

# Language Shift in the Newar Community: An Ethnographic Study of Hiranya Varna Mahavihar, Patan

Prava Shrestha

## Abstract

This ethnographic study explores the phenomenon of language shift in the Newar community, with a specific focus on Nepal Bhasa, the language of the Newar people in Lalitpur. The study examines the complex relationship between language and culture and investigates the factors contributing to the decline of Nepal Bhasa and the rise of other languages, particularly Nepali and English, within the community. The research aims to understand the historical, social, political, and cultural dynamics that have influenced the language choices and language use patterns among the Newar population.

The study begins by highlighting the intrinsic link between language and culture, emphasizing the role of language as a means of communication and cultural preservation. It addresses the impact of language on identity, unity, and the transmission of cultural norms and values. Drawing on Tucker and Lambert's notion of non-ethnocentrism in language learning, the research emphasizes the importance of developing awareness and sensitivity towards the values and traditions associated with the language being studied.

The research acknowledges that Nepal Bhasa, despite its rich literary tradition and historical significance, is facing significant endangerment. The language has experienced a steady decline over the past century, with the number of Newar speakers in the Kathmandu valley decreasing from 75% to 44% between 1952 and 1991. Currently, Nepal Bhasa is listed as a definitely endangered language by UNESCO. This study sheds light on the urgency of preserving and revitalizing the language and explores innovative initiatives that have been implemented worldwide to address language endangerment.

The implication of this study lies in its contribution to understanding the cultural importance of Nepal Bhasa and the ongoing efforts to protect and promote the language within the Newar community. The research provides insights into the broader issue of language endangerment and its impact on cultural diversity and identity. By investigating the attitudes and perceptions of Newar individuals towards their language and culture, as well as examining the role of education, media, and government policies, this study offers a comprehensive analysis of the multifaceted factors influencing language shift in the community.

As an outsider to the Newar community, I initially faced limitations in understanding and utilizing Nepal Bhasa. This personal experience highlights the urgency of the research and highlights the need for effective language revitalization programs. By identifying the causes behind the decline of Nepal Bhasa, this study aims to contribute to the development of strategies and interventions for language preservation. The findings of this research will be valuable not only to the Newar community but also to linguists, scholars, policymakers, and individuals invested in the protection and revitalization of endangered languages.

In conclusion, this ethnographic study on language shift in the Newar community provides a comprehensive analysis of the complex factors influencing the decline of Nepal Bhasa. By exploring historical, social, political, and cultural dimensions, the research offers insights into the urgent need for language preservation and revitalization. The study emphasizes the cultural importance of Nepal Bhasa and its contribution to the rich heritage of Nepal. Ultimately, this research serves as a call to action for the Newar community and stakeholders to work together in safeguarding and revitalizing the language for future generations.

## Factors and Reasons Contributing to the Decline and Extinction of Languages

Culture is firmly identified with language, not only in an academic sense. Language is a source, and carrier of culture. This is the reason, I figure, language ought to be saved and dealt with and used most importantly. Moreover, language is fluid and is constantly evolving so we should just keep them in check, I assume. So, they don't just carelessly die. Many Indigenous communities have lost or are going to lose, their last native speaker yet doesn't think about their language "dead". What I realized is we might consider a language as "extinct" once there are no longer any speakers of the language and no communities profoundly socially and culturally connected to the language.

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 disfavor language maintenance and may lead to language endangerment.'

David Crystal (2000) put it very well, re: death of language. It is when the second to last speaker of a language dies that the language is considered as dead. Since the last person has nobody left to speak to. Assuming the language somehow becomes extinct, it brings about the extinction of that valuation information, and the way of life, culture and values as well. That is the reason it is even more important to save our mother tongue and ancient language as well. They hold the way in to our past heritage and glory.

The genuine definition of a dead language is one that no longer has native speakers. It can happen in a variety of ways, but the outcome is that if there is just one person remaining who speaks the language as their native tongue and fluently, later the language may die. There is no special consideration to those group of people who are dwelling in particularly society and able to comprehend the language or ever utter a bit of. In addition, if there are still some elderly people who show declination in teaching the language to the youngsters could also lead the language to die. (Atifnigar, 2021)

Why does a language die? Whenever a language absolutely prone to death, people and culture take a longer period of time and process; even takes several generations. By observing any dominant language on a specific context then an older language may slop to extinct (Harrison, 2008). Harrison proposes a few stages of language death which are as the following:

- When children utter their mother tongue at home or with their relative then it is considered susceptible,
- When children do not study their mother tongue then it is considered susceptible,
- Whenever grandparent only speak their mother tongue and their young generation avoid of speaking in it can lead their language to death. (Atifnigar, 2021)

The new generation of Newar communities grows in an environment where everything is simply in Nepali Bhasa, no one talks unexpectedly Nepal Bhasa in the Newar communities since they expect no one would get them if they speak in Nepal Bhasa. Only groups of few people who know one another use Nepal Bhasa to socialize. I think losing a language will imply that I'll lose my culture. I will lose my culture. I'll lose everything that I acclaim in themanner my language allows me to see and enjoy the general surroundings around me.

