



Languages in Danger: How Can Linguistic Diversity Be Preserved and Promoted in Nepal?

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Abstract

This paper focuses on the decline and death of indigenous languages with special reference to sampled languages used by indigenous communities in Kaski district, arguing that the indigenous language communities should be supported by the government for giving official status to their native languages, focused on formulation and implementation of education policies, and encouraged to insist on speaking their native languages. Together, the indigenous language communities need to collaborate with the government to curb all the issues related to preserving and promoting linguistic diversity in Nepal. Based on the findings and discussion of the study, the following recommendations have been made to preserve and promote linguistic diversity in Nepal: 1) The findings of the study concluded that documentation is one of the most important ways to preserve and promote indigenous languages; 2) The findings of this study concluded that both formal and informal languages classes can be effective to cover all types of age group indigenous language speakers; 3) It is recommended that language teachers should be provided with appropriate trainings to be good indigenous language teachers; 4) It is recommended that indigenous language groups should put pressure on the government for policy development and political advocacy for the preservation of indigenous languages; 5) The study suggested that indigenous language groups should be given language awareness programs occasionally in order to motivate them to use their native languages and then to preserve the linguistic diversity in Nepal; and 6) The study suggested that indigenous language communities need to get help of language researchers to address the issues related to indigenous language revitalization strategies.

Keywords: Linguistic diversity; Indigenous languages; Language endangerment; Language maintenance.



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1. Introduction

Though Nepal is a multilingual country with over 123 languages, as many as 60 indigenous languages are on the endangered list (Pun, 2014). This is a serious issue because once we lose a language; there is no hope for recovery again. The past few decades have seen these languages as falling out of use as their speakers shift to speaking other languages. For instance, as estimated by Kirti (2018), Nepal has already lost about 11 indigenous languages so far and many others including Bote, Lhomi, Lepcha and Koche, among others, are now on the verge of extinction (para. 1). This indicates that it will observe more deaths of languages if urgent and necessary measures are not taken seriously to preserve them.

Many languages around the world are dying constantly, in many cases, resulting in death. There is no official data, but many linguists and historians believe that more than 10,000 languages once existed in the human history. According to the estimate by Crystal (2000), there are approximately 6,000 languages spoken in the world today (p. 3). Linguistic diversity is therefore being threatened by this trend around the world, and this threat is, in particular, severely felt by Nepal's indigenous communities. In Nepal, many languages of these communities such as the Tibeto-Burman language family are in danger of disappearing. Many linguists agree to group languages according to levels as safe, at risk, endangered and extinct (Crystal, 2000), and most of Nepal's indigenous languages are believed to be endangered (Pun, 2014). Here, the endangered level of languages is measured according to the number of children who learn it as opposed to the number of people who speak it. In this case, many of Nepal's language communities tend to define themselves according to what language they speak.

Unless current trends of the decline and death of languages in Nepal are reversed, the common threat to indigenous languages is the conscious and unconscious desires of parents not passing on their language to their children. In some places, indigenous communities who speak the Nepali language fluently are looked upon more favorably than those who use indigenous languages fairly well. In the similar way, the Nepali language is used as the only medium of instruction in all types of educational institutions, minimizing the use of indigenous languages. One of the reasons is that "native children get little or no incentive to learn their indigenous languages" (Pun and Gurung, 2020). Their parents and community around fail to make them understand the value of the language and the consequences of its decline and loss. Thus, the issue of language endangerment and maintenance is based solely on the use of language and is most severely felt by indigenous language communities around the world including Nepal. The paper has, therefore, aimed to suggest a more inclusive language policy of the government that can

accommodate indigenous languages of Nepal and contribute to the preservation and promotion of the world's linguistic diversity.

2. The Issue of Language Endangerment and Maintenance

Language decline and death can be considered as one of the pressing issues to indigenous language communities in Nepal. It can directly occur at two levels. First, it occurs when a language speaker or family moves from one place to another and shifts to speaking another languages. Secondly, it occurs when the whole community stops using the language due to many other reasons. In this case, the language community may lose their native language forever. The second one has become a common threat to all types of indigenous communities in Nepal. It is due to the fact that such languages are not spoken anywhere else in the world.

