 2012:205)

(2012:205), semi-structured interviews are “focussed interviews that have questions contained in an interview guide”. The questions are not asked in same sequence to the participants and are dependent upon the response of the participants. Through in-depth interview “[a] researcher gets the opportunity of viewing the life and experience of informants in a great detail” (Kaiser, 2009:1639). It helps both the researcher and the informant to discuss few questions or topics not being limited to just answering the question but also to add more options to it. I had planned to interview some senior people from the Newar community, who have been working to revitalize the language. Due to the earthquake in Nepal in 2015, I could not meet these people. I had to re-start the process of selecting informants and had to use snowball sampling to choose most of them. I had to conduct one phone call interview and one video call interview apart from meeting people personally. The problem I faced will be discussed in later part of this chapter.

I interviewed 11 Newar people for this purpose under qualitative approach – an approach that is well suited for a “subjective assessment of attitudes, opinions and behaviour” (Kothari, 2004:5). As such, this approach was the most appropriate for the first group of my research. I used open ended questions in my interview. In this way, I assumed to gather more information about my topic without heavily relying only on questions I had prepared, which might have limited the answers of my informants. The questions were chosen beforehand but not asked in the order as written.

The information about my research was given on the phone beforehand to those informants whom I decided to meet personally. Before the interview began, I always made sure to ask the informants whether they were comfortable or not. I think there was no formal starting of the interview as we always started with a friendly talk and then transitioned to the subject matter gradually. The informants were asked about their choice of language for the interview. For the comfort of my informants, Nepal Bhasa was used to question most of my informants. I believe that it made easier for them to present their ideas clearly. Knowing the language well was one of the benefit I had as an insider. For those who were not comfortable with Newari language, I used Nepali and English simultaneously. Knowing three languages was advantageous to me. The use of semi-structured method of the interview was helpful to pivot around their experiences. My informants provided examples from related fields, which boosted my knowledge about Nepal Bhasa. Personally, I feel that structured interviews confine the interviewer, interviewee and the interview. Using unstructured interviews, we did stray away from the topic at times but I made sure at the end I got all my questions answered.

### **Questionnaire**

According to Brown (2001:6), “[q]uestionnaires are any written instruments that present respondents with a series of questions or statements to which they are to react whether by writing out their answers or selecting from among existing answers.” With the help of answer given by the Encultured Group, I prepared a set of close-ended questions. The respondents either had to answer yes or no, or by choosing one of the multiple answers.

The questionnaire included 21 closed-ended questions after pretesting. In the first draft of the questionnaire, there were only closed-ended questions. The closed-ended questionnaire was to be distributed to a multitude of Newar people to know their view within short time; it was moreover like taking a poll on certain topic. However, I felt the need of a platform for the voice of this population in some of the questions. So, in some questions an extra option was given where the informants could write if they had any other thought. The questions were not so grave but still managed to capture their viewpoint.

I did a ‘Pilot study’ to test the questionnaire (Kothari, 2004). I took help from two of my informants to read the question before it was given to the mass. With their advice, I made some changes in it. It was very important for the questions to be evaluated by someone else to get their perspective because at times a single mind can’t locate all the problems and mistakes. The questionnaire was posted in FB Newar Community. Ten participants received a personal message encouraging them to take part in the survey.

#### **3.4.2 Secondary Data**

Secondary data is data collected by other researcher for their research. Thus, secondary data were someone’s primary data. “By virtue of being archived and made available, any type of primary data can serve as secondary data.” Data as “official statistics, administrative records and accounts kept routinely by organizations” are example of secondary data, which are collected by organization for their specific purpose (Hox and Boeije, 2005:596).

For secondary data, I used the data of the Nepal Population Census to gather information on the population of Newar and the number of people who speak Nepal Bhasa. Comparing the Census issues of different years gave me a clear view of the dynamic status of Newar and Nepal Bhasa.

Articles authored by prominent figures are assumed to be more reliable, since such people publish an article after a lot of research in that area. I reviewed articles about the history of Newar and Nepal Bhasa containing suggestions of ways for revitalization written by different prominent writers. I also listened to some of their interviews to understand their point of view.

I mainly followed the interviews of Dr Bal Gopal Shrestha, Prof. K.P Malla and Mr. Dipak Tuladhar.

### **3.5 RESEARCH CHALLENGES**

Research is ‘a voyage of discovery’ (Kothari, 2004:1). We face a lot of challenges during this journey to seek the knowledge. The challenges can come in different forms, in different places and at different times. If the research is planned well, these challenges can be tackled well. A good researcher always plans well and it is very important to have back-up plan. However, it is always not possible to avoid challenges. On the positive side, with challenges, a voyage becomes memorable.

#### **3.5.1 In the Field**

When I visited Nepal in 2016, it had just been through the shock of a massive earthquake. Kathmandu was at its worst and there were still aftershocks. Though language loss was one of the hot topic among Newar, when I reached Kathmandu for field work, there was another loss that people were more concerned about. The earthquake had taken thousands of lives and had brought down many houses and historical monuments. The aftermath of the earthquake made it difficult to reach many of my informants.

The city was in chaos and I was not able to reach to the available informants on time; even those who were supposed to come to me couldn’t make it on time. There were times when I even had to postpone or cancel the meetings. Transportation was one of the biggest problem for me. I live in *Gurjudhara*, a place somewhat far away from the main city area. The road I take to main city is a main highway which is very crowded with big trucks. At the same time, there was blockade from India, which decreased the amount of public transport vehicles and the few available were too crowded to access. Once I tried to take a taxi to the main city, but when the taxi driver demanded thrice the normal price, I had to cancel my trip. I was lucky that in such a short time I still got 11 people to help me with the interviews. However, I couldn’t complete all my requirements of field work and had to take the help of social media to fulfil the rest of the requirements.

My daughter was only five months old when I visited Nepal for field work. She was totally reliable on me for everything so I had to make sure that I was with her whenever she needed me. Carrying her with me was not an option, as it would have impeded the smooth flow of the interviews. Being a mother, it was tough for me to manage the time to visit all my target cities.

### **3.5.2 The Endless Talks and Time Management**

Time management was one of the challenges I faced during interviews. I truly enjoyed taking interview about Nepal Bhasa with people, as they had many interesting stories to tell. I was brought up listening to these stories, and I could add some more to my list through interviews. However, while conducting interviews, it occasionally became difficult to stick to a topic. At times we, the researcher and the informant, wandered away from the main topic. Many times, the topic shifted from language to cultural heritage preservation. It also wandered to stories as an example. From history till date, all the issues were just linked. Many of the historical monuments and places of Nepal were hit very hard by the earthquake, so the topic even reached to that point. For example, the temple of *Swoyambhunath*<sup>23</sup>, which is one of the religious place for the Newar people of Kathmandu, was hit hard by the earthquake. One of my informant was in the same place when the first shock was felt. So, she started to tell me her experience of that day. She was so horror-struck while explaining that we had to stop interview of that day and continue some other day.

When the topic shifted from the main objective, it was not always possible for me to stop the interviewees, as it would hurt their sentiments. The ease of informant is of vital importance to get the best out of the interview. It was fun and at the same time useful to learn interesting stories from the history. The sole problem was to manage time.

### **3.5.3 After the Field Work**

I had to pause my research work for two years due to personal reason. I came back with a determination to complete it with the encouragement of my family in 2018. I contacted the interviewees once again to get their updated views. They were very supportive and with the help of social media like Gmail, Messenger and Viber, we discussed the updated situations of Nepal Bhasa. The social media proved to be very helpful during this stage.

## **3.6 EMOTIONAL ATTACHMENT**

When I first chose this topic, my objective was to do something for my language. I wanted to find out why Nepal Bhasa has faced such a decline and what can be done to revitalize it. I wanted to find why the stories I heard and the songs I sang in Nepal Bhasa during my childhood were heard no more. As I conducted the interviews, the area grew vast and I came to know

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<sup>23</sup> A temple famous for both Hindu and Buddhist is one of the main temple for Newar. It is in the World Heritage Site of UNESCO.

many heart-wrecking stories related to Nepal Bhasa. I came to know the history of domination of Nepal Bhasa from Prithvi Narayan Shah's time till present date where a Newar would be punished for speaking Nepal Bhasa or working for Nepal Bhasa. One of the horrible stories I heard was how the soldiers of Prithvi Narayan Shah cut the nose of the men of Kirtipur as per the king's order after he won Kirtipur during his unification process. I also came across a recent story, where a child was punished for speaking in Nepal Bhasa in school (Mr Tuladhar). It is hard to believe such facts. The bitter truth is that they happened. I also came to know that there were many children who stopped going to school due to language problem.

I felt more attached to this language and topic knowing that Newars have gone through so much trouble just because they were Newars. I felt more obliged to do something for my language Nepal Bhasa and my identity as a Newar.

### **3.7 ETHICS AND REFLEXIVITY**

Ermine (2000:115) defines 'ethics' in research for indigenous peoples as a respectful process that must constantly work in issues of the Indigenous community and perform from the point of view of its "historical consciousness and its difference". Research Ethics is about responsibility: responsibility towards 'our action and motifs' and responsibility towards people and community that might be affected by (our) research (Olsen 2016:28).

We must keep ethics in mind from the time we start drafting questions till we analyse the data. We must be careful about ethical issues right from the early stage of the project as it relates to how we present ourselves and the questions to the informants (Oliver, 2010:9). In the process of making question, we must keep our informants in mind, and be conscious if our questions could negatively affect them. At the same time, as researchers, we have to keep in mind how can the researched community can benefit from the research we conduct.

Ethics is like a road that guides us towards what to do and what not to do during research work. Delora (1980:271) states that the "construction of ethical codes of ethics" draws a line of discipline within which a research is conducted along with establishing a healthy relationship with society as a whole.

Ethics plays a very important role while collecting data. At other times of research work, the researcher is physically alone, but while collecting data through interview or through other interactions with informants, the researcher is not alone and at this time, ethics should be more carefully followed, as any kind of unethical gesture will ruin the whole environment, hence ruin the whole interview. Ethics is all about respect to each other. It is a prime duty of a researcher

to explain the informant about the purpose of the interview and give a clear view about the thesis topic that the researcher is working on. It is the right of an informant to know the objective of the research. It is also the right of the informant to know that they can leave the interview anytime if they are not comfortable.

In a research, when we know the real identity of an informant, it is easy to interpret and understand their point of view. Chilisa (2012:207) mentions that in postcolonial indigenous paradigm, if permitted, the name of the informants should be revealed as it ensures that ‘the researcher is accountable to the participants, and the participants are in turn accountable to their communities.’ But it is also important to keep in mind that informants have the right to conceal their identity. In my research paper, the real identity of some of the informants are hidden due to their unwillingness and desire to avoid any kind of conflict which may arise due to their personal view.

Under the guideline of ethic, we can collect valid data maintaining respect and preserving rights of both researcher and informants. Ethics is a moral and professional behaviour which makes the research data more reliable. It preserves the right of the research subject when the findings are being published (Chilisa, 2012). Baker (1999) says that ethics plays an important role in minimizing the research disaster by limiting the power of researcher and providing respect to the subject.

A researcher faces many challenges while collecting data. To avoid or minimize such challenges, it is very important to follow ethics and include reflexivity, especially in research on indigenous studies. It also helps to maintain a healthy relation between researcher and researched. Chilisa (2012:168) observes that “reflexivity is a strategy which helps to ensure that the involvement of the researcher is not a threat to the credibility of the study’. Reflexivity is an assessment of researcher’s background which might influence the way a researcher analyses “reality, perceptions, experiences, ideological biases, and interests during the research.” This assessment is important as the scholar is “the main data collection instrument who analyses, interprets and reports the findings.” If a researcher conducts a research on basis of ethics and reflexivity, there is minimal risk for facing challenges anywhere in the process.

For example, two of the participants whom I interviewed didn’t want to reveal their names. At first, it troubled me a bit as in a research paper, the analysis looks more reliable when the informants’ original name is given. Moreover, I feel that using terms like Informant #1 and Informant #2 will break the flow of the analysis. It tends to alienate these informants from other informants also. To solve this dilemma, I followed the ethics and decided to keep their name secret as the information they give which mattered more than the name. I decided to give



Newari names to those informants who didn't want to reveal their names as it would not separate them from other informants. Apart from their name, all other information is real. Their permission was taken to do so.



## CHAPTER 4: HISTORY OF NEPAL BHASA

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*History is written by victors.*

*– Winston Churchill*

The Newar are the original inhabitants of the Kathmandu valley (Shrestha, 1998/99:1). The Newari language, also famously known as Nepal Bhasa or Nepal Bhasa, is the language spoken by the Newar – the indigenous inhabitants of Nepal. According to Daya Shaky, “it is a language that was historically recognized as the official language of Nepal Mandala, which was then known as Nepal Bhasa, before the unification of current and larger Nepal” (Shakya, 2010/11: 2). Nepal Bhasa has a different verbal accent and variant words even among the different Newari speaking communities of Kathmandu, Lalitpur, Bhaktapur and Kirtipur, collectively known as Nepal Mandala.

The Newar prefer to call their language Nepal Bhasa and not Newari. However, the word Newari is more popular internationally and nationally, due to its connotation to the Newar people. I use the term Nepal Bhasa to denote the language spoken by the Newar people. If the term Newari is used instead for some reason, it should be understood as Nepal Bhasa and not a distinct language.

“Newari belongs to the Tibeto-Burman group, with rich ancient and modern literatures going back to the fourteenth century” (Shrestha, 1998/1999:1). The Newar have a very rich language and cultural heritage. Every month there are festivals which are celebrated with genuine enthusiasm. According to the anthropologist Dor Bahadur Bista, “the word Newar describes a very large and diverse range of people united mainly by their language and cultural practices” (Bista, 1967:16). Even now, when the use of the language is decreasing rapidly, its festivals and celebrations steadily gain attractive power among non-Newars too.

There are still many speculations about the origin of this language. Here are few of the points mentioned by writers and researchers in the past and the present about its origin.

The anthropologist Bal Gopal Shrestha shares the view that the word ‘Newar’ is etymologically identical with the place name ‘Nepal’. To support his point, he further adds the view of the historian Baburam Acharya maintaining that the words *Nevar*, *Neval* or *Nevah* have all developed from the single word ‘Nepal’. He also mentions that, according to linguistic research, the Newari language is of Tibeto Burman origin just like the languages Yakthumba, Khambu, Sunuwar, Thami and Murmi, which also represent indigenous languages of Nepal. Malla confirms that the inscription of *Vasantdev* of Tistung from 512 AD is the first evidence that the word Newar is used for the people of Nepal (Shrestha, 1998/1999:84).