Human beings do not live in the objective world alone, nor alone in the world of social activity as ordinarily understood, but are very much at the mercy of the particular language which has become the medium of expression for their society. It is quite an illusion to imagine that one adjusts to reality essentially without the use of language and that language is merely an incidental means of solving specific problems of communication or reflection, according to the American linguist Edward Sapir. (Svoboda, 2021)

## **Language and Change**

The issue of language and change has been a matter of concern early studies in linguistic anthropology. Many linguists and cultural anthropologists were concerned about declination, stressing the need for its preservation. David Crystal (2000) also stresses the need for preservation of language that it is an aim of linguist. He also argues that change is a constant factor and no matter what the efforts to retard or impede it, changes occur anyway. He adds:

When there are no new child speakers of a language and the only remaining speakers who know the language well are young adults, the language is endangered. If the youngest proficient speakers are over the age of fifty (it is not clear why this cut off point was chosen) the language is classified as seriously endangered. When only a few, mostly quite old, speakers remain the language is moribund. And finally, when there are no remaining speakers, the language is extinct. (Crystal, 2000)

Linguists have also attempted to identify the processes by which language declines. Broadly speaking, Martin Arndt saw language change as the result of loss of linguistic diversity. (Eve Clark, 2003) argues that Martin Arndt paid some attention to the cultural context of language, and he thought of the world history of language in much the same way as the evolution of language and cultural, but they looked for clarifications of linguistic in the association of language diversity and in thoughts not primarily related to linguistic.

David Crystal has pursued a language-based theory of language change. This theory assumes that language changes are related to vocabulary. This theory has been criticized by a few linguist anthropologists. Crystal adds “Vocabulary is the area where we most often notice the way language changes, because each year hundreds of new words arrive in a language. We only came across few of them in everyday life of course. Most new words are technical terms to do with specialized areas of knowledge we don’t know anything about, or they’re slang words which are used by a very small group of people.” (Crystal, 2002)

Crystal’s assumption of vocabulary change reflecting language is not always valid. Language can change without from vocabulary to grammar. While many of the earlier studies on Nepal Bhasa is changing over time and how it is adopting to modern circumstances.

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 draws the sad analogy between a person's death and the death of a language. He then goes on to analyze the causes of language extinction, classifying them into four major groups: natural disasters, war and genocide, overt repression, and cultural/political/economic supremacy. When it comes to Nepal Bhasa, the language is not in such horrible condition because there are still people in the younger generation who are interested in learning it.

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. The majority of the following factors also applicable to the endangerment of Nepal Bhasa. Sallabank gives the example of economic inequality causing migration under the heading of the economic component. A group that migrates frequently picks up the language of the new

location. Another factor is the majority community's cultural domination, which "folklorized" indigenous languages and literature through literature and education.

In this research, 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. 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 suppression of a minority language by the dominant language is linguistic hegemony. When a dominant group can convince a minority population to change from their native tongue to the dominant language, it can be accomplished.

According to Ives (2004:83), "linguistic hegemony can come through many organizations in the hegemonic structure, such as government, education, business, religious institutions, and the media." Through its media and educational tools, a government might unintentionally impose a language on its subject, particularly on the minority population. The language used in religious institutions has the power to influence minority groups into thinking that linguistic change will be beneficial.

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. Then he gives examples of multiple languages that have experienced linguistic hegemony but have also succeeded in fighting it off. He brings up the Greenlandic Inuit language, which has survived despite a dramatic decrease. It was effectively rejuvenated for a number of reasons.

Language loss eventually results from successful linguistic hegemony, which turns the minor language into the dominant one. To justify my contention that Nepali has hegemonic status as the nation's official language and that Nepal Bhasa has been relegated to an indigenous language with a high extinction danger, I have embraced the conceptual framework of linguistic hegemony including the emotional aspects of language advocacy and language socialization. The studies revealed the complexity of situated language activism, which is intertwined with processes of subjectification. They also revealed that people language activism involved a fight for an authentic voice and the right to specify how a progressive ideology should be marginalized in everyday language.

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. 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 linguists are working on how this language can be revitalized and preserved. Dr. Tulsi Maharjan (2000/01) in his article "Hami kasari newarai bhai rahane?" 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 remarks that the younger generation must be taught about the importance of their mother tongue. We must follow our rituals and celebrate our festivals regularly and discuss them with the children. The elder generation must share their experience about Nepal Bhasa to others.

Nareshbir Shakya (2007/8) in his article *Megu Bhay Sayeketa Ma Bhay Twatemwa* emphasizes on the role of the parents to transfer the language to their children. He continues by saying that while it is reasonable for parents to be concerned about their children's future, they must also realize that by not teaching them Nepal Bhasa, they are limiting their abilities. He emphasizes that the language will never stop being used once parents understand their part in keeping it alive. Involving parents in the revitalization effort is important.

Researches show that children's ability to learn a second or additional language is not affected even though they get mother tongue instruction in the primary level. Rather their fluency and literacy in mother tongue lay a cognitive

and linguistic foundation for learning additional languages. Furthermore, adequate learning of mother tongue accelerates the second language learning. On the other hand, if the children are forced to switch abruptly too early from learning mother tongue to other language, their mother tongue acquisition may be attenuated or even lost (Ball, 2010).