The issue of language endangerment and maintenance occurs indirectly. For instance, the government is the only institutionalized entity that can forcibly change the whole process of language socialization in a country where more than one language exists. In many such countries, dominant languages can be employed to drive out the smaller ones that can be considered as promoting linguistic discrimination. In the past, in Nepal, the government used a simple method to punish or remove indigenous and minority populations. In the recent past, during the Panchayat era, the Nepali language was considered the single most preferable language for Nepal. More recently, this happens through indirect means, an easy way of doing that has been the compulsory imposition by the government on matters related to the use of a language for official and educational purposes.

Even after the restoration of democracy in Nepal in 1990, the Nepali language is considered the official language, which is the *de facto* national language. The use of Nepali language is reinforced through the government and media, private businesses and educational institutions. On the whole, social, economic and political forces come together to make the Nepali language a valuable tool of communication, often to the exclusion of other languages. In the field of education, most importantly, Nepal has a history of discriminating against those who speak minority languages, preventing people from using their native languages. In this case also, the subsequent governments in the past have tried to promote more assimilation of the speakers, causing the language endangerment of many other communities.

Keeping in mind the aforementioned issue related to language endangerment and maintenance, this study has tried to give answers to the following research questions:

1. What are the attitudes of indigenous language speakers towards their mother tongues?
2. Where and how often do indigenous language speakers use their languages?
3. What, according to the indigenous language speakers, are the factors that endangered indigenous languages from the study area?
4. Why is it necessary to preserve and promote linguistic diversity in Nepal and how can they be preserved and promoted?

3. Review of Literature

History has taught us that the languages of powerful groups have become stronger than the languages of powerless groups, in many cases causing the deaths of weaker languages. The extinction of minority languages in today's world has become an issue which has been long discussed by previous researches, reaching at alarming stage mainly due to globalization, world social changes and changes in the world global community and Nepal is no exception.

In Nepal, a few linguists have made empirical studies about languages of Nepal, presenting a complex linguistic situation. Such attempts made by individuals and institutions are unable to present the comprehensive picture of the languages of Nepal. In his study, Regmi (2011) has examined attempts made to survey the languages of Nepal and explored the progress, challenges and prospect of the new attempt made by the Linguistic Survey of Nepal (LinSuN), surveying the languages of Nepal since 2009. Accordingly, the LinSuN has surveyed eight languages so far and has prepared the draft reports of the survey. Although the LinSuN had trained manpower, tools and enthusiasm, it lacked sufficient budget to achieve its expected goals. The findings indicated that the current linguistic issues cannot be addressed without framing appropriate language policy on the basis of the sociolinguistic research of the languages of Nepal. The findings suggested that the concerned authorities at home and abroad should help the LinSuN to complete the survey of the languages of Nepal. In order to preserve and promote languages of Nepal, his study concluded that there needs a comprehensive linguistic survey to identify and document the endangered minority languages, to determine their role in primary and adult education, to develop orthographies for unwritten languages, and to implement the socially inclusive provisions in Nepal.

In 2005, in Kathmandu, there was a seminar on the situation of indigenous languages, formulating policies and planning for their preservation and promotion, and establishing coordination among various language-related national and international agencies to revive the linguistic situation. The seminar was organized by the National Foundation for Development of Indigenous Nationalities (NFDIN), Kathmandu. There were three research papers presented in the seminar. Yadava and Turin (2005), presented a paper to set the scene for the seminar on indigenous languages of Nepal that examined two aspects of these languages: language situation and contemporary language issues. The language situation covered the topics such as identification, distribution, genetic affiliation, writing systems, ethnicity and language endangerment. The second aspect of indigenous languages covered contemporary issues related to the preservation and promotion of linguistic diversity in Nepal, discussing various aspects such as ecology, state, law, census, media, education and gender. The paper concluded that there are future prospects for

promoting indigenous languages of Nepal. They recommended that both the government and the language communities need to launch language revitalization campaigns, to use indigenous languages in the education system and to develop writing system for such languages.