According to Gellner, “[t]he Newar see themselves as the rightful inhabitants of the Kathmandu Valley, the centre of Nepal, and they are the largest single ethnic group within it” (Gellner, 1997:151). When asked today, the Newari people maintain the same view that they are the rightful inhabitants of Kathmandu. Even the non-Newar people residing in Kathmandu will share the same opinion, if asked.

The anthropologist Dor Bahadur Bista writes that “the Newar people had been settled in the Nepal since the prehistoric times” (1976:16). Shrestha mentions that although the language flourished in Malla period, the earliest evidence was found on a palm leaf of *Patan Uku Bahal*, dated 1114 AD. The earliest dated epigraph in Nepal Bhasa was found at *Vajrayogini Sankhu*, dated 1172 AD (Shrestha, 1998/1999:2).

According to H.A.Oldfield, “[t]he race of the Newars is a mixed race, derived from Indian or Tibetan stocks, and their religion naturally presents a corresponding mixture of the Indian and Tibetan creeds” (Oldfield, 1974:73).

In this chapter, we discuss the history of Newar and Nepal Bhasa spanning five periods:

1. Malla Reign
2. Shah Dynasty
3. Rana Oligarchy
4. Panchayat system
5. Multi-Party Democratic Period to Republic Nepal

### **3.8 THE MALLA REIGN**

The Malla kings ruled during 1200–1769AD, in succession to the Lichhabi kings in Nepal. It is believed that the Newari language was in use before this period but it flourished in this era. The kings themselves wrote plays in Maithili and Newari. The Malla period is also known as the Golden Age of the Newari language and literature.

“During the Malla reign, from the 13<sup>th</sup> century till its downfall in 1769, the kings themselves contributed greatly to promote the Newar literature, as well as other languages, such as Mailthili, Avadhi, Bhojpuri, and Bengali. The Malla courts supported all languages, classical and vernacular, without discrimination. The extent of the literary tradition in other languages indicates the cosmopolitan nature of the Malla courts.” (Malla, 1982:7)

The Malla kings were also known as Newar kings, even though the Malla kings never identified themselves as Newars. They supported all the languages and cultures. It was due to this fact

that the Malla period had rich language and culture. The people were encouraged to and were free to use their own language.

Acharya mentions that majority of the people spoke Newari during Malla period, which may have been the reason for the Malla kings to try to establish this language as a national language. The literature of that time was written in Newari, and even the inscriptions used the same language (Acharya, 1953:15).

Shrestha mentions that *Nepal Bhasa* was used in literary works only in the later part of the fourteenth century. He gives the examples of *Haramekhala*, *Naradasmr̥ti* and *Amarkosa*, which were translated in Newari in the year 1374, 1380 and 1381, respectively. He also mentions that the chronicle *Gopalrajavamsavali* was compiled in Sanskrit and Newari in the 1380s. (Shrestha, 1995:74). In the Malla period, the first use of word Nepal Bhasa was found in an inscription dated from 1654. It was in an inscription at Hanumandhoka of King Pratap Malla (Shrestha, 1999:85).

### **3.9 THE SHAH DYNASTY**

The Shah dynasty succeeded the Malla reign. King Prithvi Narayan Shah united Nepal in 1769, and since then the Newari language has been gradually declining. The language was not banned directly, but slowly replaced by Gorkhali Bhasha, which is the current official language – the Nepali of Nepal. Even in this era, when Nepali was slowly taking over Nepal Bhasa, there were a few patrons in the palace who worked to maintain the Newari language through their writing. King Ranabhadur Shah and Rajendra Bikram Shah are few of those examples. Since it was totally not banned but indirectly made impractical, the use of the language slowly started to decrease without full awareness (Shrestha, 1995).

### **3.10 THE RANA OLIGARCHY**

The Rana period started in 1846 after prime minister Juddha Samsher Rana imprisoned the king of Nepal and took over the power. The Ranas ruled the country for 104 years: from 1847 to 1951. Initially, the Newars, their culture and language were well treated. The Newars were offered posts in the palace, as Ranas always saw the Newar as a threat and wanted to keep them under their power by favouring them with good positions. The Ranas were especially afraid of writings in Newari language, as Newari was the language of the majority in the Valley. They knew that if the Valley people turned against them, the power of Rana would not be able to suppress their voice (Shrestha, 1998/1999:1).

The Rana regime was always in fear of losing its power. The regime was supported by the British and with the British losing its hold in India, the fear multiplied. As a result, the then prime minister Juddha Shamsar Rana pressed Newar writers not to write in Newari in 1933. He jailed several writers for many years who did not obey his order. This act proved to be a boon for Newar, as these prisoners turned out to be writers. They wrote many books secretly, which made significant contributions to the Newar literature (Shrestha, 1998/1999:4).

When Chandra Samsher Rana became Prime Minister, the suppression of Newari language and culture reached its peak. During his rule, Newari was totally banned from the court of justice and administration. The government was very harsh towards this language. “Anyone daring to use Newari either for business or literary purpose was found guilty of committing an illegal, even a revolutionary act” (Lienhard, 1992:4). Those who used Newari language were imprisoned or sent to exile and were labelled as traitors of the country. Apart from this, the users of this language were also given warnings and fined heavily. Nevertheless, the direct oppression favoured the flourishing of Newari language.

This oppression gave birth to legends about Newari renaissance. Siddhidas Amatya, Nisthananda Vajracharya, Yogvir Singh Kansakar, Jagat Sundar Malla, martyr Sukraraj Sastri (Sukraraj Joshi) and Dharmaditya Dharmacharya, were products of that period (Shrestha and Hoek, 1995:74). The period is also known as the Renaissance (1899-1940) of the Newari language (Shrestha, 1999).

Pandit Nisthanand was the first to publish a book in Nepal Bhasa entitled *Ekavimsati Prajnaparamita* in 1909, a Buddhist text with Sanskrit Slokas. In 1914, he printed another book *Lalitavistara* which is about Buddha’s life and *Swoyambhupurana*, a mythical story. He did all the printing work on his own finance, but later it became difficult for him to print these books due to censorship imposed by government on all the publications (Shrestha 1999:87).

Siddhidas Amatya wrote nearly 50 books including Ramayana. He used to go to Arya Samaj, the group of activists in social reform programs, and encourage them to write in Newari. One of the member of Arya Samaj was Sukra Raj Shastra. He was the author of the first Newari Grammar book, *Nepal Bhasa Vyakarna* published in 1928. His work also includes *Nepal Bhasa Varnamala* book and the Nepal Bhasa Reader 1 and 2. He was executed by hanging in 1941 by the Rana Government with other three political activists: Gangalal Shrestha, Dharmabhakta Mathema, Dasrath Chand (Shrestha, 1999:88).

Amatya’s quotation *Bhasa Mvasa Jati Mvai* (If the language survives, the country survives) is famous and is quoted in most of the Newar programs.

Another prominent figure was Jagat Sundar Malla, who was the first to speak in the favour of education in mother tongue. He opened a school in Newari language in Bhaktapur in 1912. He wrote textbooks in Newari language and English to Newari and Newari to English dictionaries. He was arrested and imprisoned during the Rana reign (Shrestha, 1998/99:4).

There were many Newars in India for business and study purpose during this time. At that time, Newars also used to go to India to get education, since during the Rana period it was not possible to even contemplate getting an education in mother tongue.

In 1926, the first Newari literary organisation, the *Nepalbhāsa Sahitya Mandala*, was founded in Calcutta by Dharmaditya Dharmacharya. The organization was the one to publish the first Newari language journal *Buddhadharma va Nepalbhāsa* (Shrestha 1998/99:4). Below are the lines written by the renowned poet Yogvir Singh Kansa. They mean “Nepal Bhasa has been worn out. Let us mend it without being lazy. Let us get a place for it in Indian Education Board (Bharatiya Sastra Bhawan).”

नेपालभाषा जीर्ण जूगु अलिस् मचासें भिंकेनु  
भारतिय शाष्ट्र भवणं मान थ्वैत बिइकेनु

-- योगवीर सिं कसा:<sup>24</sup>

The Newar Buddhist monk—expelled from Nepal in 1944 for advocating Therveda—established *Dharmodaya Sabha*, a Buddhist Religious Council in Sarnath. The members of the council wrote in Newari language and started publishing a second journal *Dharmodaya* in 1946. *Cvasapasa*, another literary association was formed in 1950 in Calcutta, which later was transferred to Nepal in 1951 after the political changes (Shrestha, 1999:89).

In 1945, when Padma Samsheer became Prime Minister, he released many of the political prisoners and lifted the ban on publication of Newari language. Within a few years, 115 books were cleared by the censorship and became available to everyone. The Buddhist monk were also allowed to return to the country.

The Rana Reign came to an end in 1951.

### 3.11 THE PANCHAYAT SYSTEM

Nepal achieved democracy in 1951, which shifted the power back from the Ranas to the Shah Monarch. In the beginning of this period, there was more freedom for the Nepal Bhasa and

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<sup>24</sup> Read it as: Nepal Bhasa jirna jugu alsī machase bhinkenu, bhartiye shastra bhawane maan thuita beikenu -Yogbir Singh Kasa.

other languages to bloom. However, the Newari language was not back in court of justice or administration. The so-called democracy could not give back Newar and its language the same status which they used to enjoy before.

In 1960, king Mahendra introduced the Panchayat system under his dictatorship and banned all political parties (Shrestha, 1999:91). The Panchayat rule promoted the policy of *Ekdesh, eknaresh, ekbhesh, and ekbhasa*, which means one country, one ruler, one religion, and one language, depriving citizens from basic human rights of free speech, free gathering and free movements. It is similarity to the Norwegianization policy in Norway during the period 1850 to 1980, people were forced to use Nepali and could not speak or work in the favour of their mother tongue. Under this policy, the other indigenous languages were heavily oppressed and importance was given to Nepali, which was known as Gorkhali language during the earlier phase of the Shah dynasty.

In 1959, the Constitution of Nepal declared Nepali to be the national language of Nepal and since that moment, the once official language of Nepal, Nepal Bhasa, was officially invalid. The Panchayat system also tortured and imprisoned the prominent writers of Nepal Bhasa.

The Democracy Radio Nepal which used to broadcast in Nepali, Newari and Hindi during the Rana period continued only with Nepali after 1965. In 1951, Nepal Bhasa Parisad (the Council of Newar Language) was established. Its main aim was to publish educational materials and literary books in Nepal Bhasa as the government failed to extend help to Nepal Bhasa. The first Newari daily newspaper was published during this time.

Gellner (1997:454) maintains the view that during “the Panchayat period, minorities’ cultures were certainly neglected, if not suppressed; if ethnic culture was present in the public arena at all, it was folklorized”. For example, if a Newari poem was to be recited in public, it was recited by a Non-Newar.

During this period many organizations and committees were formed to support Nepal Bhasa. Birat Nepal Bhasa Sahitya Sammelan Guthi was formed in 1962 in Bhaktapur. It means Grand Newari Literary Conference Trust. In 1979, Nepal Bhasa Mamkah Khalah was established in Kathmandu. Mr Padma Ratna Tuladhar was the chairman of this organization.

### **3.12 MULTI PARTY DEMOCRATIC PERIOD TO REPUBLIC NEPAL**

In this section, I sum the period after the Panchayat system till date, as nothing much has happened in Nepal Bhasa literature under this time span. The political instability in the country lead to a pause in the development of every field, including the literature. During this time



Nepal was going from being a monarchy to a multi-democratic party system, which finally ended with Nepal being a republic. Nepal holds same status till date.

The Panchayat system was brought down by “the people’s movement” (*Janadolan*) in 1990. The late king Birendra legalised political parties, and hence the new constitution was made. The new constitution defined Nepal as ‘a multi-ethnic, multilingual, democratic, independent, indivisible, sovereign, Hindu and Constitutional Monarchical Kingdom’ (Gellner, 2007:1825). After the people’s movement, the country had multi-democratic parties with a king as the head of the country. The country could not enjoy the peace for long as soon another conflict started in 1996. The Maoist announced a war against monarchy and launched an armed insurgency. This period is known as *Janayuddha* ‘People’s War’. Ten years of Civil War in Nepal ended in 2006. Nepal’s interim parliament declared the country as a ‘federal democratic republic’ on 28 December 2007. The monarchy was fully brought down.

It is very important to know the political situation of Nepal at that time to understand the state of the language. Due to the political instability, the language was never a matter of priority to the political parties and hence the state of language did not improve. The language issue was only limited to the book of Constitution but not implemented. Below I cite a few of the Articles from the Constitution which deal with Language Rights.

- According to Article 6, all languages spoken as mother tongues in Nepal are languages of the Nation.
- Article 7(1) proclaims Nepali language in the *Devnagari* script as the official language of Nepal.
- Article 31(5) states that every Nepalese community residing in Nepal shall have the right to get education in its mother tongue and, for that purpose, it can open and operate schools and educational institutes, in accordance with law.
- Article 32(1) states that every person and community shall have the right to use their languages.
- Article 32(2) states that every person and community shall have the right to participate in the cultural life of their communities.
- Article 32(3) states that every Nepalese community residing in Nepal shall have the right to preserve and promote its language, script, culture, cultural civilization and heritage.

Source: The Constitution of Nepal 2015

However, this legislation seems impractical in a multilingual country like Nepal. According to CBS reports from 1992, Nepal is a multilingual country with 32 spoken languages. This matter is still debated, as linguists argue that there are more than 32 languages. KP Malla takes a stand against this. He remarks

“Can the state finance primary education in the mother tongue? If not, what is the sense of putting so many words in the Constitution? Then it is just for show, it is just window dressing. That’s all. But in practice, the government is spending everything in education just for Nepali.” (Malla and Gellner, 1996: 48)

I strongly agree with Malla’s statement. Firstly, the articles of the Constitution are impractical as it is very difficult for a multilingual country like Nepal to promote all the languages of its people. Secondly, though mentioned in the Constitution, the government has done nothing to support its decision. It has not supported any other language but Nepali. This is best put in Tej R. Kansakar’s words:

“The various Constitutions in the past had designated Nepali as the national language in view of its status as a lingua franca among diverse linguistic communities and its role in the national life of the country. While no-one has disputed the status of Nepali as the national language, it was abundantly clear that the policy of His Majesty’s Government was to promote only the use of Nepali in education, administration, press and publication, information and the media.” (Kansakar, 1996:18)

During this period, very little effort was made towards language preservation by the government as the country went through many highs and lows. Apart from devising rules for the use of language, not much work was done by the government to preserve and encourage the indigenous languages.