For Taylor (1871) culture is “that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.” The way we think and perceive the world—as well as our personal lives—is referred to as culture. It can differ within a nation, a state, a community, a subgroup of society, and even within a single family. Preservation requires the use of culture too though. Furthermore, because they are linked to human origins, cultures are forms of civilization in and of themselves. Language is a tool for communication, on the other hand. Language is typically thought of as a component of culture.

Generally, native culture of the foreign language learners can be understood as indigenous culture and local culture though they have slightly different connotation. Indigenous culture generally refers the culture of indigenous people of a land employed for centuries for survival and everydayexistence (Die, 2011).

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, 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.

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.

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. 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.

In conclusion, I depict the commitment of this thesis to the issue of language attrition and loss as well as the useful outcomes for revitalization efforts. My study on “The decline of language culture (Nepal Bhasa) in contemporary time” may require loads of writing about the concepts of language culture, social and social world by dissecting the fundamental real information-based practices that interconnect to frame more mind-boggling social elements like gatherings, ways of life, social fields or whole social orders.

## **LANGUAGE SHIFT OF PATAN AND IT'S DYNAMICS**

In this research, I analyze contemporary changes in Nepal Bhasa and present an introduction to the area of study, Patan, its brief history, and the findings and analysis of the research conducted there. It is important to comprehend and be informed about the general background of the units under study in any anthropological study because it molds and shapes every other aspect of their lives. Similarly, I attempted to analyze how Newars use their language and how much control they have over their mother tongue in comparison to their saving language. At last, the youth's perception of Nepal Bhasa as a tool to uplift their Nepal Bhasa locally.

### **Decline in the use of Nepal Bhasa**

Ms. Shivani Shrestha, resident of Hiranya Varna Mahavihar, includes two major reasons for the decline of the language. One of the reasons is that parents do not teach their children about their mother tongue. Another is that this language has almost no use outside of the Newar community. The reason being, majority of educated young people cannot communicate their own mother tongue without attempting to integrate some English words to express the thoughts and ideas they have been thinking, Nepali and English languages are suppressing Nepal Bhasa. While any educational institution's youth must learn English in order to achieve higher education, I genuinely think there are multiple reasons why such a situation exists in Nepal. Likewise, a lot of the content on the internet is in English, and since people use it so often, it has an effect on the quality of the mother tongue that they speak from universities, government agencies, businesses, and people who don't speak Nepal Bhasa. Without any doubt, English is now considered a universal language. Besides that, it is acceptable for people to speak, learn, and then use English everywhere. However, the issue is that most of the people do not prioritize their local languages.

Ms. Shakya expresses for the parents who believe that acquiring a language that cannot be used anywhere is worthless. It really is meaningless to teach a language that cannot be used or practiced, which discourages the parents. This same suppression of Nepal Bhasa in recent years, beginning with the rule of Prithvi Narayan Shah and continuing to the present, is the second reasoning she provides. Since the goal of the thesis is to determine the cause of Nepal Bhasa's downfall, the research participants were given several options for determining whether any of the ruling parties, past or present, were responsible for the language's decline. The language was suppressed during various governing eras, which caused the use of language and decline in the use of this language. She believes that although politicians talk about how proud we are of our language, they don't enroll their children in local schools. Everybody wants to enroll their children in English medium schools nowadays. She acknowledges that even though we are supposed to be proud of our language, it is totally ineffective if it cannot help us find job opportunities. She emphasizes that it is the major drawback for parents to teach their kids mother tongue.

Mr. Sunil Dangol, who teaches in local private schools from Hiranya Varna Mahavihar, identifies fault for the decline of usage of the Nepal Bhasa is the government policy. He further categorizes his justifications into many factors. The first is education. He makes this same observation that the government's official language is the only language that receives governments support. The parents have refused to speak Nepal Bhasa to their kids out of concern that they might run into social issues because of their language, and the kids are not allowed to speak their native language in class. He argues that the government should indeed support language advocates without trying to interfere. First off, I believe that a country's duty is to preserve its official language or languages, but not for silly reasons. Language reflects culture. Everything and anything that contributed to a country's culture is lost without the native language, which carries its history. Indeed, protecting native languages, which proportionally protects culture, is a responsibility of the government.

Ms. Lumanti Bajracharya who is a social activist for Newar culture, native Nepal Bhasa speaker from Hiranya Varna Mahavihar, highlights an essential aspect of the problem, such as the fact that many non-Newar people have

migrated to Kathmandu valley since the Panchayat period, bombarding Kathmandu with people of different descendant who have different dialects and accents whereas her husband Mr. Prakash Maan Bajracharya who is a priest of Mahavihar, also believes that today's youth and even children are hesitant to learn their mother tongue because of bullies and inappropriate behavior aimed directly at Newar children's accent at public spaces and schools.

Mr. Babukaji Shakya who works for government from Hiranya Varna Mahavihar, believes that now the decline in the use of the language is primarily due to educational policies. He also mentions that between the Rana period and the Panchayat system, authors were punished for using Nepal Bhasa. He claims that, despite the government's continuing oppression, development in Nepal Bhasa has not stopped. Mr. Lal Bahadur Maharjan, 3<sup>rd</sup> generation of his heritage from Hiranya Varna Mahavihar admits that Nepali, as an official language, has a bigger population, causing us to believe that the utilization of Nepal Bhasa has decreased, although in actual fact, Nepal Bhasa has been present in moments in its community. Mr. Maharjan acknowledges that development has had a repercussion on the language, and Mr. Shakya tries to blame the current multi-party government in particular for the decline of Nepal Bhasa. The majority of the respondents are of the opinion that Nepal Bhasa has had less space in which it can be used due to government policy.