At the same conference, the second paper was presented by [Watters and Rai \(2005\)](#) that dealt with the nature and scope of language and suggested appropriate planning and policy for the indigenous languages of Nepal and made strong recommendations to implement them. They focused on the use of indigenous languages in education including literacy, arguing that mother tongue education is not just a right but also a bridge to participation in the wider world.

The third paper of the conference was presented by [Watters and Rai \(2005\)](#) that focused on a framework for establishing coordination among diverse existing national and international agencies, carrying out campaigns related to the preservation and promotion of indigenous languages and their use in education and other everyday businesses. The paper was divided into three sections: the first section dealt with a list of agencies and individuals in language work in Nepal; the second suggested a model of cooperation that dealt with a group of people that share and collaborate in getting over problems; and the third made some specific suggestions about the form of the collaboration that included academics, practitioners and policy makers. The paper also suggested that support and coordination could be possible as individuals and organizations needed to have one.

A study on the preservation of linguistic diversity conducted by [Turin \(2007\)](#) provides a wide range of information on language diversity, endangerment and preservation, bringing together the debate in the social context of Nepal. The findings of the study illustrate the interrelatedness of language, culture, knowledge and ethnicity that deal with questions of minorities, political orientation and ecological sustainability. Since the study is a case study from Nepal, its outcomes go beyond the Nepali context such as other multilingual societies across the Himalayan regions and beyond. The findings suggest that there needs successful efforts to keep languages from extinction and combine mother tongue literacy and education, improving the socioeconomic and political status of minority language communities.

Many linguists and education planners agree that the future of nations depends on their education systems. For instance, the languages used in learning and instruction in schools and colleges contribute to the quality of education ([Kadel, 2017](#)). This debate is associated with the implementation of bilingual or multilingual education system in Nepal. Discussing this matter, he reviewed the background to education policies addressing minority language use in basic education in Nepal, arguing that each Nepali community living in Nepal has the right to preserve and promote its mother tongue, script, cultural civilization and heritage. His findings suggest that each language community needs to choose bi- and multilingualism as a minimal requirement to teach children in the beginning stage of their education in order to create strong foundation in their life (pp. 189-190).

The similar study was conducted by the [Department of English Education \(2011\)](#) that tested the realities of multilingual education program being practiced in 7 schools from 6 different districts. The findings showed that due to unrealistic implementation of multilingual education, the multilingual education program might not be sustainable. The findings also showed that the teachers needed support to run the program effectively because the support provided by the state is insufficient. So it is recommended that the state should be serious about the implementation of the policies. The study concluded that the multilingual education situation in all schools found to be encouraging because the stakeholders wanted to continue with the multilingual education programs.

A study on bilingual education conducted by the [Department of Education \(2001\)](#) admitted that education through mother tongue helps minimize learning difficulties of the children. With this vision, the government adopted a policy to teach mother tongue as an optional subject in schools and the Curriculum Development Centre (CDC) developed 10 exemplary curriculum and textbooks in different languages, but the use of these materials did not have any impact on the school education. Similarly, due to lack of mother tongue teachers, the Nepali language was widely used as a medium of instruction in schools. These findings indicated that the bilingual education was not successful, so it was recommended to have better management of mother tongue language teachers, orientations for teachers, and a provision of using local languages for classroom instruction. In a similar study on education policy, [Regmi \(2011\)](#) indicated that Nepal requires a multilingual language policy which can motivate the indigenous language communities to use their native languages (p. 139). So in order to preserve the endangered languages, the speakers of endangered languages should be given education in their mother tongues.