Moreover, in the year 1999, the Supreme Court ruled out that “the use of ethnic languages like Nepal Bhasa and Maithili in government offices is unconstitutional and illegal” (Gellner, 2007:189). This decision was made when a case was filed against Kathmandu Metropolitan city for using Nepal Bhasa for official purpose. In August 1997. The decision of the Supreme Court was strongly condemned by Newar people and Nepal Janajati Mahasangh (The Federation of the Nationalities of Nepal).

Among the very few ventures by government in the language area, we can name the National Languages Policy Recommendation Commission, which compiled vital information and data on the language situation of Nepal. It also made recommendations specially for the preservation and development of the country’s minorities languages (Kansakar, 1999). The recommendation

of the commission was never implemented by the government, and there was no commitment from the government in the issue of national languages. Kansakar shares the view that “the recent governments are concerned solely with political and economic issues, and linguistic and cultural questions still do not figure in the government’s list of priority. Hence the commitment of government is just limited to papers and not to actions” (Kansakar, 1996:21).

*Nepal Janajati Mahasangh* (The Federation of the Nationalities of Nepal) was established in 1991 to address the issues related to the indigenous group of Nepal. In the same year, the first Newari School *Jagat Sundar Bvane Kuthi* was established on personal effort. Newar intellectuals founded the Nepal Bhasa Academy in 1992. In 1993, ‘Nevar<sup>25</sup> Trust’ was established to build a mass-based ethnic organization. *Nevah De Dabu*, the National Forum of the Newars was formed in 1995, while the participants from 38 districts have formed local organizations in their areas. There is some caste-based organizations within the Newar society. To end this chapter, I present a map of Nepal showing the proposed ethnic and Regional Autonomous States of the Maoists along with a table of the ten largest population groups by language in Nepal from Census 1991, 2001 and 2011, which indicate that the Newar have maintained to be the sixth largest ethnic group of Nepal since many years. However, the growth rate is very low.

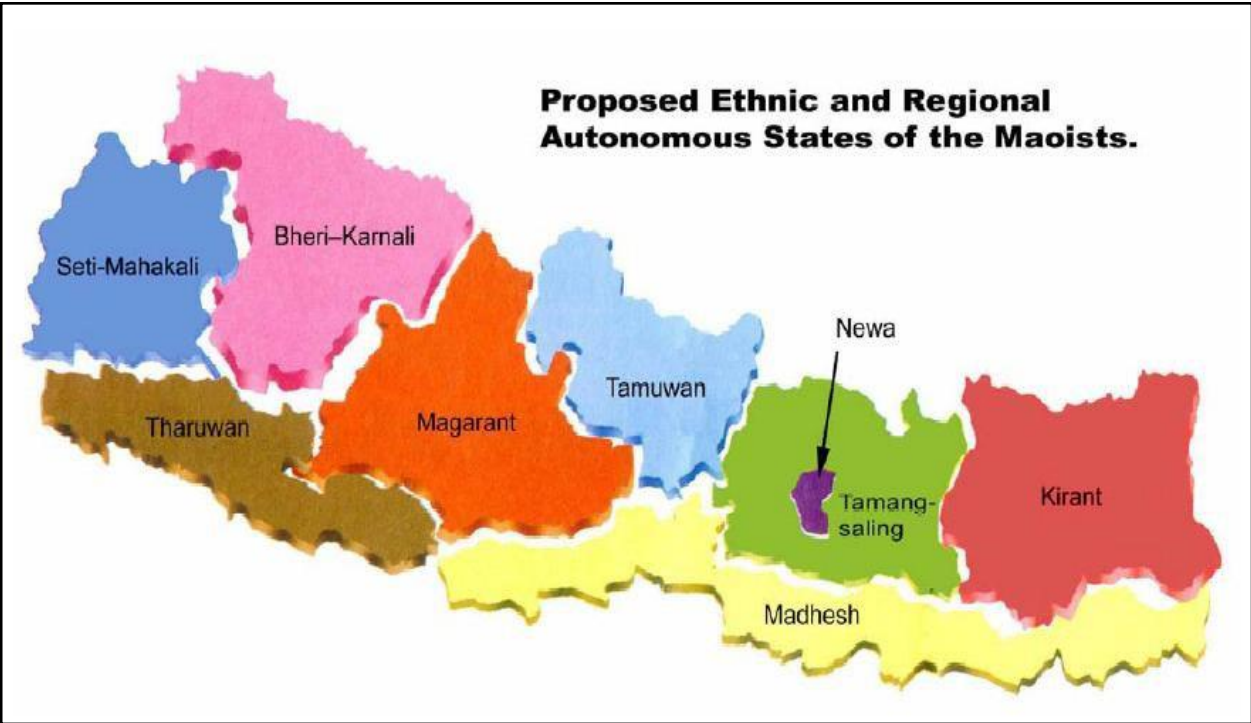


Figure 2: Map of proposed Ethnic and Regional Autonomous States of Maoist  
 Edited by Er. Rashil Maharjan. Source: <http://demrepubnepal.blogspot.fi/2006/07/federalism-competing-maps.html>

<sup>25</sup> Newar

*Table 1: Ten Largest Population by Language – 2011*

<b>10 numerically dominant ethnic/ caste groups by number</b>	<b>1991 Census (pop. size and % of total)</b>	<b>2001 Census (pop. size and % of total)</b>	<b>2011 Census (pop. size and % of total)</b>	<b>Changes in number and (2001-2011 census)</b>	<b>Population growth rate (2001-2011 censuses)</b>
<b>Chhetri</b>	2,968,082 (16.1)	3,593,496 (15.8)	4,398,053 (16.6)	804,657	2.04
<b>Brahman-Hill</b>	2,388,456 (12.9)	2,896,477 (12.7)	3,226,903 (12.2)	330,426	1.08
<b>Magar</b>	1,339,308 (7.2)	1,622,421 (7.1)	1,887,733 (7.1)	265,312	1.52
<b>Tharu</b>	1,194,224 (6.5)	1,533,879 (6.8)	1,737,470 (6.6)	203,591	1.25
<b>Tamang</b>	1,081,252 (5.8)	1,282,304 (5.6)	1,539,830 (5.8)	257,526	1.84
<b>Newar</b>	1,041,090 (5.6)	1,245,232 (5.6)	1,321,933 (5.0)	76,701	0.59
<b>Kami</b>	963,656 (5.2)	895,954 (4.0)	1,258,554 (4.8)	362,600	3.46
<b>Musalman</b>	653,055 (3.5)	971,056 (4.3)	1,164,255 (4.4)	193,199	1.83
<b>Yadav</b>	765,137	895,423 (4.0)	1,054,458 (4.0)	159,035	1.64
<b>Rai</b>	525,557 (2.8)	635,151 (2.8)	620,004 (2.3)	-15,147	-0.24
<b>Total (10 groups)</b>	12,919,815 (69.7)	14,675,439 (68.7)	18,209,196 (68.7)	3,533,757	2.18
<b>Nepal</b>	18,491,097	23,151,423	26,494,504		1.35

Source: Census 1991, 2001 and 2011 from <http://cbs.gov.np/>

## **4. CHAPTER 5: DATA AND ANALYSIS**

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This chapter is divided into two parts: data and analysis. The data is presented under two separate headings of Interview and Survey. The part Interview presents the main data to discuss in detail related to the downfall of Nepal Bhasa. The Survey part aims to check the idea of interviews with more people. The population of interviewees is 11 and the population of survey takers is 50.

### **4.1 INTERVIEW ANALYSIS**

The in-depth interview was conducted with 11 informants. The main area of discussion was the reason behind the decrease in the use of Nepal Bhasa. The interview started with the informants' view on Nepal Bhasa being listed in definitely endangered group by UNESCO. It was a warm-up question to elucidate their view about whether the language is really endangered and weakening day by day. Some of the participants agreed with the fact that in today's scenario that is the status of our language. Still, many of them were of the view that the reality is not that bad. They did agree though that the language is weakening in comparison to the past, and that if this trend continues, soon it will turn into an endangered language. Mr Dangol, for instance agrees that there is a slight decrease in use but there are also people those who are working for its preservation. Mr Maharjan is of the view that the use of language is not decreased and is still spoken in the same extent within family and community. He further clarifies that it is true that in domains outside the community its use has decreased as it is no more an official language. In other words, its area of use is limited, but the number of speaker has not decreased. He maintains that Newars have started learning and using an extra language, Nepali, but have not stopped using Nepal Bhasa.

Most of the interviewees agreed that the use of this language has decreased a lot in the past 25 years. All of them held a slightly different view on why there was a decrease in the use of this language. Since this is the main pursuit of my research, their views are presented in detail below.

#### **4.1.1 Decrease in the Use of Nepal Bhasa**

Mr. Prajapati presents two main reasons for the decrease. One of the reason is that parents do not teach this language to their children. The reason again is its scope, which is near to zero in the outer world. He represents parents' view that there is no use of learning a language which can't be used anywhere. Teaching a language which has no space to be practiced and used is

just a waste of time, and this demotivates the parents. The next reason he gives is the suppression of Nepal Bhasa in the past years starting with the rule of Prithvi Narayan Shah till date. In different ruling periods, the language was suppressed which led to decrease in the importance and use of this language. He remarks that this is the main reason why parents hesitate to teach their kids Nepal Bhasa.

Mr. Tuladhar blames the government policy for this. He further divides his reasons in four categories. The first one is School. He remarks that the government policy is not favourable towards any other language than the official language. The children are forbidden to use their mother tongue in school, and the parents have stopped using Nepal Bhasa with children fearing that they might face problems due to their language. He further criticizes the One Language policy of the Panchayat system where the writers of Khas<sup>26</sup> (the so-called Nepali) language are awarded and at the same time the writers of other language are punished. He criticizes the government media, where all the programs are in the Khas language and even the important government news are printed only in *Gorkhapatra*<sup>27</sup>, which has news in Khas. He at last condemns the act of the government to give the title of *Nepali* to only the Khas language along with a total importance. He presents two real examples.

When a Newar wanted to register an organization with a Newari name *Bhintuna*<sup>28</sup> in CDO<sup>29</sup> office, it was not allowed. The reason given was that the name is not understandable. The organization was registered as *Shuvakamana*<sup>30</sup> instead which meant the same in Nepal Bhasa. Another example, the Newari movie *Silu* had to pay tax for being a Newari movie whereas all the Nepali movies get tax-free facility. Any kind of work in Nepal Bhasa is discouraged by the government. He also mentions that even the media is biased, as all important news are given in Nepali. He further explains that since the children are prohibited to use their mother tongue in school, the parents have also stopped speaking it with their kids.

Ms. Pradhan maintains that the weakening of the language started since the time of Prithvi Narayan Shah and became more severe under the Panchayat system with its One Language policy. She presents an important side of the cause; namely, that since the Panchayat period, many non-Newar have relocated to Kathmandu, which flooded Kathmandu with people of

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<sup>26</sup> Mr Tuladhar prefers using Khas language instead of Nepali. It is a matter of debate whether only Khas language can be Nepali since all languages of Nepal should be Nepali. So, to keep up with his sentiments I use the words as used by him.

<sup>27</sup> National Daily Newspaper of Nepal

<sup>28</sup> Greetings

<sup>29</sup> Chief District Officer

<sup>30</sup> Greetings

different accent. The accent of the Newar people was subject to ridicule by non-Newars, and due to this reason Newar people avoid talking in this language in public.

Ms. Malla blames the reluctance of parents to teach Nepal Bhasa as the reason for downfall. She also opines that the Panchayat period is also one of the reason. She further adds that Nepal Bhasa programs were banned in Radio Nepal in this period.

Mr. Dangol is of the opinion that it is mainly due to the education policy that the use of the language has decreased. He also presents the same fact that under the Rana period and the Panchayat system, the writers were punished for using Nepal Bhasa. He is of the opinion that although there is continuous oppression from the government's side, the development in Nepal Bhasa has not ceased. Mr. Maharjan shares the view that Nepali being an official language has more market, which make us feel that the use of Nepal Bhasa has decreased, but in reality, Nepal Bhasa is fully present in its community.

The rest of the informants have more or less similar view that its due to government policy that Nepal Bhasa has less space where it can be utilized. The parents are helpless in this situation.

Mr. Pradhan thinks that modernization has affected the language and Ms Shrestha blames specially the current government of multi-party system for the fall. Master Pradhan is of view that with an interconnected world, the dominant language always replaces the minor language and remarks that maybe in future we will lose Nepali to English. Ms Tandukar also blames the reluctance of parents for failure of this language.

We continued with the question how Nepali Bhasa being an official language has affected Nepal Bhasa.

#### **4.1.2 Is the Nepali language the real culprit behind the fall of Nepal Bhasa?**

Informants feel that it is of course a sorrowful fact the language is being replaced. In addition to Nepali being an official language, the policy of the government to support only Nepali language has played a negative role.

Mr Maharjan feels that due to the dominance of Nepali in official places, it creates an illusion that it has replaced Nepal Bhasa, but in reality, Nepal Bhasa only lost its title as official language status, but remains in use within its community.

According to Mr. Prajapati, Nepali being an official language would not harm much, if only Nepal Bhasa was encouraged in other fields, such as the court and local government. But the total ban of Nepal Bhasa for official purpose has resulted in a decrease in its use even in the domestic scene.

Mr. Tuladhar feels this has directly affected the use of the language, because Newars misunderstood it as Nepal Bhasa being a useless language. Mr. Dangol is of the view that Nepali being an official language has not affected Nepal Bhasa but it has been affected because the parents of the Newar society have stopped conversing with their children in Nepal Bhasa. He says that if parents, especially mothers, conversed in Nepal Bhasa with their kids, the language will not be affected by any other factor.

Ms. Pradhan is of opinion that Nepali language has affected Nepal Bhasa, as the latter used to represent Nepal and now when another language represents Nepal, Nepal Bhasa has lost its identity. She further suggests that it should be made the language of the country. Mr Pradhan is of view that being deprived of its official status made Nepal Bhasa not compulsory, which led to decrease in use. Mr. Pradhan and Ms. Maharjan believe that it has direct effect, as now Nepali is used everywhere, which diminished the value of Nepal Bhasa language. Ms Shrestha adds that not only Nepali has affected the status of Nepal Bhasa, but it has also pressured Newars to learn this language despite their will.

It was also further discussed that when the constitution of Nepal proclaimed that all the people have the right to use their mother tongue then it is unclear why the Supreme Court banned the use of Nepal Bhasa for official purpose. The act of Supreme Court to ban Nepal Bhasa for official purpose has been condemned by many.