Table 1: Declining language (Nepal Bhasa) in four consecutive years of Census

S. N	Total Population	Number	Percentage	Years
1.	19,405,505	690,007	3.7%	1991
2.	22,736,934	825,458	3.6%	2001
3.	26,494,504	846,557	3.1%	2011
4.	291,92,480	846557	3.2%	2021

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics, Nepal

The table above indicate the differences in native language speaker counts. Newar native speakers, for example, made only 3.6 percent of the overall population in 2001, but just 3.2 percent in 2021. However, a comparison of the statistics between 2011 and 2021 demonstrates unequivocally that Nepal Bhasa has not decreased. I believe it is as a result of the local development committee, or tole sudar samiti, which has established local Newari language classes as well as other provisions for the preservation and promotion of local Newar culture in Lalitpur. It shows that the indigenous people are conscious of the risk to their cultural identity. Most young people aspired to learn Nepal Bhasa, despite the fact that their parents remained hesitant to speak it, as per my personal observations.

### Parents' reasons for being extremely hesitant to teach their children Nepal Bhasa

The topic of parents' hesitancy to communicate to their children in Nepal Bhasa had also been brought up during the discussion. Mostly many first-generation parents are reluctant to teach their children in their mother tongue. This is because of their perception that speaking a different language at home will cause their own children to have an unusual accent. In their preferences for particular accents and languages, parents are very biased. Discrimination against Newar speakers are institutionalized in Nepal. The Newar accent may lead a few people to believe that the speaker does not speak Nepali fluently.

The majority of the parents I've interviewed were hesitant to speak in several languages at home or chose to believe their efforts were not valued at school. While communicating with other elderly family members, some parents use this Nepal Bhasa language but even so when speaking with children, they change to Nepali. What might be the consequences behind this?

According to Mr. Dangol, Interviewee from Hiranya Varna Mahavihar, this is a self-centered and irresponsible decision on the part of modern parents. He believes they will regret their misguided steps in the near future, and it is extremely important that they attempt communicating Nepal Bhasa to their children so that they will start to understand its value. In his personal view, parents should strengthen the use of Nepal Bhasa with another language.

According to Ms. Maharjan, Interviewee from Hiranya Varna Mahavihar, it indeed is the other way around; but instead of parents not using their native language with their children, Ms. Maharjan believes alternate. The children are now sent off to preschools where Nepali and English are overwhelmingly dominant due to various reasons. Besides, children today are taken to nursery before they can speak. The decision of whether they should teach their children these highly regarded languages or Nepal Bhasa is a real dilemma for the parents. Parental use of both Nepali and English with their children is indirectly made mandatory.

Many of the respondents feel that the challenging presumption if they do not know and understand other dominant languages, they will fall behind everyone else in success. To some people who responded, it's really totally ineffective and should not be managed to pass on to the next generation. The majority of respondents, however, hold the misperceptions that this language cannot offer work and career opportunities. Approximately half of the parents believes that somehow this language cannot offer jobs, which is the reason parents are hesitant to teach their children Nepal Bhasa. Because of better job opportunities, the most of Patan's Newars have switched to Nepali and English.

Concerning the decreased use of Nepali Bhasa at home, Ms. Bajracharya (Interviewee) holds a different perspective. She reckons that it could be strongly associated to the increase in inter-caste marriage, which force parents to speak Nepali to their children, which is a widely used language. Ms. Shrestha (Interviewee) believes that parents have stopped speaking Nepal Bhasa to their kids as a result of social changes and the necessity to adjust. She continued by trying to point out that it's actually the truth parents who already have themselves struggled embarrassment and utter humiliation because of their own Newari accent are unlikely to want their children to encounter the same mistreatment and humiliation, which is the reason behind their hesitancy to use Nepal Bhasa.

Some respondents believe that Nepali and English are the most common languages. As a result, once their children come back home and share the same language as their parents, these same parents, deeply worried regarding overloading their children with an additional language, respond to the language that their children speak. In response to societal and cultural pressure, parents choose not to speak Nepal Bhasa to their children, bringing up the accent and dialect vulnerability to ridicule by non-Newars and the insufficiency of people within their social circles who are fluent in the language.

### **Cultural Practices of Newar with Respect to Language**

People in Nepal normally grow up speaking two and knowing at least four languages. People might speak the language that is a heritage from the family. The communication of the immediate surroundings seems to be generally different from of the home language, which is mostly Nepali, and the child picks it up as well. Besides, it is likely that children will acquire English as it is part of the living culture in urban areas. And, due the India's dominant influence of the entertainments like movies, TV channels and globalization people tend to know Hindi language also. On minor level we can also observe cases, there might be difference in language of parents, father

and mother coming from different mother tongue, which can influence additional one more language to learn from each of them.