Following the establishment of multiparty democracy in 1990, linguists and ethnic groups advocated mother tongue literacy in Nepal such as many of ethnic organizations even took initiatives to develop literacy materials and implemented mother tongue literacy programs in many parts of the country. Similarly, the post-1990 constitutions of Nepal have advocated mother tongue education. On the subject of mother tongue literacy, [Khadka et al. \(2006\)](#) have made a comprehensive study to investigate good practice in the development and promotion of mother tongue literacy and ways in which this can be shared at a national level. They have tested 4 languages: Tharu, Tamang, Newar and Limbu as having their literacy programs. The findings indicated that, in the case of Newari language literacy program, a monolingual group can gain access to the official language of the wider society through literacy classes. In the case of Limbu language literacy program, it was found that the learners were motivated to join and actively participate in literacy classes, raising awareness about the importance of using native languages. In the case of Tamang, the study showed that the learners had developed a habit of reading and writing after they participated in the mother tongue literacy program. In the case of Tharu, the findings showed that through the Nepali language the learners learnt their mother tongue quickly that promoted Tharu culture as a positive model for the development and use of cultural-mosaic materials. The findings of this study of these languages suggested that the state and the mother tongue communities should develop bi/multilingual materials to run the mother tongue literacy classes.

An important contribution to the study of languages of Nepal is a chapter by [Yadava \(2014\)](#) that has analyzed the linguistic diversity and the use of languages as mother tongues and second languages in Nepal based on the 2011 census. His study categorized mother tongues into 2 main groups: the major language group consists of nineteenth mother tongues spoken by almost 96% of population and the minor language group consists of more than 104 mother tongues spoken by about 4% of the total population. The findings suggested that it is necessary to formulate language policy at national and local levels by the state and to further investigate the language situation in Nepal by the future researchers. The findings also recommended using mother tongues in multilingual education as medium of instruction in both formal and non-formal education.

A review of the literature on the preservation of linguistic diversity in Nepal shows that most of the studies focused on the available data of languages from the census taken in different periods, the current situation of languages and revival efforts made by the subsequent governments of Nepal. Some studies dealt with the awareness of linguistic diversity, bi- and multilingual education programs, and mother tongue literacy programs. Very few studies covered selected areas in the use of indigenous languages and language revival efforts in Kaski district such as the attitudes towards the use of indigenous languages and ways to preserve and promote indigenous languages in Nepal. In the Nepali context, such studies have been rarely found. More specifically, no studies are found on the factors that caused the decline and death of indigenous languages of Nepal elsewhere in Nepal.

4. Methodology

This study focuses mainly on preserving and promoting linguistic diversity in Nepal with special reference to indigenous languages of Kaski district. The study is entirely based on survey and secondary sources. Both descriptive and analytical research design have been followed in the study. A rigorous study has been conducted through questionnaire survey on the preservation and promotion of linguistic diversity in Nepal with special reference to indigenous languages of Kaski district.

The study describes the attitudes towards mother tongues of sampled respondents with their responses on the various aspects of demographic information, language background and use, and strategies for preserving and promoting linguistic diversity in Nepal. It also analyzes the responses of the sampled respondents using statistical techniques to generalize the findings. Opinions received from the secondary sources have also been analyzed for interpretation. So the collected data have been analyzed by following the mixed method i.e. quantitative and qualitative.

The study has been conducted in Kaski district, which is one of 77 districts of Nepal and lies in the Gandaki Province. The district covers an area of 2,017 square kilometers and has a total population of 492,098 as per the Nepal Census 2011. It has more than 44 language speaking communities and is one of the major tourist destinations in Nepal. It was selected as the study area for this project because the area is within the reach of the researchers and both belong to the study group: one to the Gurung language speaking community and another to the Magar language speaking community. More importantly, both the selection of the study area and group has made the researchers to understand the research gap and subsequently find the solutions to the research problems.