Mr. Tuladhar opines that using Nepal Bhasa as official language in local level does not mean stopping to use Nepali in those offices. It just means that along with Nepali, Nepal Bhasa will also be used for those who want service in Nepal Bhasa. Mr. Dangol takes it as a homicide attempt to the local languages. Whereas Ms. Pradhan takes it as a step towards eradication of the language. Ms Maharjan and Ms. Tandukar are of opinion that due to the need of transparency, it is better to use the language spoken by all with provision of translators into Nepal Bhasa. Mr Maharjan feels that the decision is not wrong, however, he believes that it must be introduced at the local level. The rest of the informants share the idea that it is a bad decision by the Supreme Court and should be challenged. However, on the positive side, there is again a preparation going on for using Nepal Bhasa at the regional level.

#### **4.1.3 Reasons for hesitation to use Nepal Bhasa at the individual level**

We then narrowed down the topic to individual level and discussed why the people who know Nepal Bhasa are not willing to use this language.

Mr. Maharjan opines that it is due to some people believing that Nepali is a standard language as it is official, and Nepal Bhasa is of no use anywhere. This is why they tend not to speak



Nepal Bhasa. Mr. Tuladhar and Ms Shrestha opine that its due to some unseen force, such as job opportunities and getting better education, that people want to master Nepali and hesitate using Nepal Bhasa. It is a universal truth that the more we practice the more we master the art of speaking. However, Ms. Shrestha also believes that for some of them it can be a personal choice and not an external force. Mr. Prajapati is of view that due to lack of job opportunities after study in Nepal Bhasa, people tend not to use Nepal Bhasa. He remarks that nevertheless in many houses, Nepal Bhasa is spoken with fluency, while lack of job opportunity curtails them in speaking this language outside the house. Ms. Pradhan states that although using mother tongue is our basic right, people hesitate to speak it due to its limited scope. Ms. Malla remarks that there is always a pressure in the labour market to speak Nepali as it is understood by many and it is the common language in use. Whereas Mr. Dangol is of a somewhat different opinion that just because of lack of job opportunity people do not have to hesitate to use their mother tongue. He is of the view that we can still use it in many places as far as we want. For example, in private sectors where Nepali is not compulsory, we can use Nepal Bhasa. Master Pradhan remarks that due to a smaller number of speakers, people hesitate to speak Nepal Bhasa. Ms. Maharjan thinks that to get integrated in a non-Newar circle, Newar people hesitate to speak their language in public. Mr. Pradhan is of the same idea that a good environment is needed to speak and practice the language. He gives example of himself: he learned Nepal Bhasa during his teenage years after he moved to a Newar community. He states that the lack of environment to practice it that can be the reason for the hesitation to use Newari language, as people are getting used to Nepali day by day.

#### **4.1.4 Reasons for reluctance of Parents to use Nepal Bhasa with their Children**

The discussion further moved to the hesitation of parents to converse in Nepal Bhasa with their children. Some parents speak this language with other elder family members, but as they speak with children they switch to Nepali. What can be the reason behind this?

Mr Maharjan tries to create a scenario to explain his reasons. He says that nowadays due to busy schedules of parents and also due to competition, the children are sent to school earlier than needed. Some of the kids are sent to nursery while still being breastfed. The mother has to go to work as the maternity leave is very short in Nepal. These kids go to nursery before they learn to speak and start with Nepali as in school.<sup>31</sup> Nepali is the dominant language along with English. So, when these kids come home and use the same language with their parents, the

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<sup>31</sup> It depends what kind of school it is, in some of school English is more dominant than Nepali.

parents concerned with the thought of not burdening the kid with an extra language, succumb to the language which their kids use.

Mr. Dangol sees this as an unwanted and short-sighted act of parents of today. He says that they will soon regret this thoughtless act of theirs, and it is high time they realize the importance of this language and start conversing in Nepal Bhasa with their children. He feels that parents must encourage the use of Nepal Bhasa along with another language.

Mr. Prajapati is of view that there are various factors responsible for this. The foremost reason is the accent of Nepal Bhasa speakers, followed by lack of job opportunities and resources. He also mentions that it is due to lack of resources in Nepal Bhasa that there is a decline in the use. Ms. Pradhan and Ms. Shrestha are of the view that due to changes in the society and the need to change accordingly, the parents now have stopped using Nepal Bhasa with their children. It is true that parent who themselves have experienced humiliation due to their Newari accent would not want their kid to go through the same torture.

Ms. Tandukar maintains a different view on the reduced use of Nepali Bhasa at home. She believes that it can be due to the increase in inter-caste marriage which makes people use Nepali with kids, which is a dominant and common language. She gives an example from her own family. She says that her grandmother was a Chhettri<sup>32</sup> who got married to a Newar. Since the common language was Nepali, as the grandmother did not know Nepal Bhasa, Nepali was the dominant language in the family. So as the offspring of that family, mother of Ms Tandukar is still influenced by Nepali and prefers speaking Nepali over Nepal Bhasa. Which again has reflected upon Ms Tandukar.

Mr. Tuladhar thinks that it is a reverse process; it is not that the parents do not use this language towards kids, but it is the children who do not use this language with parents. Due to modernization and competitive society, nowadays children are sent to nursery earlier, before they start speaking. The children are sent to nurseries where Nepali and English are dominant. Since they quickly learn these languages, through teachers, peers and different activities, they understand these languages better and tend to speak these languages more. The parents are in dilemma whether to use Nepal Bhasa or these dominant languages with their kids. Indirectly, the parents are forced to use Nepali and English with their children.

Master Pradhan agrees that due to societal influence, parents do not speak in Nepal Bhasa with their kids. Ms. Shrestha says that although there are many households in the Valley that use Nepal Bhasa as medium of conversation, the houses outside the Valley normally do not use this

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<sup>32</sup> Native speaker of Khas community having Nepali as first language

language. She reasons that it is due to accent which is subject to ridicule by non-Newars and due to lack of circle who speak Nepal Bhasa.

#### **4.1.5 Revitalization**

The question is what can be done to encourage the use of Nepal Bhasa and whose role it is to preserve and revitalize this language. As these two questions are interconnected, let us look at some of the suggestions in detail.

The answers informants gave can be divided into two different groups: family and government. Mr. Maharjan is of the view that we should use our conscience to make the revitalization possible. We need to understand the value of the language and that it is our identity. We will be nothing without our identity. He says that the role of parents is most important, followed by the role of the government, which has to create programs that are related to the progress and support not only of one language but of all the languages present in Nepal. Similarly, Ms. Shrestha says that just as people have a name to distinguish them from each other, language and culture define our unique identity, without which we are nothing but just a person in the mass.

Similarly, Mr. Dangol is of the view that the role of a mother is very important in this. He assures that if every mother speaks in Nepal Bhasa with her children, then there is no need of any other revitalization program. Ms. Shrestha is of a similar view: since the language was not spoken to her at home, she could not master it. She states that the role of the parent is very important in transferring the language. According to her, the children learn faster when they hear parents conversing in that language. So, instead of having one parent conversing in Nepal Bhasa with the children, it is more important for the child to see parents using the same language when talking to each other. Children learn better when they are naturally exposed to a language, rather than when someone orders or tells them what to do and speak. Ms. Maharjan maintains the opinion that we need to encourage our children to use this language. Mr. Pradhan is of the view that we need to teach the importance of language to the children. It is our mother tongue and it is our responsibility to preserve it. He presents as an example that we do not neglect our mother if she is no more useful and adapt another mother. In the similar way we cannot neglect our mother tongue and switch to some other language just because our mother tongue will not be useful or in the current scenario its value has declined. It is the duty of children to maintain the importance of both mother and mother tongue. Ms. Tandukar agrees that the role of parents is important to shape the thoughts of children, as children spend most of their time with parents.

After the parents' role, comes the role of the government, which is important to maintain the value of the language. There are various things what a government can do and should do.

At first, the government needs to change its biased attitude towards Nepal Bhasa and other indigenous languages. Another important place where the government needs to change its attitude is in education policy. Mr. Tuladhar suggests that it is important to change the current curriculum. He says that the study of Nepal Bhasa must be made compulsory, there where the Newar community is a majority. The language of instruction must be Nepal Bhasa in the early years of school, whereas in the later years it should be read as a compulsory subject. He cites examples of Marathi in Maharashtra and Gorkhali in Gorkhaland. He emphasizes the role of the education system and government language policy to revitalize this language. In this regard, he shares example of one of the guardian of his school. According to him, the guardian said that they spoke Nepali with his first child as at that time, Nepal Bhasa was not introduced in school. Later, after initiation of NSNSC when Nepal Bhasa was introduced in schools, he was able to converse in Nepal Bhasa with his second child. With this Mr. Tuladhar claims the importance of school and proper education system for revitalizing a language.

Master Pradhan believes that rather than making it compulsory the incentives must be given to encourage the use of this language. Ms. Malla is of a similar view that with scholarship provided in education and incentive given to the works of Nepal Bhasa, this language can be revitalized automatically. Ms. Pradhan is of also of the same view that to create awareness in any topic, the education policy plays an important role. For this reason, the revitalization of language must be done from the education level.

Mr. Prajapati suggests that to revitalize Nepal Bhasa, everyone's role is very important as the problem is not single sided. According to him, parents, writers, publishers, government officials, schools, colleges, everyone's role is equally important. He suggests that if parents sincerely teach Nepal Bhasa to the children, it will create job opportunities in this language. The writers and publishers will be encouraged to publish materials in Nepal Bhasa with growing demand. The government also will be compelled to change its policy accordingly to address the mass.

Mr. Pradhan emphasizes the importance of media. Nowadays, media is a very important tool to advertise and promote things. Children learn very quickly through rhymes and stories. There are various examples where children those whose parents do not speak English know words in English due to attractive rhymes. Here, Ms. Shrestha has an interesting story to tell. She recalls that her son was trying to sing a Nepal Bhasa song as it was very catchy, while she did not know Nepal Bhasa well and did not converse with him in Nepal Bhasa. Mr Pradhan also has a

similar experience when his daughter started to speak some unexpected language like Russian, influenced by her favourite cartoon in Russian. If we follow the trends, then it is very important to include visual and printed media to revitalize this language. Mr. Tuladhar agrees that awareness should be created among children, who can be attracted easily towards this language through music, cartoon, movies.

Here, I would like to add a piece of information given by Mr. Prajapati. As he says that everyone's role is very important in revitalization, he gives example of a community who with the help of state is able to bring back the language. He provides the example of the Sikkim of India where there are some 30,000 Newars. The government has different facilities scheme for a community or tribe if they can get the ethnic status of OBC<sup>33</sup> and tribe. Since they didn't have their own language and culture to prove this, in 1998 they came to Kathmandu in search of their identity. Later, to help them with their quest, a group of teachers from *Newah Dey Daboo*<sup>34</sup> went to Sikkim to teach them Newar language, music and dance. Thanks to this effort, the Newars of Sikkim got OBC status and now are enjoying different facilities by the government. This has also created a lot of opportunities in Sikkim for Newars, and several schools have opened in Nepal Bhasa to continue learning this language. Now the government publishes newsletter in Nepal Bhasa and Newar culture is one of mandatory part of their official performance. Being part of this project, Mr. Prajapati remarks that Sikkim is an example that with self-consciousness and with the help of the community this language can be revitalized, but the support of the government is needed for smooth transaction. He further informs that learning from the success of Sikkim, a similar movement has started in Darjeeling Kalingpong, Assam, and now even in Bhutan. He says that through his organisation *Dabuli Nepal*<sup>35</sup> various scholarship programs are brought ahead to support those who want to learn this language.

## 4.2 QUESTIONNAIRE (SURVEY)

These are the responses to my survey, where 50 people took part. The questionnaire was created in Google form and was posted in the Newar Facebook community. The identities of the respondents are not revealed. Only the gender and age of the participants are presented. The fifty participants are divided in the following age groups and genders.

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<sup>33</sup> Other Backward Class

<sup>34</sup> Stage for Newar Community/State

<sup>35</sup> Platform of Nepal

*Table 2: Population of Questionnaire by Age Group*

<b>Age Group</b>	<b>Number of participants</b>
<b>15-25</b>	15
<b>26-35</b>	13
<b>36-45</b>	3
<b>46 and above</b>	2
<b>Not specified</b>	17

*Table 3: Population of Questionnaire by Gender*

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Number of participants</b>
<b>Male</b>	22
<b>Female</b>	17
<b>Not Specified</b>	11

The questionnaire included 21 questions. The questions were related to Nepal Bhasa, but were not exclusively focused on the cause of downfall and revitalization of Nepal Bhasa. I present the important ones in this chapter with the help of pie charts, whereas the remaining questions are included in Appendix C.

As the aim of the thesis is to establish the cause for the downfall of Nepal Bhasa, the population was presented with the multiple options to find out whether according to them any one of the ruling parties from past or present were responsible for the downfall of this language. As we saw in Chapter 4, the struggle of Nepal Bhasa is divided in distinct periods, so the options of these four ruling period were given. A total of 46 people responded to this question. The question was ‘Which ruling period is more responsible for the downfall of Nepal Bhasa?’

### Whose ruling period is more responsible for downfall of this language?

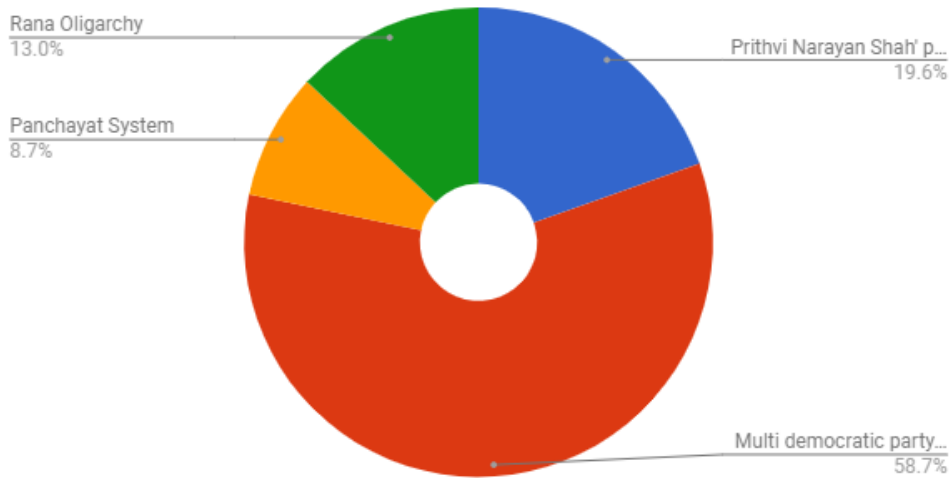


Figure 3: Which ruling period is more responsible for the downfall of Nepal Bhasa?