Informants genuinely think that it is extremely shameful that the language is shifting. Mr. Maharjan, interviewee from Hiranya Varna Mahavihar, believes that Nepali's predominance in official settings gives the impression that Nepal Bhasa has been replaced, when in fact Nepal Bhasa has only lost its status as an official language and continues to be used in its community. According to Mr. Shakya (Interviewee), the implementation of Nepali as the official language has not had an impact on Nepal Bhasa, but the parents in the Newar community have stopped talking in Nepal Bhasa to their kids. He claims that if parents, particularly mothers, spoke to their children in Nepal Bhasa, no other factor would have an impact on the language's development.

Ms. Pradhan (Interviewee) believes that the Nepali language has influenced Nepal Bhasa as the latter used to represent Nepal and now that some other language represents Nepal, Nepal Bhasa has lost its authenticity. She continues by stating that it needs to be categorized as the official language. According to Mr. Shakya (Interviewee), the loss of its official status made Nepal Bhasa non-mandatory, resulting in a drop in utilization. Mr. Shakya and Ms. Maharjan believe it has a direct effect because Nepali is now used everywhere, lowering the value of Nepal Bhasa. Ms. Pradhan continues by claiming that Nepali language has not just influenced the status of Nepal Bhasa, but it has also pushed Newars to learn this language against their will.

Mr. Maharjan (Interviewee) chooses to believe that the hegemony of Nepali in official places gives the misconception that it has replaced Nepal Bhasa, but within reality, Nepal Bhasa hardly ended up losing its own title as primary language status and continues to exist within its community. Additional discussion concentrated on the issue of why the Supreme Court prohibited the use of Nepal Bhasa for official purposes when the Nepal constitution stated that everyone has the right to speak their mother tongue. Many have heavily criticised the Supreme Court decision to forbid the use of Nepal Bhasa in official contexts. The informants agree that the Supreme Court's decision is misleading and should be ruled unconstitutional. Positively, there really are again then proposals being made to use Nepal Bhasa at the provincial level.

Furthermore, most Nepalese classes require English proficiency in order to have employment opportunities. That is why the majority of people in contemporary world prefer learning English instead of any other language. On a more precise level, we can observe a decline in Nepal Bhasa as a mother tongue in Lalitpur in comparison to early days. Generally speaking, the urban area has enhanced for the Nepali language, and as more youth proclaim Nepali as their mother tongue, there has been a shift in the Newars' mother tongue condition in favor of Nepali language.

### **Language Shift in the Newar Community**

As more Newars proclaim Nepali as their mother tongue, there is a noticeable language shift in Nepal Bhasa within the Newar community. Most parents in Patan today don't teach Nepal Bhasa to their children. There are the beginnings of a shift toward English and Nepali language, but the results of the upcoming census will reveal whether it is truly happening. The process has just started. Distinctly, more of the Newar people is speaking less of the Nepal Bhasa. This shows a steady decline. This is crucial since it implies that the importance of the Nepal Bhasa is declining for the Newar community itself.

Due to several oppressions, the use of Nepal Bhasa has decreased, causing language shift in the Newar community. This is also for economic reasons since if they know Nepali and English language, they will have better employment opportunities. On the other hand, there are less chances of being cheated easily if you speak the same language as the people holding dominant position. It clearly shows Nepal Bhasa's legitimate dominance in Patan and the disappearance of dialects or sublanguages are dying out. This is primarily the result of the fact that youngsters consider their native tongue to be on equal level with English and Nepali in terms of language importance.

People are choosing to switch their language preference to Nepali and English in the case of the Nepali language in order to integrate into the mainstream Newar society. Thus, it does not necessarily indicate a shift in favor of Nepali and English but rather that it is maintaining its position. Another aspect of the shift towards English and Nepali as the official languages is access to education. This has been described in some literature as "cultural genocide" in a gradual and adequately. The world's languages have long been in a condition of linguistic equilibrium, but in the last 500 years, waves of biological and socioeconomic symbolic importance have completely changed the situation. Besides that, languages with socioeconomically disadvantaged or political status in society have been heavily impacted by the pressure.

### **Identifying the flaw of revitalization strategies: Newars of Hiranya Varna Mahavir, Patan**

Language shift, loss, maintenance, and revitalization are all part of the continuum in language contact situations. At the point where maintenance becomes a conscious process, it becomes more similar to revitalization, especially in terms of requiring deliberate language planning efforts. The revitalization of Nepal Bhasa is of vital importance today. We need to find our own solution as everyone is in a different situation, though the motif is the same: to revitalize the language. (Personnel conversation with Ms. Byanjankar in November, 2021) We do not have to resist Nepali language to support Nepal Bhasa. 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. (Personnel conversation with Mr. Shakyain November, 2021)

The community leaders need to restore the faith in the community that Nepal Bhasa is our native language and we are responsible for it. They must act as a bridge between the government and the local people. They must figure out different ways to revitalize the language with the help of local people and then propose those methods to the government and make sure that the government works on it. We have to believe that with our determination we can make government work as per our need. (Personnel conversation with Ms. Pradhan in February, 2022) 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. Constitution must be practiced rightfully. The government needs to create awareness among its people about the importance of local languages. If not being able to maintain the importance of mother tongue, we won't be able to save the national language from hegemony of some other dominant language later.