Out of total 492,098 all language speakers in Kaski district, total of 70,033 indigenous language speakers (more than 44 different language groups) are the sampling frame of this study ([Central Bureau of Statistics, 2012](#)). In order to draw samples, first of all, various indigenous languages have been stratified into two language groups as suggested by [Yadava \(2014\)](#) according to the number of their speakers recorded in the census of 2011. If a language has more than 100,000 speakers can be categorized as 'major' language and their number in Nepal is 19 that make the cumulative percentage of the population as approximately 96%. In contrast, the remaining 104 plus languages are categorized as 'minor' language groups (having less than 100,000 speakers) spoken by 4% of Nepal's total population (pp. 57-60). Accordingly, 2 language groups, namely Gurung and Magar belonging to the 'major' language groups and other 3 language groups, namely Bhujel, Hyolmo and Dura belonging to the 'minor' language groups that have randomly been selected as sampled population for the study. Then samples have been drawn from all these indigenous language groups using simple random sampling techniques. The sample size has been of 140 indigenous language speakers from different locations of Kaski district.

Table-1. Population Sampling for the Study in Kaski District

SN	Language Group	Language Category	Total No. of Speakers in Kaski	Sampled Population for the Study
1	Gurung	Major	58,589	40
2	Magar	Major	10,782	40
3	Bhujel	Minor	400	20
4	Hyolmo	Minor	152	20
5	Dura	Minor	110	20
Total Population			70,033	140

Source: Rural Municipality/ Municipality's Profile of Kaski-2074 BS (pp. 18-20). Pokhara: Bureau of Statistics, Kaski

The data used in this study are both quantitative and qualitative in nature. Questionnaire survey and interview were used to collect the primary data. The questions included in the data collection instrument, especially the survey questionnaire, are all objective type like categorical, dichotomous, multiple choice as well as 5-Likert type scales. The secondary data were retrieved from past studies such as journal articles, seminar papers, dissertations, government reports, etc. They were helpful to check the validity and reliability of empirical data.

The collected responses coded and entered into Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20. The results have been presented in simple table in order to generate ideas explicitly on the sampled respondents' attitudes towards their indigenous languages.

Statistical tools like univariate and bivariate analysis have been used in the study. In univariate analysis descriptive statistics like frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation were used to describe the characteristics of the data. One way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was also tested to measure significance on the respondents' attitudes in terms of language group, age groups, religion, gender, and marital status, educational status and occupation.

5. Results and Discussion

The input given in the presentation of linguistic diversity in Nepal with special reference to indigenous languages from Kaski district reflected the mind frame of respondents. The study covered the questionnaire presentation of results: quantitative perspective of results that included the existing literatures available from both print and online sources. The overall findings indicated high agreement on the need to preserve and promote endangered indigenous languages in Kaski district.

Quantitative data displayed through the survey questionnaire distributed among the 140 respondents. The demographic characteristics of the survey respondents highlighted different attitudes of the respondents towards their use of mother tongues. The survey was used to test the attitudes of respondents towards their mother tongues.

Table-2. Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Variables (Language Group)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Bhujel	20	14.3
Dura	20	14.3
Gurung	40	28.6
Hyolmo	20	14.3
Magar	40	28.6
Variables (Age Group)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
0-19	10	7.1
20-39	56	40
40-50	48	34.3
60 and Above	26	18.6
Variables (Gender)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Female	30	21.4
Male	110	78.6
Variables (Religion)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Bon Lama	1	0.7
Buddhist	70	50
Hindu	67	47.9
No Religion	2	1.4
Variables (Marital Status)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Married	100	71.4
Unmarried	40	28.6
Variables (Education)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Illiterate	3	2.1
Literate	19	13.6
School Level	45	32.1
+2 Level	39	27.9
University Degree	34	24.3
Variables (Occupation)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Business	15	10.7
Carpenting	3	2.1
Driving	3	2.1
Farming	7	5
Foreign Job	5	3.6
Govt Job	7	5
Housewife	29	20.7
Office Job	9	6.4
Retired	12	8.6
Security	1	0.7
Study	27	19.3
Tailoring	3	2.1
Teaching	17	12.1
Technician	2	1.4