Out of 46 participants, 27 replied that the multi-system party is mainly responsible for it. A total of 9 respondents thought that it was the ruling period of Prithvi Narayan Shah, whereas some of them thought that the other two ruling periods were the reasons.

In the next question, I tried to get poll on why people who know Nepal Bhasa hesitate to use it.

I gave the following answer options:

1. The language is forced upon us by the Government policy
2. To be competitive by mastering other languages as Nepali and English
3. Personal choice
4. They think the language is useless
5. It is not useful enough to be transferred to the next generation
6. Other reasons

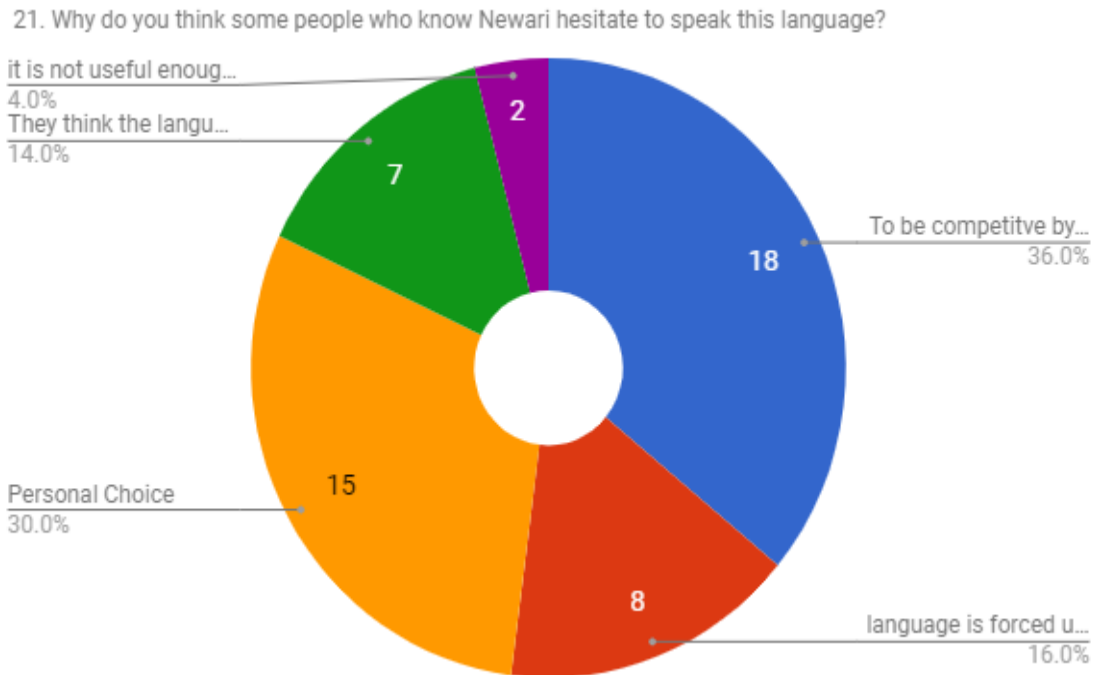


Figure 4: Why do you think that people who know Newari hesitate to speak it?

Many of the respondents feel that its due to the competitive feeling that if they do not master other dominant languages they will lag in prosperity. Closely follows the population of 15 respondent who feel that it is a personal choice. Eight people think its forced, whereas the remaining 7 and 2 people feel that it's useless and should not be transferred to next generation. The next question was whether Nepal Bhasa can create job opportunities. A total of 38.8% of the population believe that this language can provide jobs, where almost half of the population feels that this language has the potential to provide job. The rest believe that this language cannot provide job opportunities. So, with a notion that Nepal Bhasa cannot provide job, Newars switch to Nepali and English for better job opportunities.



### Do you think Nepal Bhasa can provide job opportunities?

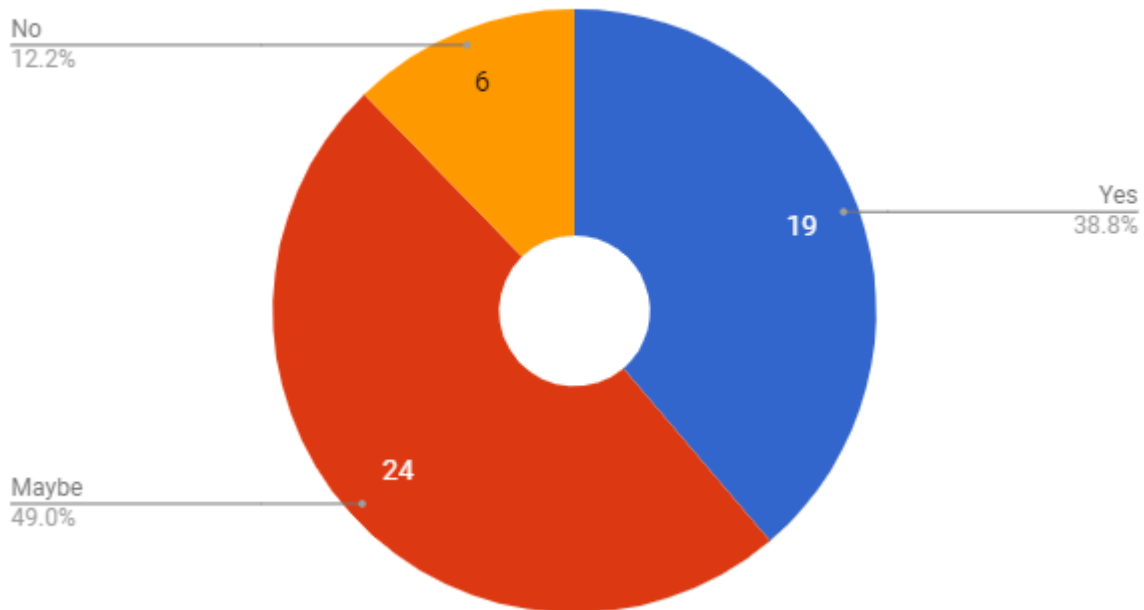


Figure 5: Do you think Nepal Bhasa can provide job opportunities?

Let us now address another set of questions, showing that the language is losing space generation after generation. Below are the four pie charts which clearly show that the use of language degrades in each next generation. The first chart is the answer to whether the parents speak Nepal Bhasa or not, and all of them answered positively. The second pie chart answers the question whether they converse in Nepal Bhasa with their parents or not. As we can see, 26% of them answered No, which means that out of 50 participants 13 do not speak in Nepal Bhasa with their parents whereas the parents do speak the language.

## 2. Do your parents speak Nepal Bhasa?

50 responses

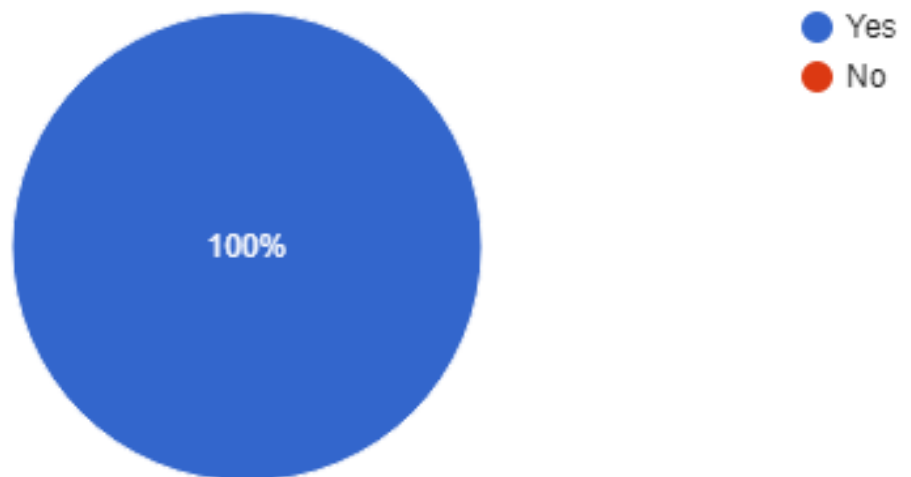


Figure 6: Do you parents speak Nepal Bhasa?

Do you converse in Nepal Bhasa with your parents?

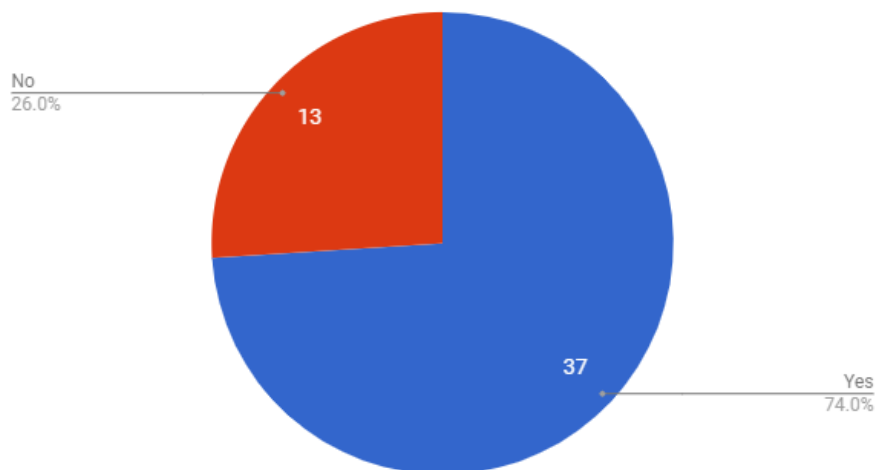


Figure 7: Do you converse in Nepal Bhasa with your parents?

The respondent pool of next two question was limited as they were only for parents. Out of 50 participants 25 of them took part in these two questions. When asked whether they use Nepal Bhasa with their children, 40% replied No and 60% replied Yes. That is, out of 25 parents 15 did not use this language with their children whereas 10 used it. Moving onto the next question whether their kids speak Nepal Bhasa, the answer is 50:50 negative versus positive.

Do you use Nepal Bhasa with your children? (answer if applicable)

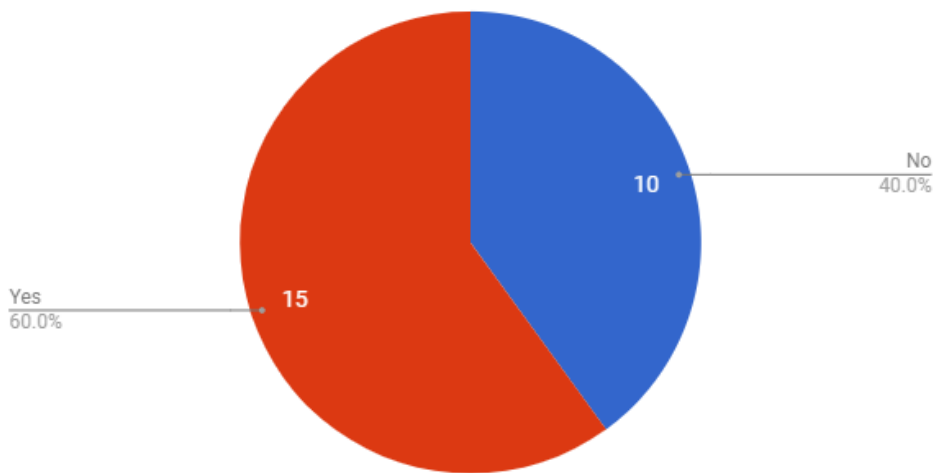


Figure 8: Do you use Nepal Bhasa with your children?

Do your children speak Nepal Bhasa? (answer if applicable)

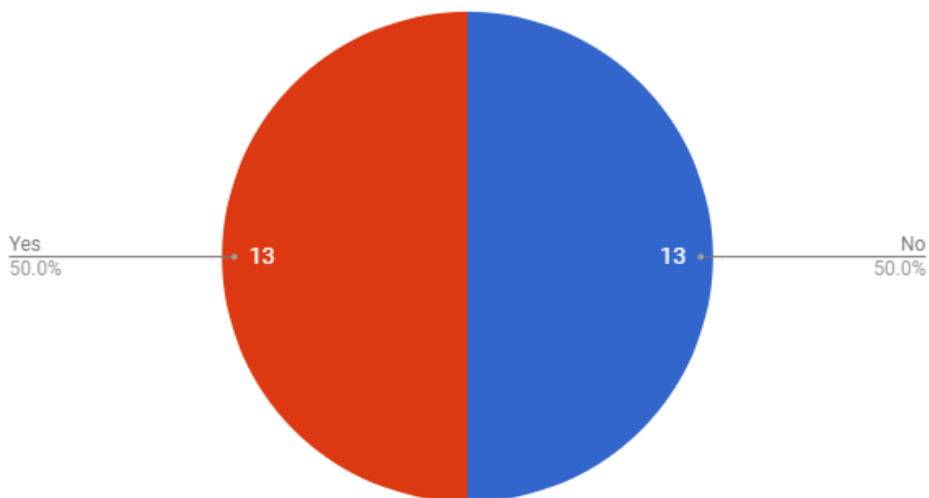


Figure 9: Do your children speak Nepal Bhasa?

Comparing the four pie charts above we see that there is a downward trend in the use of Nepal Bhasa. Starting from the parent's parent generation and moving to the children, we see that the result has changed from 100% yes to 50:50. If we interpret the data with Factor 1 of Intergenerational Language Transmission<sup>36</sup> of UNESCO, it transpires that our language is in

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<sup>36</sup> Refer to the Appendix.

the group of Definitely Endangered. However, I personally feel that the language is somewhere between Grade 3 and 4 as the language is still spoken and practiced by the children.

Examining the same topic from a different perspective, I tried to check the sincerity of the population towards the language through a few questions about school and education as they are very important to keep language alive.

The first question was whether it is important and beneficial for a child to get education in Nepal Bhasa?

As we can see in the pie chart, 83.3% agrees that mother tongue education is beneficial for a child in his early stage of education.