Every informant has given much emphasis on parent's role to revitalize the language. Parents and family members must speak Nepal Bhasa with their kids (Personnel conversation with Ms. Byanjankar in June, 2021). We know that it is difficult and looks impractical but its only us who can reform a mass of Newars with strong command in Nepal Bhasa, so that we force the government to work for it. We need to create awareness among the children to respect own language and own identity. For that first we need to acknowledge the importance of the language. Once the generation of parents realizes the importance of the language, then the language will prosper without the need of revitalization program mentions Ms. Maharjan.

10 respondents feel that family has an important role to play for revitalization of the language, while 8 believe it is the responsibility of the community. A total of 18 people reflected that it is the duty of parents, while 11 people thinks that the role is of government. For 7, it is an individual effort, and 10 respondents emphasize on the role of educational institute, 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.

To briefly discuss the loopholes of previous revitalization process, I think the community leaders must communicate with the government to establish better ways to support Nepal Bhasa. It is good to have individual effort but it is more effective with the support of the government. The awareness focus not only should be on younger generation but also on the parent group. They need to be enlightened how to maintain the importance of this language and how to pass it to the children. Lastly, it is very important for Newar on individual level to feel proud of this language because if language dies it is an indication of a loss of the corresponding social identity. Even if we cannot completely revive a dying language, we can be proud that we have documented the cultural diversity of humanity and helped in preserving traditions and knowledge of generations of people who have spoken that language.

All interviewees agreed that one of the causes of the decline in language use is related to the government's past policies. The interviewees believe that the present government's biased position was to blame for the language's swift decline. 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). 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 (Wurn, 1991). The circumstance is somewhat different when it comes of support because, unlike the USSR, where much was done to support its minor language, Nepal's government has not yet done much to support Nepal Bhasa. Again, the approach is the same that is to provide more facilities in areas related to the language that the government wants to establish as the main language.

For easier and more effective opportunities outside of the dominant language, people have switched to alternative language which they find comfortable to learn.

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

Ms. Shrestha (Interviewee) acknowledges in an interview that non-Newars seem to be more outspoken concerning their decision to avoid social interaction with some Newars because they speak Nepal Bhasa. Too many Newars seem to be hesitant to speak this language in public because of this. Mr. Tuladhar (Interviewee) highlights the need for those non-Newars to fully understand that Nepal Bhasa always has existed and that the Newar people themselves must keep this in mind. She shows clearly how the situation was not the same 30ears ago. Non-Newars who emerged to Kathmandu for business or study used to learn Nepal Bhasa and feel more confident in order to socialize with Newars. Why should we have to unexpectedly feel insecure about our language? Unless we are proud of our language, everyone else will appreciate it as well. Nevertheless, as a result of the government's biased policy, Newar will undoubtedly feel insecure about their language.

It was also noticed that, as a result of the large number of non-Newars who showed up in the valley, Newars were expected to learn Nepali in order to interact with these people. As a matter of fact, so when Newars are now in the inclusion of non-Newars, the language switches to Nepali, the official language. Simultaneously, fear of someone being bullied at school for their accent by non-Newars caused Newars to limit their use of this language in public. (Ms. Bajracharya).

Parents were asked if they speak Nepali with their children, and 40% said no while 60% said yes. That is, out of 25 parents, 10 did use this language with their children whereas the other 15 did not.

## **Blatantly biased government strategy**

I agree that when a government authorizes a language as the country's official language, it has a duty to preserve that language. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the government to preserve the language and to make sure that it is spoken by everyone in the nation. In order to homogenize the language all through the nation, resources will have to be given access. Likewise, this suggests that the government is responsible for ensuring that the language is taught in every educational facility nationwide.

Since Prithvi Narayan Shah took over Kathmandu Valley during Nepal's unification process, the government policy has prioritized Nepali. All of these rulers initially tried to support Newar culture and literature, but their main goal was to keep the Newars under their control. After a while, Newars were always found to be victims of these rulers. Although the Constitution states that most every individual has the right to speak, learn, and preach in their mother tongue, the government really hasn't motivated such behavioral patterns in practice. In this regard, the government has always been biased toward other minor languages, including Newar. Even within the administrative field, Nepali is required to complete any work.

To get a good job, Nepali as an official language is considered necessary. Most Newars genuinely think that Nepal Bhasa cannot provide job prospects and that understanding of Nepali is required to get a job, particularly at the government level. In the meantime, key government vacant positions are published in Nepali in Gorkhapatra. Mr. Maharjan mentioned that certificates besides from Nepali and English are of less worth.

The group of 15 respondents who believe it to be a personal decision is closely followed. 8 people disagree, while the other 7 believe it is unnecessary and remaining 2 say that it shouldn't be passed on to the next generation. The following inquiry concerned Nepal Bhasa's capacity to generate employment possibilities. Nearly half of the people, or 48.2%, think that this language has the ability to create jobs. A total of 38.8% of the population holds this belief. The others think that this language is incapable of opening up work chances. As a result, Newars turn to Nepali and English in search of better employment possibilities, believing that Nepal Bhasa cannot supply jobs.

The educational system in Nepal also prioritizes the Nepali language. There are no textbooks readily accessible in minorities' mother tongues at the government level, where subjects are only taught in Nepali and English. There are no classes in Nepal Bhasa or any other minority languages at the government school; all subjects are taught in Nepali or English. Yet Newars have made an effort to support Nepal Bhasa at the community level. Nepal Bhasa is now being taught in many new schools. There are initiatives, such as the Newah School in the Newah Settlement, which support in having established such schools with the support of the local inhabitants. But the harsh reality is that parents seem to be reluctant to enroll their children in government schools as they are unsure of their children's future opportunities for education after achieving their fundamental studies in Nepal Bhasa.