Source: Field Visit, 2019

Of the total respondents (140 sampling population size), as shown in Table 2, 78.6% were male respondents while the rest were female respondents. Similarly, major parts of the respondents were aged 49 to 50 years old and married respondents were significantly higher than that of unmarried ones. Most of the respondents were from the school level graduates while the illiterate respondents were found to be very less. Respondents (20.7%) were housewives, 19.3% as students, 12.1% as teachers, 10.7% as businesspersons and the rest engaged in different professions. However, 50% respondents were Buddhists, followed by 47.9% as Hindus, 1.4% had no religion and 0.7% as Bon Lama. The distribution of demography represents all aspects of population proportionately. The demographic information drawn from the questionnaires covered gender, marital status, education level, and age group, which showed the reliability and validity of the sampled population.

The survey about the language background and use of respondents from indigenous language groups showed the indigenous language speakers' background and use of their native languages such as frequency of language use, and the place and persons they are being spoken.

Table-3. Respondents' Opinion about Indigenous Languages (in percentage)

Variables	Strongly Agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
People and Culture Survive without Language	7.9	12.9	3.6	34.3	41.4	100
Important to Keep the Language	57.9	38.6	1.4	.7	1.4	100
Community Supports the Use of Language	14.3	52.1	5.7	27.1	.7	100
Teaching Language in School	37.9	50.0	5.7	5.7	.7	100
Speakers of Dominant Languages Learning the Language	15.7	59.3	13.6	8.6	2.9	100
Passing Knowledge to Future Generations	46.4	34.3	2.1	10.0	7.1	100
Losing Identity If not Spoken	48.6	32.9	7.9	5.7	5.0	100
Using Language Helps Succeed in Schools	24.3	34.3	16.4	19.3	5.7	100
Only Indigenous People Teach the Language	12.1	20.0	17.1	45.7	5.0	100
Using the Language Improves the Life	25.7	46.4	7.9	13.6	6.4	100

Source: Field Visit, 2019

In Table 3, 41.4% of the total of 140 respondents strongly disagreed to the question about whether indigenous peoples and their culture can survive with their native languages, 7.9% strongly agreed, and 3.6% was unsure about the question. Similarly, to the question of whether or not the respondents want to keep the indigenous languages for the future generations, 57.9% strongly agreed, 0.7% disagreed, and the rest were either for 'strongly agree' or 'agree' options. In comparison to the results obtained for the compare means, the respondents supported the indigenous languages. It indicated that the respondents had positive attitudes towards their native languages.

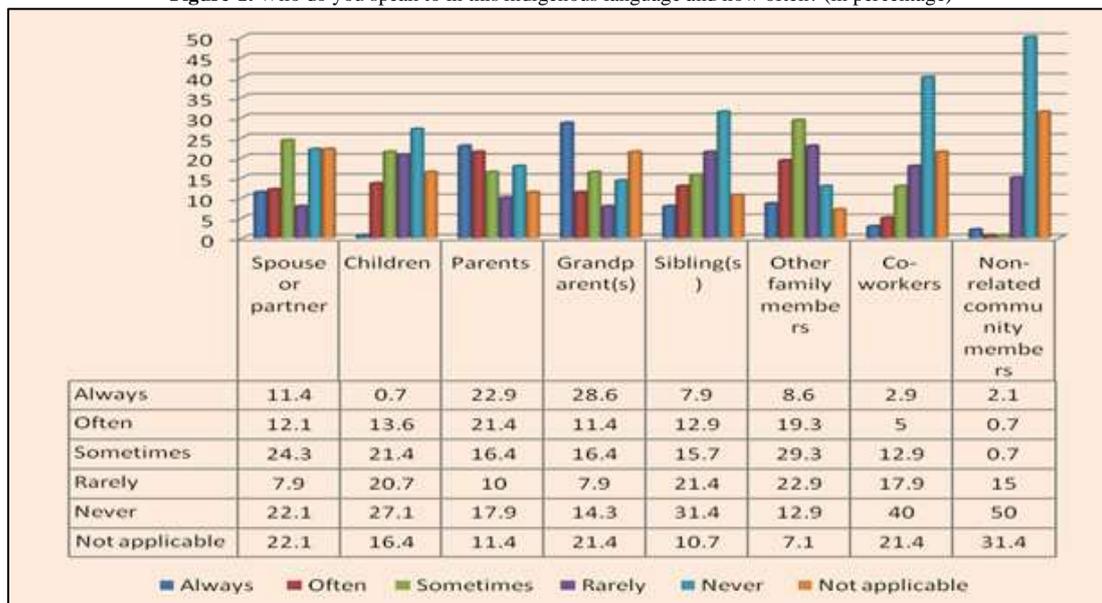
Table-4. How often do you use this indigenous language? (in Percentage)