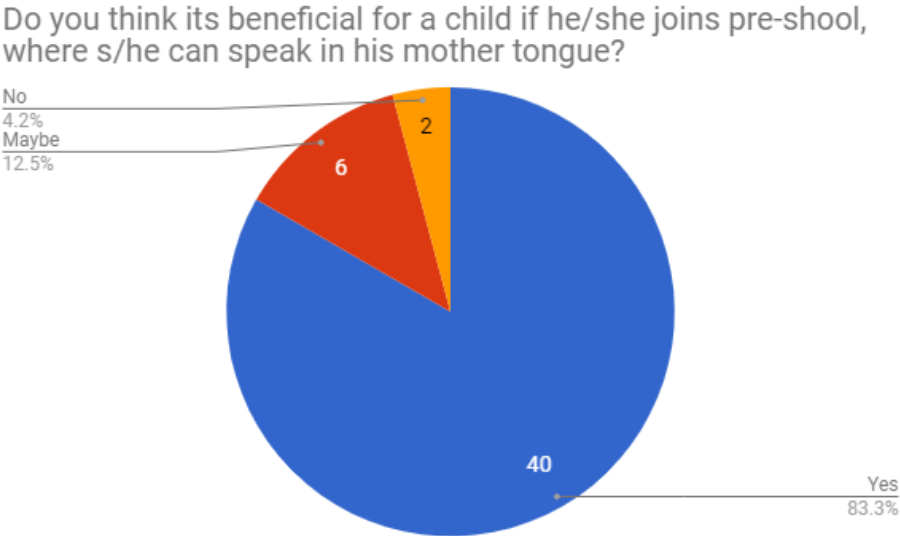


Figure 10: Is it beneficial for a child to attend a pre-school where s/he can speak the mother tongue?

### Would you send your child in Nepal Bhasa Medium School?

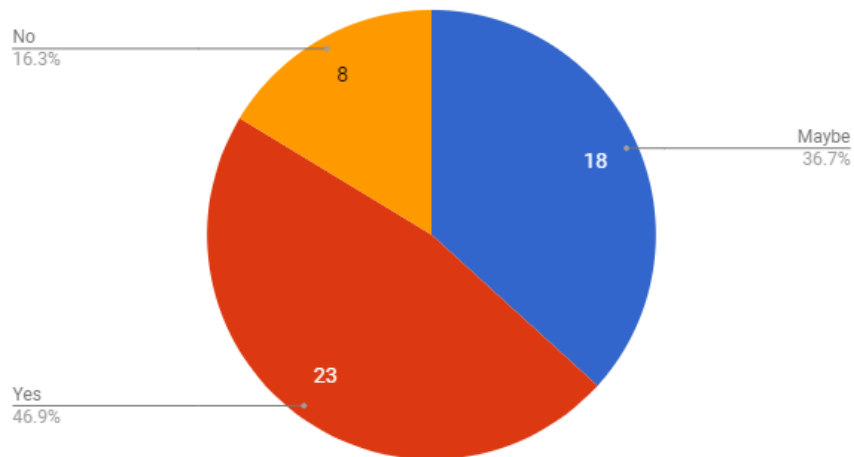


Figure 11: Would you send your child to a Nepal Bhasa Medium school?

On the contrary, when asked whether they would send their kids to Nepal Bhasa Medium school, 46.9% of the population replied positively, whereas 36.7% are not sure whether they would send their kid to a Nepal Bhasa Medium school. The pie chart below shows that a large part of the population has not heard of the campaign Newa Schools in Newa Settlement ‘NSNS’<sup>37</sup>. This can be interpreted in both positive and negative ways. On the positive note, on individual basis we can do a lot to lift this language, as this campaign has just started and has opened many schools. On the negative side, due to lack of government support this campaign is less known. Also, due to the government’s prioritization of Nepali, parents still hesitate to send children to Nepal Bhasa Medium school.

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<sup>37</sup> It was established by Mr. Dipak Tuladhar, who is the founder of Modern Newa English School, a Nepal Bhasa medium School. The main idea was to share the positive outcome of Modern Newa English School and to help establish similar schools in other parts of the country with involvement of the local community

Have you heard of the project: नेवा: बस्ती नेवा: स्कुल अभियान (NSNS)?

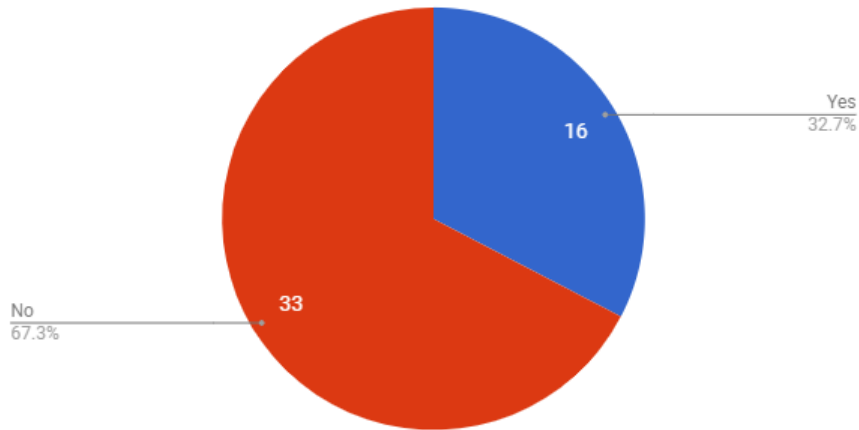


Figure 12: Have you heard of the campaign Newa Schools in Newa Settlement 'NSNS'?

Moving onto the revitalization part, 31 respondents feel that family has to play an important role to revitalize the language, while 27 believe this is the role of the community. A total of 21 people feel that it is the duty of parents, while 11 of the population thinks it is the role of government. For 11 of them it is an individual effort, and 10 respondents emphasize on the role of school whereas one of them shares the view that everyone has a part to play but it should also be ensured that the school has Nepal Bhasa as an elective course. Three respondents think that it is duty of children too.

Whose role do you think is more important to revitalize and maintain this language?

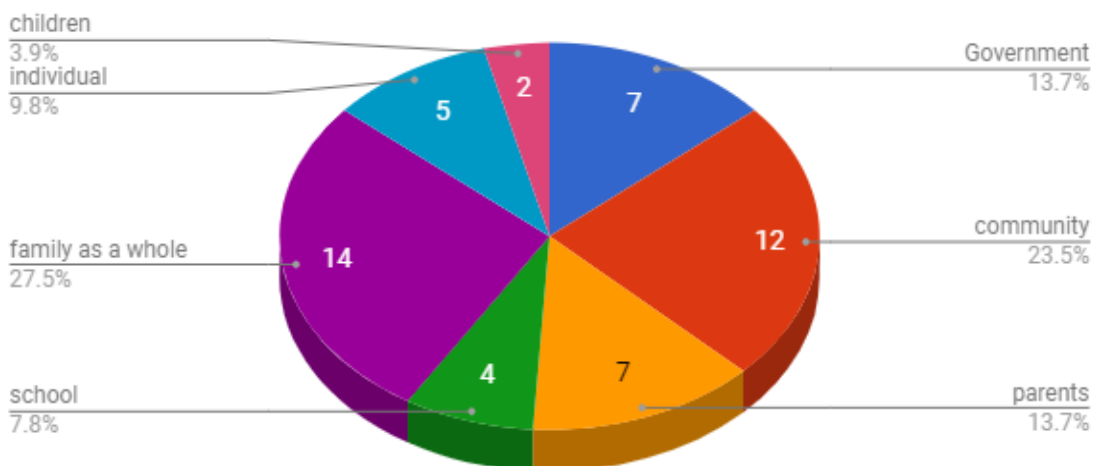


Figure 13: Whose role do you think is important to revitalize and maintain this language?

### 4.3 DISCUSSION

As per the research question, the data were collected in order to find the reason for the fall of the language, understand the hesitance of the people who know Nepal Bhasa to use it, and find the ways to revitalize it and identify the loophole in the prior revitalization programs. The first part of this chapter has dealt with the data analysis. In the second part, I discuss the different factors responsible for the fall, analysing it from the point of view of Linguistic Hegemony. The earlier chapter on history is also taken as reference in this discussion and also compared with the similar kind of situation other countries.

When establishing the cause of decrease in the use of language, all interviewees shared the idea that one of the factors is the past policies of government. All interviewees blamed the biased attitude of current government for the rapid decrease in the use of this language. Here, we need to take history as reference, which shows that the rulers following the Malla period always saw Newari literature as a threat and tried to dominate it with different policies. The use of Nepal Bhasa has not declined overnight but in the course of 100 years of suppression (Shrestha, personal conversation).

Gradually Nepali came to rise and was granted official status by the Constitution<sup>38</sup> minimizing all other language of Nepal to the status of National language but with no value. Nepali has not only replaced Nepal Bhasa as administrative language but has also curtailed the area of Nepal Bhasa. It is mandatory to speak Nepali in official places like court, CDO, government schools and so on. Nepal Bhasa is hardly a medium of discourse in academic and professional life. Nepali and English are dominant in every place (Kansakar 2004:5-3). With growing opportunity in Nepali, it was obvious that Nepali language ruled people's mind. This is where linguistic hegemony comes to play. Linguistic hegemony is achieved when "a dominant group create a consensus by convincing others to accept their language norms and usages standard or paradigmatic" (Wiley 2000:113). Similarly, the dominance of Nepali language and the support of the government policy made it look superior. The languages of the minorities were regarded as useless, thus making minority people switch their language to Nepali. The thought that Nepali, the official language was standard and Nepal Bhasa was useless made Newars prefer Nepali over Nepal Bhasa.

I find the situation in Russia somehow familiar with the situation in Nepal. In USSR, the young generation voluntarily chose Russian over their mother tongue for economic advancement

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<sup>38</sup> Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal 1990 retrieved from [http://www.concourt.am/armenian/legal\\_resources/world\\_constitutions/constit/nepal/nepal--e.htm](http://www.concourt.am/armenian/legal_resources/world_constitutions/constit/nepal/nepal--e.htm)

(Wurn, 1991). The scenario is a little different when it comes to support, as Nepal's government has done nothing much to support Nepal Bhasa, unlike USSR where much was done to support its minor language. Again, the strategy is same; that is, to give more facility to the area connected to the language that the government wants to turn into the major language. So, in a way it is to encourage language shift without coercion. There is no direct force by the government. People switch to the dominant language for better and easier opportunities out of their own will.

#### **4.3.1 Biased Government policy**

The government policy has supported Nepali since Prithvi Narayan Shah took over Kathmandu Valley in the process of unification of Nepal. At first, all these rulers tried to support Newar and its culture and literature, but their main motif was to keep the Newars under their control. After a certain time Newars always turned out to be a victim of these rulers. Even though the Constitution states that every citizen has the rights to speak, learn and preach its mother tongue, in practice, the government has not encouraged such act. The government has always acted biased to other minor languages including Newar in this regard. Even in the administrative field Nepali is compulsory to get any work done. The education policy of government supports Nepali and has succeeded in creating its dominance in the job market too.

I discuss each of the claims above in the remainder of this section.

##### **VI.1.1.1 Better job opportunity**

Nepali as an official language is mandatory to get a good job. Most Newars believe that Nepal Bhasa cannot provide job opportunities and to acquire a job especially at government level, the knowledge of Nepali is important (cf., Figure 3). At the same time, the important vacancies in government level are written in Nepali in *Gorkhapatra*<sup>39</sup> (Mr Tuladhar). Certificates other than Nepali and English are not valid.

##### **VI.1.1.2 Education Policy**

The education policy in Nepal favours Nepali. At the government level, the subjects are taught in Nepali and there is no inclusion of text book in the mother tongue of minorities. The government has brought forward the multilingual education policy but has done nothing to support this policy. In the government school, the subjects are taught in Nepali and there is no inclusion of Nepal Bhasa or any of other minority languages.

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<sup>39</sup> The national daily



At the personal level and community level, Newars have tried to work in favour of Nepal Bhasa (Mr Tuladhar). Many schools have opened with Nepal Bhasa as medium of teaching<sup>40</sup>, highlighting the importance of education in mother tongue. There are campaigns like Newah School in Newah Settlement, which helps establish such schools with the help of community. But the harsh truth is that parents hesitate to send their kids to Nepal Bhasa school (cf. Figure 8) due to an uncertainty of future education after getting basic studies in Nepal Bhasa.

### ***VI.1.1.3 Effect of Education policy on language of family***

It is very important for a child to start preschool with the language the child speaks at home to be comfortable and to get accustomed to the new environment and learning (Mr. Tuladhar, Figure 8). If a child is given basic education in its mother tongue, then she tends to understand the teachings better. But, the government's policy of giving importance solely to Nepali language acts as an indirect force for switch in languages at home also.

There are still families who speak Nepal Bhasa at home, but we can see a growing trend towards bilingualism. The parents converse in Nepal Bhasa with other elderly family members but switch their language to Nepali while conversing with children. As we try to find the reason for this, we find that the education policy is the culprit.

Due to the financial burden or personal choice, mothers start working when the child is still very young. The child is sent to school or day care centre before s/he starts speaking. In school the child learns Nepali and English through different activities with teachers and friends, and the child tends to learn these languages faster (Mr Maharjan and Mr Tuladhar). There are also examples where a child was punished for speaking Nepal Bhasa in school (Mr. Tuladhar). The parents who know both languages Nepali and Nepal Bhasa switch to Nepali for the comfort of the children. There are also examples where parents have to master Nepali language to be able to converse fluently with their kids. The reason for the language shift by the parents can be seen in two ways. One is not to burden the children with more languages as they are already learning two languages in school and next is to avoid the Newari accent due to which a child might be teased in school by his friends (Ms. Shrestha). While this may not be wise of the parents in the long run, it is understandable that no parents want their kid to suffer.