## **The Influence of Education System on Family Language**

Regardless of the increasing trend toward bilingualism, there are still some families where Nepal Bhasa is the primary language. When communicating to other senior family members, the parents speak Nepal Bhasa but when speaking to young children, they switch to Nepali. As we try to find the reason for this, we find that the education policy should take the blame because Nepali is more comforting to children. Parents who are fluent in both Nepali and Nepal Bhasa switch to Nepali. There are situations where parents need to be fluent in Nepali in order to communicate with their children. Even though the child is learning Nepali, there is a constant worry that their Newari accent will overpower their Nepali. The scenario extends beyond being made fun of for having a Newari accent and includes being guilty for communicating it. Parents usually teach their kids Nepali as a way of schooling them for people's lives outside of the home in order to avoid these kinds of situations.

The research shows that using the child's mother tongue in the classroom enhances classroom participation, decreases attrition, and increases the likelihood that family and community members will be involved in the child's learning, which is appropriate to the relationship between language policy and quality of education. Ms. Maharjan highlighted that learner-centered teaching must take place in a language the child understands in order for it to be effective. It is extremely important for a child to begin preschool speaking the language they do at home in order to feel at ease and get used to the new environment and learning. Mother tongue instruction also improves the child's cognitive learning processes.

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. And, rest 16.4% were delusional.

One of the reasons people hesitate to join in such schools is the confusion regarding the future of Nepal Bhasa education beyond the primary level. The hesitation to admit in Nepal Bhasa School is due to a variety of factors, including future educational uncertainty as well as future career opportunities (Ms. Shrestha). A Nepali environment is created by the educational system, that also prioritizes and teaches Nepali to children. In addition to teaching children Nepali, it also pressures parents to speak it. Trying to make parents talk Nepali is similar to requiring children speak only Nepali. Not only the parents' generation is affected; the grandparents' generation has also been persuaded to learn Nepali in order to communicate with the grandchildren. Even people who wish to continue their education are unable to do so due to a lack of resources. Besides this, Nepal Bhasa is not taught in the government's educational curriculum, despite claims to the contrary in writing. To allow effective access to education in such a situation, Newars are subtly pressured to change their preferred language.

### **Concluding Remarks**

The language has been devalued to the social position of an indigenous mother tongue. Even though, all the citizens of Nepal have the right to speak, learn, including using their mother tongue, according to the country's constitution. The Newar language has been passed from generation to generation verbally from generation to generation. Nepal Bhasa, the mother tongue of Nepal and the mother tongue of the Newar people, has a rich cultural history. The use of this language has recently decreased, and UNESCO has listed it as a language that is unquestionably in risk of extinction. The majority of Newars fully agree that this language is degrading every day now. People will soon regret its passing if we do not act quickly to revive and preserve it. Depriving our descendants of language is to deprive them of culture, knowledge, as well as a point of view because language is something we pass down to them. The government has chosen a prejudiced choice by declaring this language as the only one to be honored as an official language. Without realizing that the term "Nepali" is an adjective that refers to everyone and everything that belongs to Nepal, it has given the Khas language all the importance by referring to it as the "Nepali" language.

My research into the reason of this language decline actually started with the Malla period, known as the golden era of Nepal Bhasa. Every subsequent ruling power has only suppressed Nepal Bhasa in some way, despite initially being supportive of the language. During the reign of King Prithvi Narayan Shah, Gorkhali Bhasa replaced it. Even during Rana period, prominent writers were imprisoned, and it was completely prohibited under the Panchayat System's One Nation - One Language policy. I feel that not just the younger generation, but also the parent group, should be the focus. The value of this language must be engrained in them, and they must learn how to pass it on to the next generation. To convince them that the language is valuable enough to be passed on to the next generation, their faith in it must be reestablished.

As a result, it is also obvious that the native language of Newar is in danger of becoming extinct. The older generation is deliberately and unconsciously supporting it, whereas the younger generation is ignoring it in order to succeed in the globalized world. Regardless of the increasing movement toward bilingualism, there are still

some households where Nepal Bhasa is the primary language. When speaking to other senior family members, the parents speak Nepali; yet, when speaking to young children, they switch to Nepali. As I try to find the reason for this, the education policy is another reason for the decline of Nepal Bhasa.

The best ways to protect a language are subject to debate. Enthusiasm of newer generations to use the language as they move into adulthood is one way to ensure that they will pass it down to their children. This option is frequently next to unachievable. A language is frequently threatened by a variety of factors, and it is impossible to control every one of them to ensure the language's survival. The Nepali language has not only been given priority by the government, but also in every other area. The right of citizens to use their mother tongue is established by the Constitution, but having written it in the Constitution does not assure its smooth and easy use. Because of Nepali's dominance, other Nepalese languages, such as Nepal Bhasa, are regarded as inferior. As a result, in order to feel superior, Newar have stopped using their language.