Variable	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
All the time, all day	11	7.9	7.9
Frequently every day	27	19.3	27.1
A few times every day	36	25.7	52.9
A few times a week	13	9.3	62.1
Rarely	32	22.9	85
Never	21	15	100
Total	140	100	

Source: Field Visit, 2019

In Table 4, out of the total of 140 respondents, 36 or 25% respondents used their indigenous languages a few times every day and 11 or 7.9% respondents used their indigenous languages all day. However, 21 or 15% respondents never used their native languages when they met people. The data showed that indigenous language groups in Kaski district do not use their native languages as expected by the researchers.

Figure-1. Who do you speak to in this indigenous language and how often? (in percentage)



Source: Field Visit, 2019

As it is shown in Figure 1, many respondents spoke to their parents and grandparents mostly and did not speak to other members in the community. In Table 5, a large number of respondents (20.7%) also responded that they heard the use of indigenous languages at their homes.

Table-5. Where and how often do you hear this indigenous language being spoken? (in percentage)

Where and How	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Not applicable	Total
Community centre	17.9	20.0	40.7	15.0	5.7	.7	100
At my home	20.7	28.6	21.4	12.9	15.7	.7	100
At the shops	.7	1.4	17.1	27.1	48.6	5.0	100
At other family members' homes	10.0	21.4	33.6	23.6	9.3	2.1	100
At friends' homes	7.1	10.7	31.4	27.1	20.7	2.9	100
At work	.7	2.1	14.3	17.9	45.7	19.3	100
At school	.7	2.9	10.7	14.3	44.3	27.1	100
At sporting events	2.1	1.4	12.1	20.0	37.1	27.1	100
During ceremonies	12.1	22.9	28.6	19.3	17.1	-	100
At temple	1.4	5.7	7.9	20.7	48.6	15.7	100
At other community meetings & events	.7	2.9	17.1	32.9	31.4	15.0	100
Other (please specify here)	-	-	-	-	-	-	100

Source: Field Visit, 2019

The data on quantitative perspective in Figure 1 and Table 5 showed that mostly indigenous languages were used in the homely environment by the respondents, especially with their grandparents, parents and spouses. This also showed that the elders of indigenous language groups did not use or pass their native languages with their children.

The use of numerical data in SPSS to analyze the results as shown in the above tables and figures was useful for summarizing numeric variables simultaneously across categories. Expectedly, the analysis of results through this tool shows that indigenous language communities in Kaski district were serious about their native languages. The findings show that the attitudes of some respondents towards the use of indigenous languages in the communities are generally positive. This also indicated that they had neither forgotten their native languages due to their parents not passing on to the younger generations, nor not at all interested in learning their native languages due to the dominance of other languages.

As the findings of this study showed, the main threat to indigenous languages is the unfair national policy of the governments of Nepal towards indigenous language and the conscious and unconscious desires of parents not passing on their language to their children. As a result, the Nepali language is used as the only medium of instruction in all types of educational institutions that minimizes the role of indigenous languages. One of the reasons is that indigenous children get little or no incentive to learn their mother tongues. Thus, as many indigenous languages in Nepal are at risk, it is now time to take bold steps and use every method to preserve and promote the world's linguistic diversity.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

6.1. Conclusion

The language decline and death is indirectly associated with the language policy of the government. This process is based solely on the use of language and is most severely felt by indigenous language communities around the world including Nepal. This study, thus, suggested a more inclusive language policy of the government that can accommodate indigenous languages of Nepal and contribute to the preservation and promotion of linguistic diversity in the world.