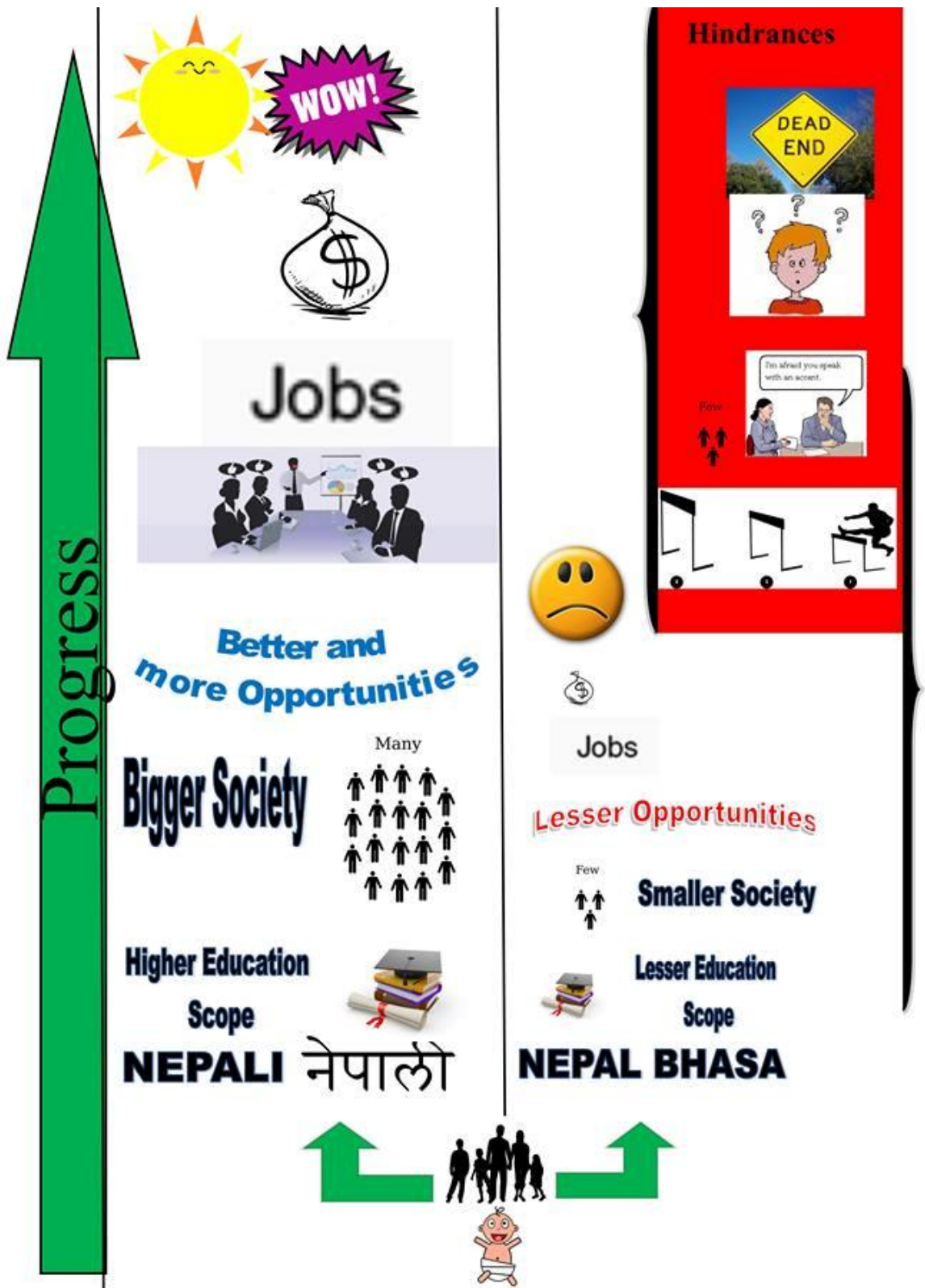
For example, a child, who is trained in Nepal Bhasa at home and has no knowledge of Nepali will not be able to converse with teachers and ask questions if there is any doubt. At the same time, the child will not be able to mingle with the group who use Nepali to converse and will

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<sup>40</sup> Refer to appendix for list of school In Nepal Bhasa

be left out. Even though the child learns Nepali, there is always a fear that his Newari accent will overshadow his Nepali. The case is not limited to being teased for Newari accent but also being punished for using the language. To avoid these kind of situations, parents tend to train their children in Nepali, in a way to prepare them for the outside world. After all, why would a parent burden a child with an extra language that has no use outside the area of house. The following figures offer a clearer view about the dilemma of parents today.

Figure 14: Parent's dilemma in the Newar society



Here, I would like to add view of Dr. Gellner given in an interview<sup>41</sup>. He provides an example of the Shrestha community of Newar, who at first had the tendency to speak two languages to children to make them bilingual. Typically, the father spoke in Nepali and the mother conversed in Nepal Bhasa with the children. In this way the child had good knowledge of both languages. But slowly, following the change in society needs, the mothers also started speaking in Nepali with the children which made the children of Shrestha family disconnected with Nepal Bhasa. In my opinion it can be due to two reasons: one is reverse language shift as suggested by Mr. Tuladhar. The other is because the mothers started stepping out of house for job and got mingled with the society where Nepali was dominant.

#### **VI.1.1.4 No future Scope**

Let us for a while assume that we take all this pain to preserve Nepal Bhasa. The question is for what purpose (Master Pradhan)? The point is why to take the trouble a language which cannot be used anywhere. What is the future of this language? According to Mr. Laksmidas Manandhar<sup>42</sup>, the problem lies in the government policy, which permits the schools to teach Nepal Bhasa only till primary level (Hoek, Shrestha 1995:79). The uncertainty of future of Nepal Bhasa education after the primary level is one of the reasons behind the hesitation to join such schools. It is not only about the uncertainty of the medium of education later but also the opportunities after studies which is the reason behind the reluctance in joining Nepal Bhasa School (Mr. Prajapati).

#### **4.3.2 Feeling of self-created inferiority**

It was also seen that due to the arrival of huge numbers of Non-Newars to valley, Newar people had to learn Nepali to converse with these people. So, whenever Newars are in the presence of Non-Newar, the language automatically changes to Nepali, the common language. At the same time fear of being teased for the accent by Non-Newar people made Newars restrict the use of this language in public area (Ms. Pradhan).

In an interview, Mr Tuladhar<sup>43</sup> brings forward that we can hear the comments of non-Newar more strongly nowadays that they do not want to mingle with some of Newar people because they speak in Nepal Bhasa. Due to this reason, too many Newars hesitate to use this language outside their house. Mr Tuladhar points out that those non-Newars need to understand that Nepal Bhasa has always been there, and this must be remembered by Newar people too. He illustrates further that 50 years ago the situation was not same. The non-Newar who used to

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<sup>41</sup> Source: Mr. Subhash Ram Prajapati, WNO; retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fin6ZXFfdgA>

<sup>42</sup> He is the financial supporter of Jagat Sundar Bvane Kuthi School.

<sup>43</sup> Interview of Mr Tuladhar in Radio Kantipur retrieved from [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MCi6JU3\\_YVg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MCi6JU3_YVg)

come to Kathmandu valley, for business or study purposes, used to learn Nepal Bhasa and used to speak with confidence and consent to get mingled with Newar people. So why do we suddenly have to feel inferior about our language. If we take pride in our language, then others will respect it too. But due to the government's biased policy, Newar are sure to feel inferior about their language.

#### **4.3.3 Failed Leadership**

It can be also said that the community leaders have failed to maintain faith and respect among community member for Nepal Bhasa. They could not speak against the biased decision of the government which made the Newar community lose faith in this language.

During this research, I got an opportunity to meet Dr. Bal Gopal Shrestha<sup>44</sup>. He remarks that the constitution of Nepal has cheated on all the indigenous group of Nepal and has not taken serious note on the suggestion given by the Newars. Another issue that he raises is that from all the languages spoken in Nepal, only the Gorkhali or Khas language are referred to as *Nepali*, making other languages feel inferior. This brings the sense of inferiority in Newars, too. He thinks that it is irresponsible behaviour of the prominent Newar leaders not to speak against these biased rules. It is felt that due to failed leadership people have lost faith that this language will have any future in the days to come.

I would further like to compare Nepal Bhasa with Dyirbal of Northeaster Australia. The main reason for the language to disappear is the compulsory education in the dominant language and also that no political organisation was able to negotiate with the authority on behalf of Dyirbal (Eriksen, 1992). I see the same fate of Nepal Bhasa, if nothing is done soon.

As linguistic hegemony is about changing of language not by force but by choice, I find the parents and generation of today following the same trend. It is clearly seen that most of the Newar people have shifted towards Nepali out of their own choice, succumbing to the unseen force of better and easier opportunities influencing the choice of people.

#### **4.3.4 Interim conclusion: the Linguistic Hegemony of Nepali confirmed**

I have demonstrated that the government policy of using only Nepali Bhasa in official places and the Education Policy with Nepali as an important language has created an atmosphere of superiority for the official language, Nepali. The minority languages are left with a feeling of inferiority and incompetency. In such an environment, speakers choose Nepali voluntarily. With the domination of Nepali, the use of other language is curtailed. With less practice and

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<sup>44</sup> In an article provided by Dr. Shrestha

fewer places to speak, people slowly get detached from the mother tongue, which is applicable to Newar and Nepal Bhasa.

The education system, where Nepali is preferred and taught to kids, creates a Nepali environment. It not only teaches children Nepali but also forces its use upon parents. Making the kids speak only Nepali is to force parents to speak Nepali, too. This concerns not only the parents' generation; it has forced the grandparent generation to learn Nepali to be able to converse with the grandchildren.

This results in the creation of such an environment where we have started to believe that Nepali is dominant and we need to switch to this language to have a prosperous and better life. A poet writing in Nepali is honoured, Nepali movies are tax-free, the organizations are easily registered if the name is Nepali but a work in Nepal Bhasa has to struggle without success. So, to avoid any uncomfortable situation and tensions, people tend to accept Nepali.

Even the people who want to pursue their studies are not able to do that because there are not enough study materials, and the government curriculum has no place for Nepal Bhasa in practice, although in writing it is claimed that everyone has rights to read and preach their language. In such a situation, Newars are indirectly forced to switch their language preference to ensure easy access to education.

As Ives (2004:83) says, "linguistic hegemony can come through many organisations in the hegemonic structure;" similarly, the linguistic hegemony of Nepali has come through specially biased government policy, which has reflected upon business, religious, institution and the media. The government has created such a web of superiority for the Nepali language, where there is no place for other language to co-exist.

#### **4.3.5 Ways to revitalize**

The revitalization of Nepal Bhasa is of vital importance today. The revitalization process is not possible single-handedly. Everyone's role is important and everyone's role is different. We need to find our own solution as everyone is in a different situation, though the motif is the same: to revitalize the language (Mr. Maharjan)

##### ***VI.1.1.5 Individual***

At the individual level, at first, we must take pride in being Newar and in our language, Nepal Bhasa. The thinking that it is useless as it is no more official should be discarded. Language is

our identity and without it we are nothing but a person in mass of millions. The language has given us our identity and now we need to save what has been given to us. If we are to follow the suggestion of Suarez (2002), we need to understand that learning one language does not mean demeaning other languages. Similarly, we do not have to resist Nepali language to support our language. We can learn Nepali and also use it to create an opportunity for Nepal Bhasa and promote it. We don't have to choose between two languages but we can learn both. Learning languages do not cause harm to anyone. Moreover, it's scientifically proven that we can learn up to 5 languages easily. (Mr. Tuladhar)

#### ***VI.1.1.6 Parents and family***

Parents and family must speak Nepal Bhasa with their kids (Ms. Shrestha). We know that it is difficult and does not look practical, but it's only us who can create a mass of Newars with strong command in Nepal Bhasa, so that we force the government to work for it. Moreover, we cannot deny that the role of the parent, as parents are the ones to teach kids right and wrong (Ms. Tandukar), and they are the first teacher of their kids. As Littlebear explains the need of retrieving the role of family as first teachers to reverse effect of English, similarly we need to retrieve the role of family to revitalize Nepal Bhasa. We need to teach the children to respect our language and our identity (Ms. Maharjan, Mr. Pradhan) and for that first we need to respect this language. Once the parent generation realizes the importance of this language, then the language will prosper without the need of revitalization program. (Dr. Shrestha, Mr. Dangol). If the parents get determined to revitalize Nepal Bhasa, then the language will never die. (Shakya 2007/8).

#### ***VI.1.1.7 Community/Authority people***

The community leaders must act like a bridge between the government and the local people. They must look for ways to revitalize the language with the help of local people and then propose the ways to the government and make sure that the government works on it. They need to restore the faith in the community that Nepal Bhasa is our language and we are responsible for it. Here the example of Sikkim can be taken. The Sikkim people came to Kathmandu in search of their identity and have now obtained official recognition for their language (Mr. Prajapati). It is important to keep in mind that the people from Sikkim came in search of their identity but we do have one already, the only effort needed is to preserve it. We have to believe that with our determination we can make government work as per our need.

#### **VI.1.1.8 Government**

The government must play fair and give equal rights to all its language. Nepal is a multilingual country and only by saving the languages of the country, the multilingualism can be saved. Programs must be brought forward to support Nepal Bhasa in different sectors. In the education sector, the policy should not be one-sided. What has written in the constitution must be practiced. The education in Nepal Bhasa should be supported. Nepal Bhasa and other local languages must be reintroduced as subject in the curriculum (Mr. Tuladhar). The government needs to teach its people the importance of language. Now if it is not able to maintain the importance of mother tongue, it won't be later able to save the national language from hegemony of some other dominant language.

#### **VI.1.1.9 Media**

Every one of the informants has given much emphasis to the use of media to revitalize the language. The printed and visual media can be effective tools. Children are attracted to these medias and tend to learn language fast. The example is the daughter of Mr. Pradhan trying to speak Russian influenced by her favourite Russian cartoon and the son of Ms. Shrestha trying to catch words of Newari song support this claim (Mr Pradhan, Ms Shrestha, Mr Tuladhar, Mr Prajapati, Mr Dangol, Ms Tandukar).

#### **VI.1.1.10 Incentives and Scholarships**

The use of scholarships and incentives can be a good way to attract the youth towards Nepal Bhasa. If scholarships are given to the students, then they will be attracted towards the study of this language. Similarly, incentives will encourage people who know Nepal Bhasa to create work in it. Even free or less costly education can attract more learners (Master Pradhan, Ms. Malla). The stage should be provided to Newars to practice their language and at the same time their talent should be recognized and awarded (Ms. Pradhan).

#### **4.3.6 Loopholes**

To briefly discuss here the loopholes of previous revitalization programs, I lay out a few of the points.

1. The focus should not only be on younger generation but also on the parent group. They need to be taught how to maintain the importance of this language and how to pass it to the children. Their faith in the language must be restored to make them believe that the language is worth passing on to the next generation.



2. It is good to have individual effort but it is more effective with the support of the government. The community leaders must communicate with the government to establish better ways to support Nepal Bhasa.
3. Lastly, it is very important for Newar on individual level to feel proud of this language. until and unless this doesn't happen no revitalization program can bring positive change. Its time not to only say that we support Nepal Bhasa but to act on it.

#### **4.4 SUMMARY**

To summarize, we see that the situation of Nepal Bhasa is a vicious circle, where one factor leads to another. It is important for parents to teach Nepal Bhasa with endless effort to create a population which speaks Nepal Bhasa and the government will be automatically forced to act in favour of Nepal Bhasa. However, this might take time as it is starting from the base, the family. To help parents in this effort, the role of media is very important.

On the other hand, the government must act as a fair guardian and implement education policies which promote all languages of the country. It needs to give proper space to Nepal Bhasa in the educational curriculum. It must give official recognition to Nepal Bhasa, which will encourage Newars to use this language.