However, we cannot deny that by supporting the government's denigration of our language by believing it to be inferior on a personal level, we have contributed to the biased government policy that has resulted in a decline in language use. Determining whether to give up our identity or keep it in tact is now up to us. Effective programs that treat all languages equally must be developed by the government. On the other hand, Nepal Bhasa must be respected by the People of Newar community.

It is simple to lose our identity and become just another face in the crowd, disconnected from our own roots and society as a whole. Our lives are shaped by language, which represents as a collection for all types of knowledge.

## Reference

Ball, J. (2010). Enhancing learning of children from diverse language backgrounds: *Mother Tongue-based bilingual or multilingual education in the early years*.

Bhaila, Birendra (2017) *Language Death: Case of Newari Language*. Dialogos, Toyo University Repository for Academic Resources. (Pp 81-89)

Bista, D. B. (1976). *People of Nepal*. Kathmandu: Ratna Pustak Bhandar. p 16

Bradley, D., Bradley, M. (2002). *Language Endangerment and Language Maintenance*. London: Routledge.

Chilisa, B. (2012). *Indigenous research methodologies*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Campbell, Lyle & Muntzel, C. (1889). The structural consequences of language death. *Kinds of language death situations: Cambridge University Press*, 1989 Pp. 183-186  
<http://www2.hawaii.edu/~lylecamp/Campbell%20%20&%20Muntzel.pdf>

Crystal, David. (2000). *Language Death*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139871549>

Die, G. S. (2011). Integrating local cultural knowledge as formal and informal education for young African learners: A Ghanaian case study. *Canadian and International Education/Education canadienne et internationale*, 40 (1), pp. 20-40.

Eriksen, T. H. (1992). *Linguistic hegemony and minority resistance*. Journal of Peace Research, 29(3), 313-332. Sage publication.

Evans N, Levinson SC. The myth of language universals: *language diversity and its importance for cognitive science*. *Behav Brain Sci*. 2009 Oct;32(5):429-48; discussion 448-494.  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0140525X0999094X>

Gellner, D.N. (1997). Caste, communalism, communism: Newars and the Nepalese State. David N. Gellner, J. Pfaff-Czarnecka, and J. Whelpton (eds) *Nationalism and Ethnicity in a Hindu Kingdom*. (pp.151-184). London, NY: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group.

Gellner, D.N. (2007). Caste, ethnicity and inequality in Nepal. Nepal: towards a Democratic Republic. *Economic and Political Weekly*, pp 1823-1828.

Grenoble, L., & Whaley, L. (2005). Language revitalization as a global issue. *Saving Languages: An Introduction to Language Revitalization* (pp. 1-20). Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511615931.002>

Ives, P. (2004). Language and hegemony in Gramsci. London: Pluto Press. Ives, P. (2009/ 2013). *Global English, hegemony and education: Lessons from Gramsci. Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 41(6), 661-683.

Maharjan, Tulsī (2000/01) Hami kasari newarai bhai rahane? *Newah Vijnana*, 4, pp 67-68

Sallabank, Julia. (2010) Language Endangerment: Problems and Solutions. *eSharp Special Issue: Communication Change: Representing Self and Community in a Technological World*. 50-87 Shakya, N. (2007/8). *Megu bhay sayeketa ma bhay twatemwa. Newah Vijnana*, 6, 99-100

Shrestha, Uma & Shakya. Daya R. (1997). A journal of Newar Studies. *Newah Vijnana*. 1(1). [http://himalaya.socanth.cam.ac.uk/collections/journals/jns/pdf/JNS\\_01.pdf](http://himalaya.socanth.cam.ac.uk/collections/journals/jns/pdf/JNS_01.pdf)

Shrestha, B.G. (1999) The Newars: the indigenous population of the Kathmandu valley in the modern state of Nepal: *Contributions to Nepalese Studies*, 26 (1) pp 83-117, Kathmandu: Tribhuvan University

Shrestha, B.G. & Hoek, B.V. (1995). Education in the Mother Tongue: *The Case of the Nepal Bhasa (Newari), Contribution to Nepalese Studies*, 22(1), 73-84

Shakya, N. (2007/8). *Megu bhay sayeketa ma bhay twatemwa. Newah Vijnana*, 6, 99-100 Taylor, E.B. (1871). *Islam and Culture*. London: Cape.

Tuladhar Jyoti, Bal Gopal Shrestha. (2017). *The Newars of Sikkim: Reinventing Language, Culture and Identity in the Diaspora*, Kathmandu, Vajra Books, 2015. In: *Bulletin de l'Ecole française d'Extrême-Orient*. Tome 103, 2017. pp. 526-528.

[https://www.persee.fr/doc/befeo\\_0336-1519\\_2017\\_num\\_103\\_1\\_6263\\_t15\\_0526\\_0000\\_2](https://www.persee.fr/doc/befeo_0336-1519_2017_num_103_1_6263_t15_0526_0000_2)

Wexler, P. & Whitson, T. (1982) Hegemony and education. *Psychology and Social Theory*, no.3, pp 31-42

Wiley, T.G. (2000) Language planning and policy. In S.L. McKay and N.H. Hornberger (eds.) *Sociolinguistics and Language Teaching* (pp. 103-147). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Wurm, S. A. (1991). Language Death and Disappearance: *Causes and Circumstances. Diogenes*, 39 (153): pp 1-18