In this study, the preservation and promotion of linguistic diversity in Nepal has been discussed and examined with special reference to indigenous languages of Kaski district. From Kaski district, 140 respondents were sampled and surveyed through questionnaires.

Both quantitative and qualitative data drawn from the survey questionnaire, and existing literatures indicated that indigenous language communities have positive attitudes towards preserving and promoting linguistic diversity in Nepal. But the findings showed that despite several attempts by individuals, governments and stakeholders, there are hindrances for effective teaching learning and use of indigenous languages. Non-availability of trained and qualified language teachers, negative attitude of education administrators, indigenous language speakers' disinterest and political domination were found to be some of the hindrances of indigenous language use.

Overall, the collected data showed that the indigenous language communities should be supported by the government for giving official status to their native languages, focused on formulation and implementation of education policies, and encouraged to insist on speaking their native languages. Together, the indigenous language communities need to collaborate with the government to curb all the issues related to preserving and promoting linguistic diversity in Nepal.

6.2. Recommendations

In Nepal, indigenous languages have received very little attention in terms of being used as equal to the dominant language, that is, the Nepali language. Therefore, based on the findings and discussions presented in the previous chapters, the following recommendations have been made to preserve and promote endangered indigenous languages of Nepal:

The findings of the study concluded that documentation is one of the most important ways to preserve and promote indigenous languages. Documentation of a language is related to preservation activities that include creating grammar, dictionaries, writing systems (scripts), translations of books, archiving indigenous languages using text, sound and video clips, and using computers and other technologies such as cartoons, CD-ROMs, movies, YouTube, etc. So it is recommended that indigenous language groups should be encouraged and supported to document their native languages.

Conducting language classes is the most common form of preserving and promoting indigenous languages. The findings of this study concluded that both formal and informal languages classes can be effective to cover all types of age group indigenous language speakers. Formal language classes include bilingual and multilingual education programs in schools, colleges and universities whereas informal language classes include conducting language classes for elderly indigenous language speakers as per the demand of the learners. It is suggested that either the government or the language communities need to arrange for such classes.

It is often found that being a fluent speaker does not make for a skillful language teacher because sometimes a first language speaker is often unaware of the difficulties of learning the target language. It is therefore recommended that language teachers should be provided with appropriate trainings to be good indigenous language teachers. This can be an effective way to preserve and promote indigenous languages.

The findings indicated that there should be inclusive language policy and political advocacy for far-reaching effects on the language revitalization movement. The government of Nepal needs to focus on the implementation of language policy despite its development of policies. Language communities should also organize language revitalization activities as political advocacy which can be particularly powerful when such communities are able to join hands with other groups of a similar language. Therefore, the researchers suggest that indigenous language groups should put pressure on the government for policy development and political advocacy for the preservation of indigenous languages.

In this study, language awareness is related to mother tongue language education for the development in learners of consciousness to the forms and functions of the target language. Many linguists and language activists have recognized that children perceive things faster in their mother tongues than in any other languages. From this perspective, indigenous language communities should be aware of this fact that they become good learners and feel proud in themselves as belonging to a certain language group. So it is recommended that indigenous language groups should be given language awareness programs occasionally in order to motivate them to use their native languages and then to preserve the linguistic diversity in Nepal.

The research interest in endangered languages is the need of the time since many languages which have lesser power are dying each year. The findings of this study have concluded that in order to curb language decline and death, language researchers need to seek answers to important question through their research, addressing issues of recovering and maintaining endangered indigenous languages. In order to revitalize indigenous languages, more research and theorization are needed because many revitalization efforts are associated with ethnic revival movements. So the findings of this study indicated that indigenous language communities need to collaborate with language researchers to address the issues related to indigenous language revitalization strategies.

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