## 5. CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

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Nepal Bhasa, an indigenous language of Nepal and mother tongue of the Newar people is a language with a rich culture. Recently, there is a decrease in the use of this language, and it has been listed as definitely endangered language by UNESCO. To most of us, who are using this language at home and for daily activities, this fact might be surprising as we still feel proud in speaking this language and converse in same language as far as possible. But there are also speakers who agree that this language is weakening day by day. If we do not take quick action to revitalize and preserve it, we will be soon regretting its death.

In the quest for the reason for this downfall, my research started from the Malla period, which is known as the golden era of Nepal Bhasa. Every ruling power after that has only suppressed Nepal Bhasa in one way or another, although in the beginning it acted supportive towards this language. The language was replaced by Gorkhali Bhasa in the period of king Prithvi Narayan Shah. It was suppressed by jailing prominent writers in the Rana period and totally banned under the One Nation – One Language policy of the Panchayat System. The current multi-party system has not brought significant change to the situation of Nepal Bhasa.

The language has been reduced to an indigenous language and is given no importance. The constitution of Nepal grants all the citizen the right to speak, learn and use their mother tongue. This has been however limited to the book of Constitution and has no relation with the practical life. The Constitution has declared Nepali language as official language, which in reality is the Khas language also known as *Gorkhali Bhasa*. Honouring only this language as official language, the government has made a biased decision. It has given all the importance to the Khas language naming it “Nepali” language without realizing that the term Nepali is an adjective which refers to everyone and everything that belongs to Nepal.

The government not only prioritized one language under the name of Nepali, it has also given it priority in all other field. The education policy is ruled by this language and so is the administration system. Everything related to Nepali language is encouraged and other languages are discouraged. According to the Constitution, it is the right of the citizens to be able to use their mother tongue, but just writing it in the Constitution doesn't make the use smooth and easy.

The dominance of Nepali has made Nepali a superior language, and other languages of Nepal like Nepal Bhasa are perceived as inferior. So, to feel superior, Newar have started to shift their language. It is easier to get work done in Nepali in all places, so the shift is favourable and understandable. If a work is getting done easier in Nepali why taking the trouble of using other

languages. We have seen examples how the use of Nepal Bhasa is discouraged, so why to learn this language which can't be used anywhere else but just at home.

At this point, we all need to understand that our mother tongue is not only a language which conveys our feeling to another person but it is also our identity that keeps us connected to our roots. Without this language we have no identity and no future. It is true that the use of language has decreased due to the biased governmental policy, but we cannot deny the fact that we have supported the act of government of demeaning our language by thinking it is an inferior language on the personal level. Yes, we are trapped in a vicious circle where the less we use this language the less utility it will have and the less utility will lead to less use. It is now in our hands to decide whether to give up our identity or save it. However, it is true that a single person cannot do the task of revitalization. Every one of us need to lift this language at the personal level. These personal efforts must be guided by the community leaders to restore the faith in this language. It is time to stand together and force the government to change its incorrect behaviour towards a particular language and give all languages equal importance. It is possible to learn and use two languages or more according to need and situation. Because of governmental policy, one language should not act like a threat to another. Nepal is famous for its multilingualism and to save this identity, we need to save the languages of Nepal. The government should bring effective programs to follow what is written in the Constitution. A country can have more than one language as official language. We can take example of Finland where both Finnish and Swedish are used for official purpose. Apart from these two languages the use of Sami language is prevalent among Sami people of Finland. We can take example of Kenya, where apart from English and Swahili, a person gets to practice her mother tongue too, so in this sense people there are trilingual. Kenya has also many indigenous language, hence many different mother tongues. Thus, after English and Swahili every citizen gets to learn her mother tongue as third language.

The government needs to learn from these examples. It needs to bring out effective programs where every language is treated equally. At the same time, the people of the Newar community need to respect Nepal Bhasa. They need to understand that Nepal Bhasa is our identity, and without it we have no existence. We can also learn from the example of Sikkim, demonstrating how one can revitalize the language and make the government act to support it.

We need to change the vicious circle into a positive one; the more we use it, the more is its utility, the more is its utility the more use it has.

We need to believe that together we can. We need to reflect that together we must, as mother tongue is our identity and we need to save it for us and for the generation to come.





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## APPENDIX A

### FACTOR 1: INTERGENERATIONAL LANGUAGE TRANSMISSION (UNESCO)

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Degree of Endangerment	Grade	Speaker Population
<b>Safe</b>	5	The language is used by all ages, from children up
<b>Unsafe</b>	4	The language is used by some children in all domain; it is used by all children in limited domains
<b>Definitively endangered</b>	3	The language is used mostly by the parental generation and up.
<b>Severely endangered</b>	2	The language I used mostly by the grandparental generation and up
<b>Critically endangered</b>	1	The language is used mostly by very few speakers, of great-grandparental generation.
<b>Extinct</b>	0	There exists no speaker

## APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

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Q1: What do you think is the position of Nepal Bhasa as it is listed as a definitely endangered language by UNESCO? Are we really losing this language?

Q2: Do you think the use of Nepal Bhasa has decreased in last 25 years?

If yes what do you think is the reason behind this? Do you think the suppression during the time of Prithvi Narayan Shah, Rana period or Panchayat period is responsible for this? If any other reason, please specify.

Q3: Do you think Nepali being official language has made any difference in the use of Nepal Bhasa by Newar?

If yes, in what way?

Q4: What do you have to say about the decision of the Supreme Court in July 1999 to block Nepal Bhasa from being used for official purpose?

Q5: What can be the reason for the hesitation to use this language by some of Newar people? Is it a personal choice or is it being forced upon them by some indirect forces, such as job opportunities?

Q6: There are parents who do not speak Nepal Bhasa with their kids. Isn't this a threat to Nepal Bhasa? What do you think can be the reason for such a change?

Q7: What can be done to encourage the use of this language?

Q8: Does this language need revitalization?

Q9: Whose role can be important to revitalize this language? In what way?

Q10: How do you view the role of young parents in the revitalization process?

Q 11: Is there anything else you would like to share about this language?

# APPENDIX C: QUESTIONNAIRE

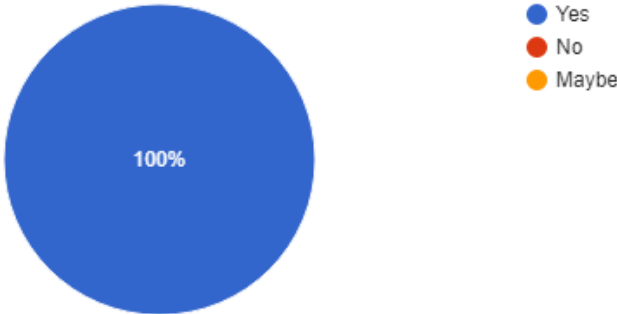
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- 1. Introduction: Name and Age
- 2. Do your parents speak Nepal Bhasa?
- 3. Do you converse in Nepal Bhasa with your parents?
- 4. Do your children speak Nepal Bhasa? (answer if applicable)
- 5. Do you use Nepal Bhasa with your children? (answer if applicable)
- 6. Do you think the next generation should learn this language?
- 7. What do you think about this language?
- 8. Do you know Nepal Bhasa in the Definitely Endangered language list by UNESCO?
- 9. Whose ruling party is more responsible for downfall of this language?
- 10. Do you know Nepal Bhasa once used to be an official language of Nepal?
- 11. Do you think the use of language has decreased in the last 25 years?
- 12. Nepal Bhasa is listed in UNESCO as a Definitively Endangered language? Who do you think is responsible for this?
- 13. In your opinion should the language be brought back as official language?
- 14. Do you think that revitalization of Nepal Bhasa is possible?
- 15. Do you think Nepal Bhasa should be saved?
- 16. Have you heard of the project Newah Basti Newah School 'NSNS' campaign?
- 17. Would you send your child to Nepal Bhasa Medium School?
- 18. Do you think its beneficial for a child if s/he joins preschool, where s/he can speak in his/her mother tongue?
- 19. Do you think Nepal Bhasa can provide job opportunities?
- 20. Whose role do you think is more important to revitalize and maintain this language?
- 21. Why do you think some people who know Nepal Bhasa hesitate to speak this language?
- 22. Is this language important to you?
- 23. Which language is the greatest threat to Nepal Bhasa?

Answers to some more questions in pie chart form

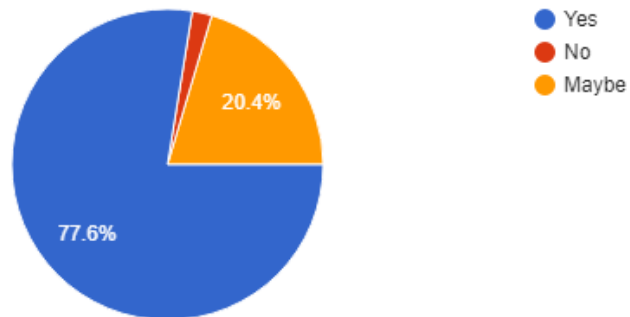
15. Do you think Nepal Bhasa should be saved?

49 responses



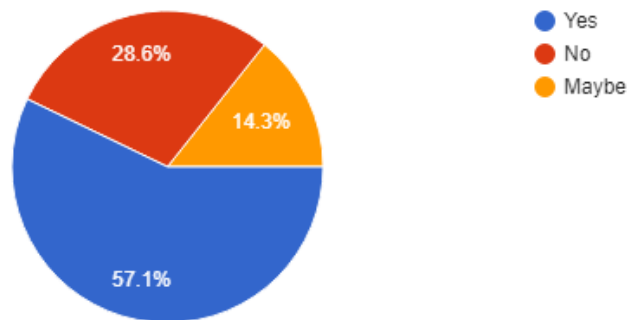
### 14. Do you think, revitalization of Nepal Bhasa is possible?

49 responses



### 13. In your opinion should the language be brought back as official language?

49 responses



## APPENDIX D: SCHOOLS TEACHING IN NEPAL BHASA

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<b>Name of the School</b>	<b>Place/City</b>	<b>Cities name in English</b>
1. Jagat Sundar Bvanekuthi	Chaga, Yen	Kathmandu
2. Modern Newa English School	Durbar Marg, Yen	Kathmandu
3. Thecho Newa English School	Thecho, Yala	Lalitpur
4. Kathmandu Newa Kindergarten	Khusibu, Yen	Kathmandu
5. Khwopa Nepa English School	Gapali, Khwopa	Bhaktapur
6. Yala Newa International School	Kobahal, Yala	Lalitpur
7. Kipu Newa English School	Kipu	Kirtipur
8. Bhastipur Newa English School	Balambu	Bhastipur, Kathmandu
9. Sunguthi Newa English School	Sunguthi, Yala	Lalitpur
10. Bajrabarahi Newa Montessori S.	Wadey, Bulu	Chapagaun
11. Hali(n) Newa English School	Thakwa	Thankot, Kathmandu
12. Lubhu Newa English School	Lubhu	Lalitpur

\* Jagriti English School teaches Nepal Lipi. It is located in Jyatha, Kathmandu.

## APPENDIX E: SCHOOLS WHERE NEPAL BHASA IS TAUGHT FROM THE PRE-PRIMARY LEVEL

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Name of the School	Address	Name of the cities in English
1. Paropakar H.S.School	Bhindya Pa cha, Yen	Kathmandu
2. Lasana Pre-School	Gongabu, Yen	Kathmandu
3. Marigold Academy	Tistung, Makwanpur	Makwanpur
4. Alok Vidhyashram	Goushala, Yen	Kathamndu
5. Nepal Rashtriya L.S School	Pulaa Dhalko, Yen	Kathmandu
6. Dattatraya L.S. School	Dattatraya, Khwopa	Bhaktapur
7. Palpasa Shiksha Sadan	Nagadesh, Thimi	Bhaktapur
8. Simran Academy	Khona	Khokana
9. Peace Garden Secondary School	Khona	Khokana
10. Rudrayani High School	Khona	Khokana
11. Shree Yuva Vidhya Mandir	Khona	Khokana
12. Jing Boarding School	Khona	Khokana
13. Bal Sewa Secondary School	Jhhonchhen, Yen	Kathmandu
14. Himalaya Secondary School	Nhusatak, Yen	Kathmandu
15. Kanti Ishwari Secondary School	Pyaphal, Yen	Kathmandu
16. Shree Kanya Secondary School	Yatakha, Yen	Kathmandu
17. Shanti Nikunja Secondary School	Bhou Kyaba, Yen	Kathmandu
18. Shanti Shiksha Mandir S. School	Thahiti, Yen	Kathmandu
19. Lokhit Secondary School	Thabahi, Yen	Kathmandu
20. Prabhat Secondary School	Na: Ghal, Yen	Kathmandu
21. Arunodaya L.S. School	Pyaphal. Yen	Kathmandu
22. Mahankal Secondary School	Mahabouddha, Yen	Kathmandu
23. Jana Prabhat Secondary School	Kalimati, Yen	Kathmandu
24. Saraswati Niketan Secondary S.	Bramha Twa:, Yen	Kathmandu
25. Nawayug Secondary School	Jyatha, Yen	Kathmandu
26. Bal Bikash Primary School	Dhalko, Yen	Kathmandu
27. Geeta Mata H.S.School	Bijayasa:, Yen	Kathmandu
28. Nepal Adarsha Secondary School	Gana Bahal, Yen	Kathmandu



29. Juddhodaya Secondary School	Thabahi, Yen	Kathmandu
30. Bhakta Vidhyashram	Tyaga:, Yen	Kathmandu
31. Nava Adarsha Secondary School	Basantapur, Yen	Kathmandu
32. Kanya Mandir H.S.School	Ikha Pukhu, Yen	Kathmandu

## **APPENDIX F: LIST OF SCHOOLS TEACHING NEPAL BHASA AT THE SECONDARY LEVEL**

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- |                                      |      |          |
|--------------------------------------|------|----------|
| 1. Kirtipur English Boarding School  | Kipu | Kirtipur |
| 2. Kirtipur Secondary School         | Kipu | Kirtipur |
| 3. Hill Town Higher Secondary School | Kipu | Kirtipur |
| 4. Mangal Higher Secondary School    | Kipu | Kirtipur |

## PHOTO GALLERY

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*Figure 15: Use of Nepal Bhasa in an inscription in Swoyambhunath Temple*



*Figure 16: Use of Nepal Bhasa in a Prayer wheel in Swoyambhunath Temple*

Photo Courtesy: Er. Rashil Maharjan